

Living

Annual Report to Tenants 2021-2022

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Welcome

Welcome to the 2021/22 Annual Report to you, our tenants. We are pleased to share highlights of how we have continued to evolve support and services in the post-covid challenging environment and how we have performed in a year of recovery.

This year saw us deliver the second phase of our business strategy, Plan A 2019-2022. This provided us with a clear strategic path to maintain continuous improvement and focus on key performance targets whilst dealing with any post-covid backlogs of work and continuing to deliver much needed support with cost of living.

Over the last 12 months we also re-directed financial resources and capacity so we could invest in the quality and energy efficiency of our homes and increasing the number of new, quality homes in sustainable and thriving places.

It has been a year of great change across the social housing sector. We have adapted to emerging changes to the regulatory Consumer Standards that were introduced through the Charter for Social Housing Residents, ensuring that all tenants are treated fairly, with respect and have their voices heard. We have also seen the introduction of new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, some of which are contained in this report, which will be used to best understand how tenants view our performance. These areas are still developing, and we will be proactively adapting as any new requirements emerge.

The publication of the Government's Levelling Up White Paper started a shift in focus for the housing sector, with greater emphasis than ever before on creating places where people are proud to live, through regeneration, creating new homes and community development. This is a developing area which we will be watching closely and aligning our strategy as further details emerge. In the meantime, we continue to invest in improving homes and estates in our local communities and during the past year we made great progress at Jubilee Fields, Shildon.

2021/22 also saw the introduction of our Sustainability Strategy, Planet A (as there is no Planet B). Tenants had told us that this is a priority and we responded by accelerating our activity to improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes, building more energy efficient new homes and reducing the carbon footprint of our homes, as we strive towards Net Zero by 2050. We also declared a climate emergency and were co-signatories to the County Durham Climate Pledge which encourages key partners across the County to work together to support environmental sustainability initiatives and reduce carbon consumption.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to you, our tenants, for the work that you do to help us improve our services. This year, through the various engagement opportunities, we were able to implement 56 meaningful service improvements in response to your feedback and suggestions, a snapshot of which are included in this report.

I hope you enjoy reading this report. We look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming year. Six monthly updates on the things we are doing and how we are performing will of course continue to be issued via our Life@Livin e-zine.



Alan Boddy
Chief Executive

Performance



Performance was equal to, or higher than our target



Performance was lower than our target



Performance improved on the previous year

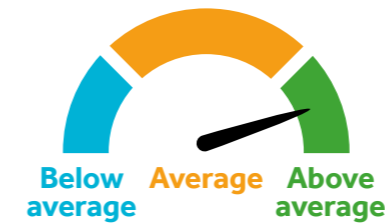


Performance was unchanged



Performance was not as good as the previous year

How we compare to others



We have compared our performance to the latest benchmarking data available for the sector.

Local offer

We will give you information on our performance targets across our most important service areas.

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Transforming Customer Experience and Digital Services

Providing a brilliant customer experience is in everything that we do, and we are committed to transforming customer services by listening and acting on customer feedback and using customer data to design and deliver modern digital services.

We know you expect services that are accessible, responsive, and easy to use, and during the year we worked on providing self-serve facilities so you can access services at your convenience in a place, and at a time that suits you. During 2021/22 we were available to you 24/7 and dealt with almost 245,000 transactions. 171,000 of these transactions were made digitally.

92%

overall satisfaction with customer experience (target 91%)



100%

tenants satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon (target 98%)



Local offer

We will always try to answer queries at the first point of contact, and when this is not possible, we will let you know who will be dealing with your query and provide updates until the query is resolved.

In 2021/22; we resolved 82% of customer enquiries at First Point of Contact. Where we could not answer the initial enquiry, we contacted 84% (16,274) of customers within two working days to give an update

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97%

of formal complaints responded to within agreed timescales (target 95%)



32%

repairs reported using our Livin app (target 17%)



82%

of queries dealt with at first point of contact (target 84%)



95%

satisfaction with the way complaints were handled (target 91%)



70%

of transactions completed digitally (target 72%)



56

Net Promoter Score (NPS) (target 50%)



The performance for 2021/22 shows that we deliver a highly responsive and convenient customer experience and that you have told us that you would recommend us as a landlord. This is demonstrated by our net promoter scores and satisfaction results.

In 2021/22 you responded positively to improvements in our digital communication channels and complaints handling. You have told us that you feel you are listened to and your views are acted upon. We have responded quickly to your feedback to target service improvements in areas you have prioritised and throughout this annual report we have provided examples of where this has impacted on the way we have delivered services.

We have increased our digital services through improving our website content which provides a better experience and delivers online self-service. 2021/22 saw an increase in active users registered on the self-service portal and the introduction of a new customer experience platform which will help us deliver a better digital customer experience.

We listened

You told us it would be helpful to have weekend and evening repairs and be alerted when an operative is on the way to complete your repair.

We acted

We introduced weekend and evening appointments and the Livin Works live appointment tracker so you can see when we are expected to arrive at your home, meaning more convenience for you.



Local offer

We value what you have to say to us, and we will always be polite to you. We will give you clear information about what to do if you are not happy with our services and use your feedback to make improvements.

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273
complaints

147
service improvements

88%
complaints dealt within 4 days

33
formal complaints

276,000
contacts

275
compliments

We listened

You wanted us to explain how to get repairs for damp and mould completed quickly.

We acted

We invited you to join us in scrutinising our damp and mould repair service. Together we:

- Developed a new script for our contact centre to identify what action was needed to treat and stop damp and mould
- Produced a new information leaflet with tips to help you identify different types of damp and how to treat it

We also identified homes that had more than two reports of damp and visited to make sure that it had been treated.



We value your feedback and learn from your complaints. [Click here to leave us some feedback](#)

We are required by the regulator to complete a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code.

You can see our latest assessment here: [You also have the right to contact the Housing Ombudsman If you're not happy with the final response from us:](#)

[Click to read our self assesment](#)

[Click to contact the Housing Ombudsman](#)

Your voice

Thank you to everyone that took part in more than 40 consultations about our services. We listened to the views of over 8,000 responses on a variety of services and as a result, you helped us to introduce significant service improvements including new and reviewed policies, better ways of communicating with you and services that are easier for you to use.

Tenants from our scrutiny volunteer group attended 23 different training events, including meeting the Regulator for Social Housing, Tenant Participation Advisory Service Complaints Masterclass and events centred around Climate Change and Tackling Net Zero. This helped them with their skills, knowledge, and confidence to influence and develop new policies and services.

Want to get involved?

Visit our dedicated website page to find out how you can get involved in ways and times that suit you:

[Click here to get involved](#)

Planet A

We are committed to making our homes and places more sustainable and energy efficient, helping you to live greener lives. Our performance measures track the progress we are making towards all our homes having the highest possible standard of energy efficiency. Our targets for energy efficiency improvement were met in 2021/22, but we know we need to do more and have set more stretching targets for 2022/23 to continue our progress and deliver improvements to more homes.

In 2021/22, we invested in a wide range of energy efficiency improvements to improve the fabric of your homes, including upgrading insulation and installing double-glazed windows, helping to reduce carbon emissions, energy usage and bills. In partnership with Mears, Durham County Council and other housing providers, we successfully secured over £1m of grant funding from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to enable us to carry out more of these improvements.

70.45

average energy efficiency score for all properties (target 70)



5,751

homes achieved a good energy efficiency rating of EPC 'C' and above. (target 5,750)



£250,000

invested to install solar panels and reduce energy bills for tenants in 61 bungalows.

£1.08m

funding secured through Social Housing Decarbonisation fund to improve the energy efficiency of 107 homes

£225,000

invested in homes to increase energy efficiency through planned works such as external wall insulation, loft top ups, and new double glazed windows to reduce energy bills.

83%

of Livin Works waste recycled preventing it being sent to landfill.



Supporting Sustainable Places

We are committed to enabling and delivering strong and sustainable places, that support people to thrive.

We are an anchor in local communities and through investment can transform places through supplying new affordable homes, improving/modernising existing homes and supporting community development.

Local offer

We will carry out regular inspections of estates in our communities to make sure our homes and properties are maintained to a suitable standard.

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88%

satisfaction with your neighbourhood as a place to live (target 90%)



70%

satisfaction with handling reports of anti-social behaviour cases (target 85%)



99%

of grounds maintenance visits completed against schedule (target 97%)



We are a successful placemaking organisation and drive significant investment into places. Our performance measures are used to track our progress and help direct our resources and target our work.

We recognise from our performance results that we must improve our approach to neighbourhood management and in supporting residents experiencing anti-social behaviour.

In 2021/22, we targeted improvements to our services by increasing estate inspection and neighbourhood management work which has resulted in increased satisfaction from the previous year, but we recognise there is still more work to do. During the year, we agreed a pledge with the Police and Crime Commissioner and other local housing providers to work closely together, share information and coordinate our work. We launched a proactive estate inspection programme, which is available on our website, and completed 72 inspections with residents and partners resolving 184 environmental issues within our communities.

Your feedback on anti-social behaviour tells us that regular communication and prompt responses to incidences of anti-social behaviour is key to improving pride of place and helping you feel safe in your community and we have improved our processes to do this more effectively.



We listened

Residents of Jubilee Fields Estate, Shildon said improvements were needed to the environment and housing on the estate to raise pride and create a beautiful place.

We acted

We have started investing £9 million in housing renewal on the estate that will deliver a range of affordable, energy efficient homes and safer modern estate design.



We listened

You wanted us to prioritise anti-social behaviour, explain the powers at our disposal, have regular scheduled feedback about your complaint, and know how we are performing.

We acted

We changed how cases are classed as an anti-social behaviour complaint and updated our process to include personalised communication. We introduced a new performance indicator to measure the time taken to take effective and swift action and resolve the complaint.

£237,244

invested in communities through the community regeneration fund, which attracted £1,850,538 of match funding from other community investors

72

estate inspections

7,459

food parcels, hampers, and hot meals were provided by 11 foodbanks that we supported

80

community projects supported

£4.4m

achieved in social value by supporting 201 tenants into work

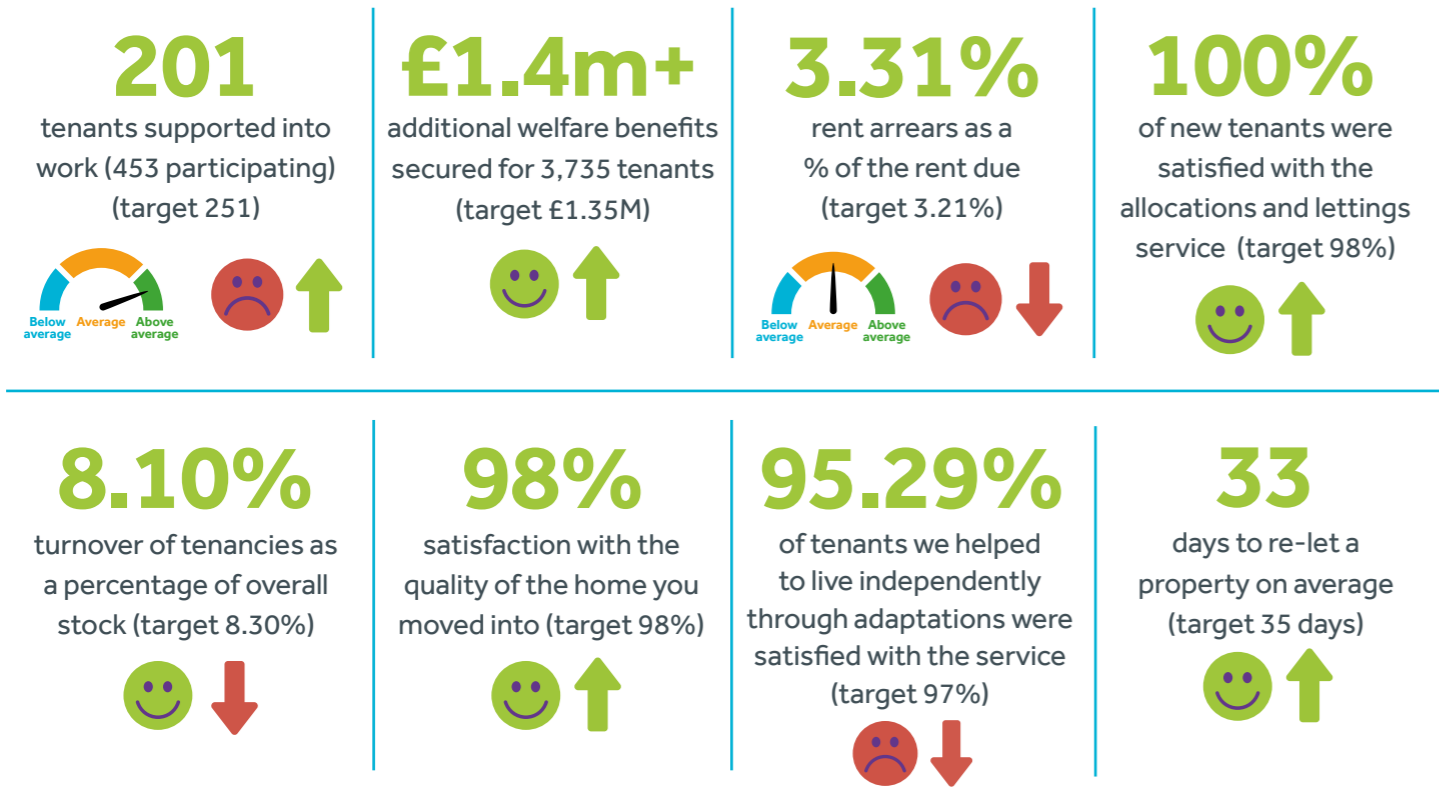
£18.5m

generated in added value within our communities

Supporting Sustainable Tenancies

We are determined to enable and deliver strong and sustainable places and to deliver this our tenancies must be sustainable. We track the sustainability of our tenancies and this helps us to focus our support interventions where needed. In a challenging economic environment, we provide much needed finance and employment support to help more people sustain their tenancies.

During the year we worked with you, residents and partner organisations to invest in communities and delivering much needed projects targeted at the emerging cost of living crisis.



Demand for our homes is very strong; in 2021/22 we processed 3, 872 housing applications and let 913 homes. We focussed on making sure new tenants were kept informed throughout their tenancy start up resulting in increased satisfaction from the previous year (2020/21).

In 2021/22, we set ourselves ambitious targets to maximise welfare benefit income and support tenants into work to help with the ongoing cost of living challenges. We secured over £1.4m in welfare benefits and we are proud to have successfully supported 201 people into employment. While this is below our target of 250, the success we have achieved provides sector leading performance for employment work. Responding to the cost of living, we also provided personalised financial inclusion support throughout 2021/22, helping tenants access budgeting and debt advice, maximise their grant and benefits take up and help with access to affordable credit in partnership with local credit unions.

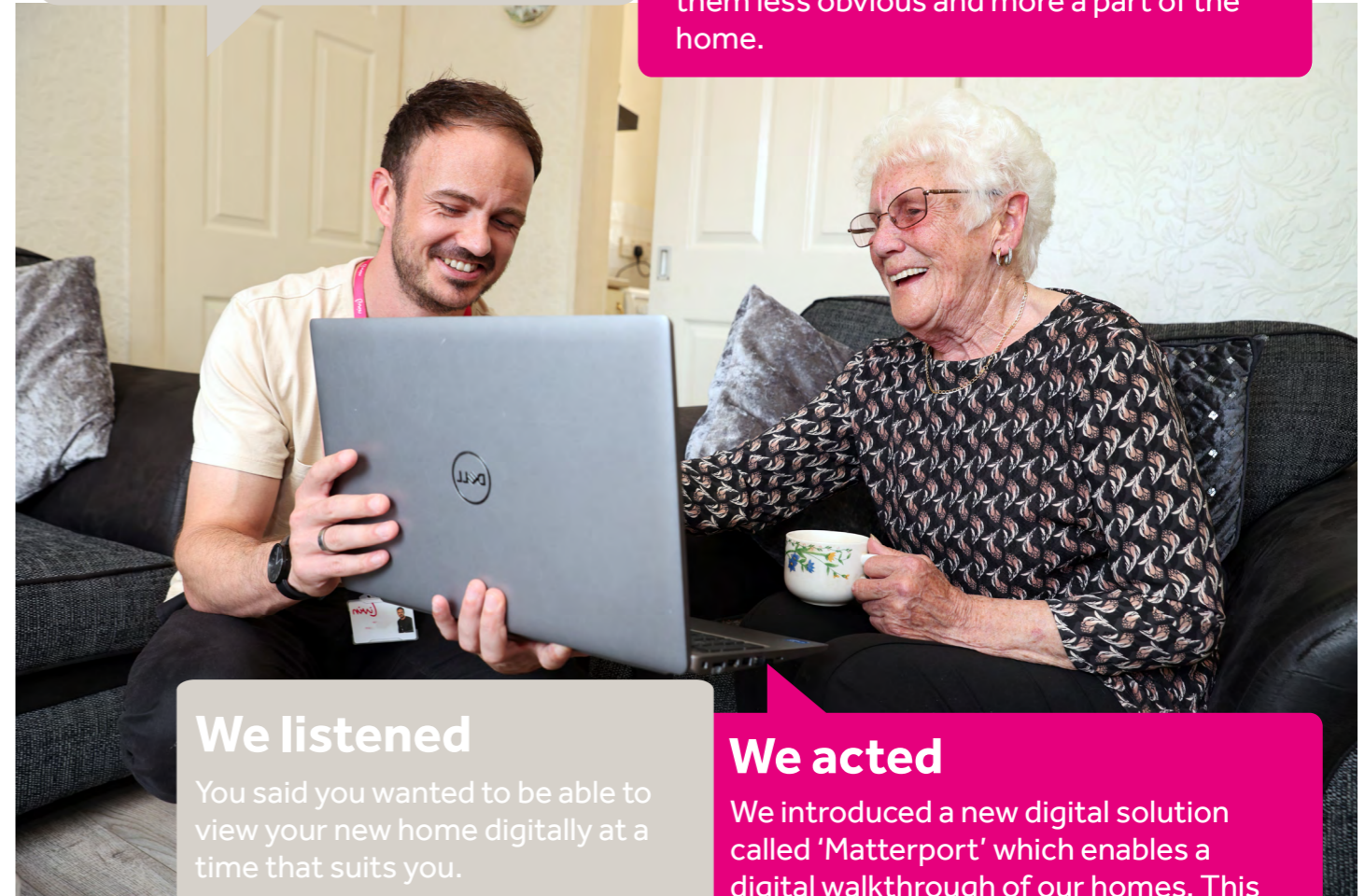


We listened

You said you wanted a simpler system to request help for aids and adaptations to let you live independently for longer and wanted high quality aids that better blended in with you home

We acted

We increased the availability of aids and adaptations through our App enabling tenants to self-serve. We also changed the look and feel of our household aids to make them less obvious and more a part of the home.



We listened

You said you wanted to be able to view your new home digitally at a time that suits you.

We acted

We introduced a new digital solution called 'Matterport' which enables a digital walkthrough of our homes. This has enabled new and potential tenants to view homes without having to travel.



Providing Quality Sustainable Homes

We aim to provide you with safe, warm, high-quality, and sustainable homes.

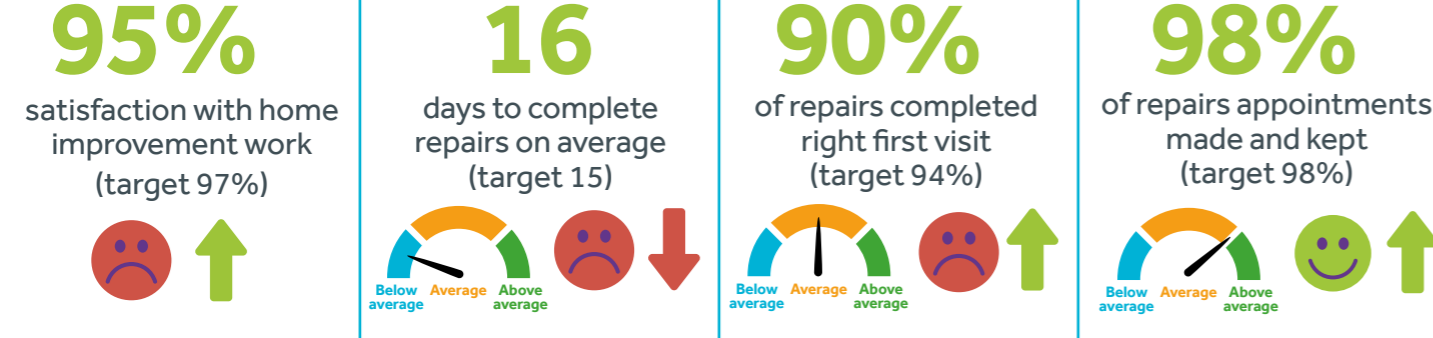
To achieve this we provide choice and deliver accessible, convenient, reliable and responsive maintenance services to ensure your home is maintained to a high standard.

During the year we invested £7.9 million in the repairs service. As the cost of living began to rise and due to economic uncertainty, we invested in the energy efficiency of over 200 homes, reducing carbon emissions and energy bills.

Local offer

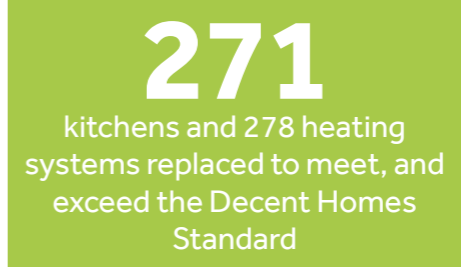
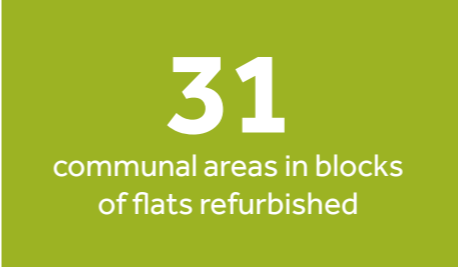
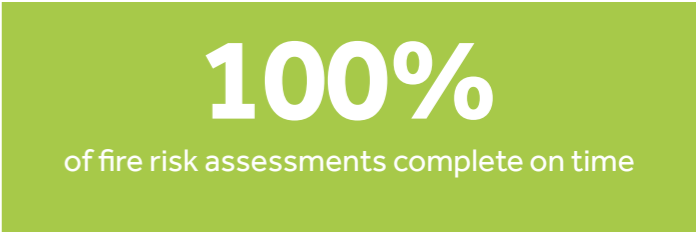
We will provide you with safe, warm, high – quality and energy efficient homes.

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Achieving our targets for 2021/22 was challenging with a backlog of repairs resulting from successive lockdowns, adverse and extreme weather and issues with the availability of materials for repairs. In 2021/22, performance didn't achieve targets for our repairs service satisfaction, speed of repairs and completing repairs at the first visit. Despite these challenges, we delivered over 31, 500 repairs last year (up from 29, 000 in 2020/21) and throughout the year we ensured that crucial services to keep you safe were maintained to a high standard.

During 2021/22 we acted on your feedback to improve our services by introducing extended repairs appointments to 7pm Monday to Friday and on a Saturday morning to increase availability and provide more convenient services. We also introduced proactive contact and improved our processes to respond to damp repairs.

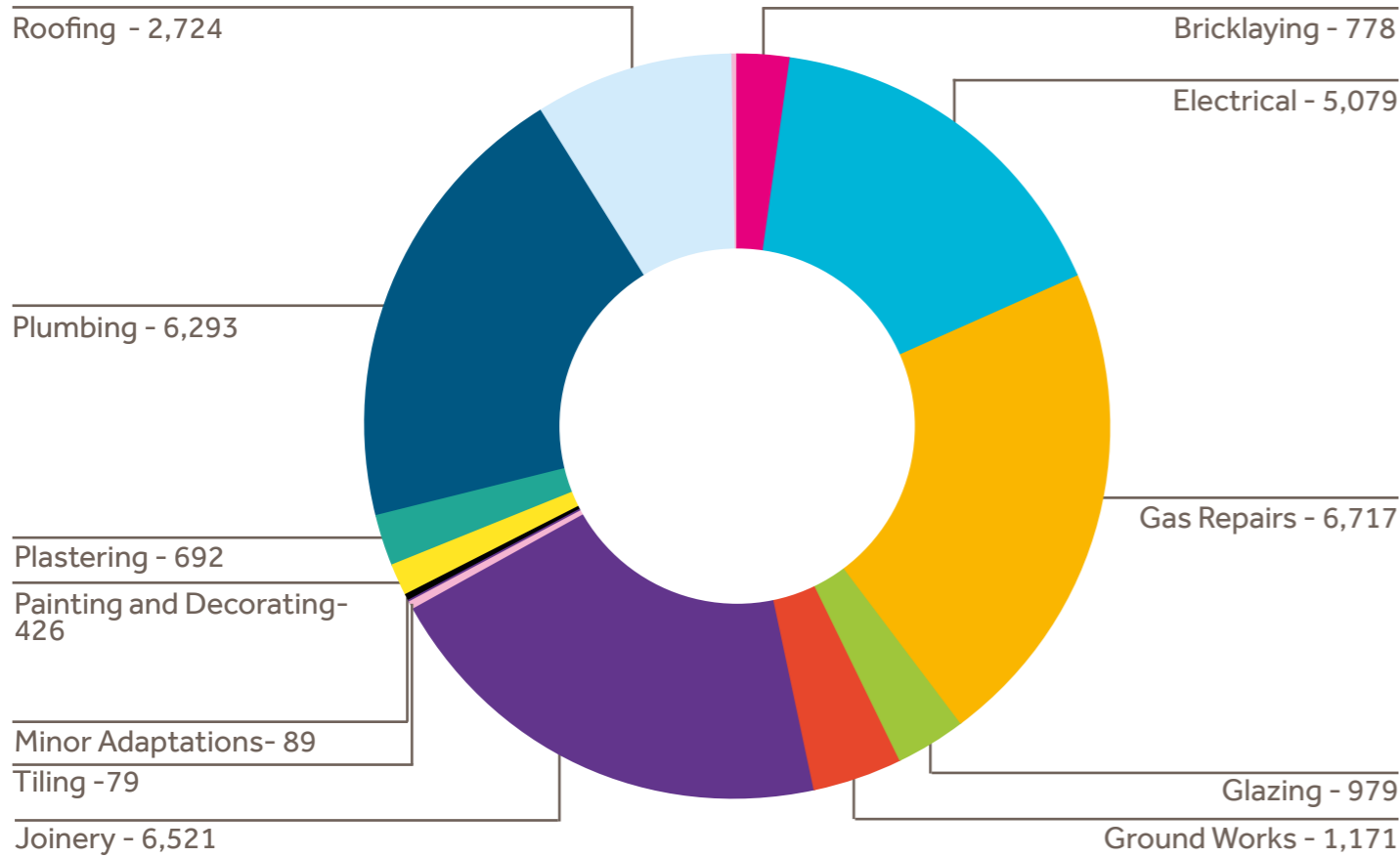


We listened
You told us through feedback and satisfaction surveys that our repairs and maintenance service overall could be better.

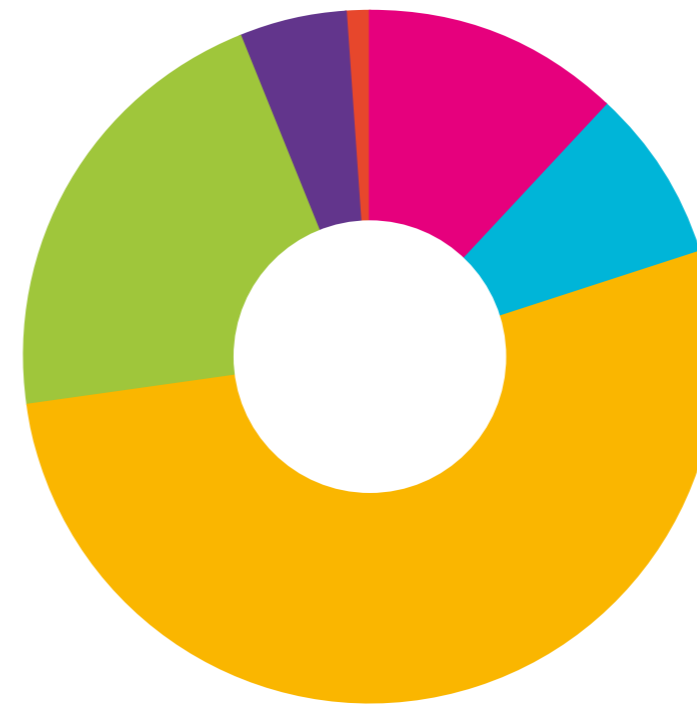
We acted
We worked with four tenants to scrutinise the repairs service and working together we introduced seven service improvements including improved diagnosis of repairs by our customer services team so that when you report a repair our operatives will be allocated the right amount of time and materials to complete a repair right first time.



This chart shows the type of repairs completed in 2021/22



This chart shows percentage improvement works (excluding repairs) completed in 2021/22



Type of repair	% breakdown
Roof works	12%
Garage Improvements	8%
Internal Works	53%
Improvements to communal areas	21%
Energy efficiency	5%
Conversions	1%

Type of repair	Number of repairs completed	% breakdown
Bricklaying	778	2%
Electrical	5079	16%
Gas Repairs	6717	21%
Glazing	979	3%
Ground Works	1171	4%
Joinery	6521	21%
Minor Adaptations	89	<0%
Painting & Decorating	426	1%
Plastering	692	2%
Plumbing	6293	20%
Roofing	2724	9%
Tiling	79	<0%
Grand Total	31,548	100%



We listened
You told us what investment is important to you for your home.

We acted
We published our set Asset Management Policy and Strategy which set our priorities for the next 3 years to bring our homes up to EPC band C standard. We also offered more options to you such as a greater choice of bathroom and kitchens and a bigger focus on making homes more energy efficient.

Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes

We aim to build and buy the right new homes in the right locations in our local area to ensure a mix of much needed homes designed to suit a range of needs.

During the year we invested £18.9 million in 206 new affordable rental homes for families and older persons in housing need.

We completed new developments at Salters Lane, Sedgefield, Travellers Green, Newton Aycliffe, King William Court, Spennymoor and Southside, Ferryhill.

We are continuing to invest in, and learn from, new technologies including air source heat pumps which provide heating and hot water via a hot water tank, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, solar PV and increased thermal insulation / fabric efficiencies.

Local offer

We will provide you with safe, warm, high-quality and energy efficient homes.

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206

new homes for rent built of which 159 are houses and 47 are bungalows (target 196)



100%

satisfaction with the quality of new homes (target 91%)



7

new homes purchased for rent (target 7)



We listened

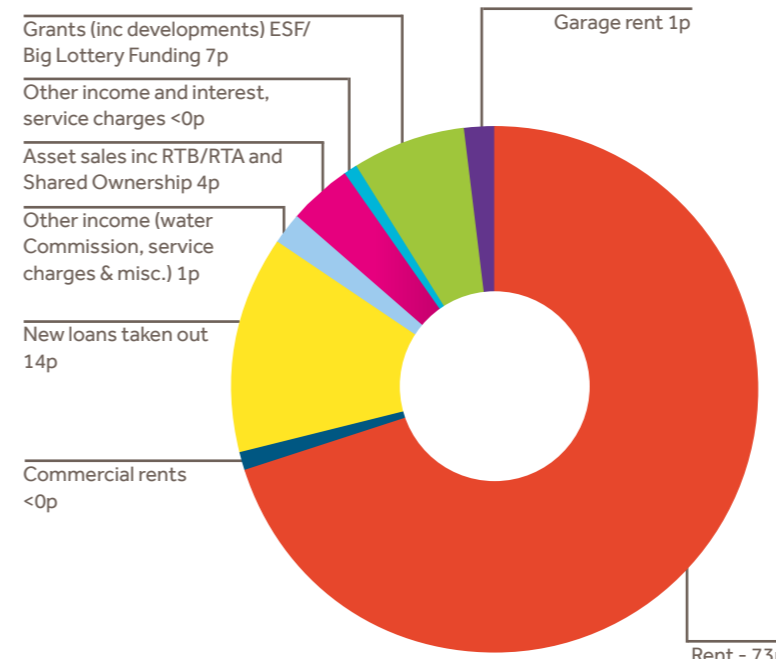
You wanted the process for reporting repairs in your new home to be easier.

We acted

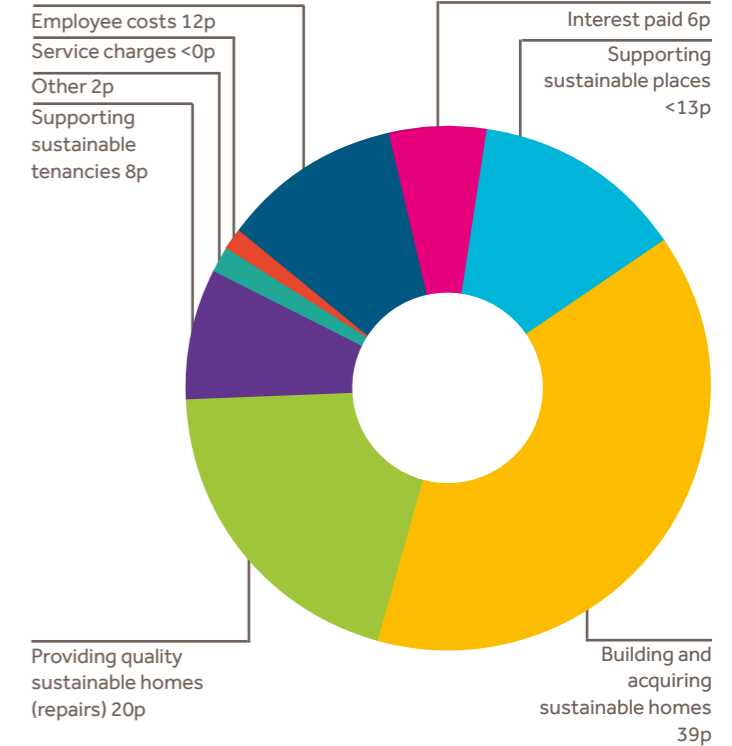
Process strengthened to provide our staff with the right information to ensure that we always provide new tenants with a good customer experience when reporting issues with repairs.

Finance

Where does each £1 come from?



Where does each £1 go?



Income

	£'000	
Asset sales inc RTB/RTA and Shared Ownership	£2,052	↑
Other income and interest	£5	↓
Service charges	£81	↑
Grants (inc Developments)	£3,523	↑
Garage rent	£654	↑
Rent	£35,480	↑
ESF/Big Lottery Funding	<£0	↔
Commercial rents	£246	↑
New loans taken out	£7,000	↑
Other income (water commission & misc.)	£518	↑

Expenditure

	£'000	
Interest Paid	£3,343	↑
Supporting sustainable places	£6,606	↑
Building and acquiring sustainable homes	£20,253	↓
Providing quality sustainable homes (repairs)	£10,147	↑
Supporting sustainable tenancies	£4,111	↑
Service charges	£85	↑
Other	£948	↑
Employee costs	£6,426	↑