

# Annual report.

2020-21

 staffs housing



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# A snapshot of our year.



**298**  
colleagues



**2,834**  
homes managed



**243**  
homes let



**54**  
homes added



**9,834**  
wellbeing check-ins  
completed



**135**  
fire risk  
assessments



**182**  
homes  
improved



**£291k**  
spent on planned  
improvements



**£23.4m**  
annual turnover

# A year like no other.

Director of Housing Services, Tim Sheail, shares how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted you, our customers, and our plans for the year.

Our 20-21 annual report is an insight into how our residents, staff and services, came together to support each other through a very difficult time. We'll share with you important updates on our services, contractors and more. We'll explain how we maintained homes, resolved complaints, used budgets and performed against last years commitments and promises to you.



## THE FINANCIAL IMPACT

There was an increase in customers claiming Universal Credit during the year with 450 claimants by mid-February 2021.

Although rent arrears increased at the start of the pandemic, they stabilised and were at 2.17% at the end of the year (compared with 2.13% last year).

## TENANCIES AND EMPTY HOMES

The initial government restrictions on letting homes increased our number of empty properties.

When we began letting again it was challenging with many potential residents unable or wary about moving due to

concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic.

This meant our lettings performance fell during this period. This increased the rent loss and the average time it took to re-let homes. The average re-let took 56 days compared with our 17 day target.

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) increased during the pandemic, we think because more people were having to spend all of their time at home. Most were minor issues but in the more serious cases, we had to take legal action.

Although we always try to resolve ASB complaints without taking court action, we did obtain seven injunctions this year.

## PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

In June 2020 we resumed a full repairs service with repair numbers returning to pre COVID-19 levels. To help manage the backlog we extended the target time for routine repairs from 10 working days to 20. From Jan 21, 10 working days was reintroduced.

We are aware of some issues as the contractor had to rely on sub-contractors to cover for staff shortages. Some non-essential planned works were also placed on hold and have been re-planned.

## CUSTOMER CHECK-INS

Throughout the year customer check-in calls became a focus for the customer services and village teams. We wanted to make sure customers were safe and well at home, assess any changing needs and provide advice if needed. Calls were made for most of the year with more during lockdown periods and average call lengths increased to five and a half minutes - providing valued reassurance for many.

Customer Marion\* really benefited from the calls after her daughter died. Marion's brother noticed she was struggling and asked if we could check-in with her. We were able to provide both emotional and practical support throughout such a difficult period.

Customer Service Advisor Janet Howell called Marion to check-in every couple of weeks.

Janet said:

***"As a team we regularly made sure to check-in on Marion and she was really grateful and said she wouldn't have got through without the calls. It goes to show that you never know what really goes on behind closed doors but by taking the time to check-in, you can really make a difference."***

***"It's true what they say, a problem shared really is a problem halved!"***



**\*name changed to protect customer identity**

# Lettings and new homes.

Everyone deserves a place they're proud to call home.



## NEW HOMES CREATED IN 2020-21

10

new homes built in Crewe

18

retirement apartments built in Meir

11

homes transferred in Stoke for women escaping abuse

15

homes transferred to Staffs Housing in Biddulph

**"We're really proud to call this home"**

Emma's daughter Ivy, who has a condition which affects her mobility, was unable to access some rooms in their old home without help. Through a connection with the Donna Louise Trust, Emma discovered Staffs Housing and was over the moon when we were able to provide her and her family with an adapted bungalow.

***"My children absolutely love it here. I no longer have to worry about Ivy falling on the stairs or having an accident. It's not only been amazing for her physical health but her mental health too. She can get around wherever she needs to and doesn't have to rely on others. She is completely independent which was so important to me as she grew older."***

## NEW HOMES BEING DEVELOPED IN 2021-2022

4

shared ownership houses in Crewe

13

homes for rent and shared ownership in Cheadle

17

new homes for rent in Goldenhill

16

new flats for rent in Chesterton and Hanley

5

new houses to rent in Bentilee

# House and home.

How we're performing: new homes, lettings, sales and customer satisfaction.

**↑ 243**

homes re-let (last year 238)



**↑ £17.9m**

generated from rental income (last year was £12m)



**↓ 89%**

satisfaction rate for our lettings service (last year 95%)



**↑ £1.2m**

additional income generated by the money advice team (last year was £0.95m)



**↓ 7**

new shared ownership homes sold (last year 14)



**↓ 1.4%**

of our total rental income was lost because of empty homes (last year 0.9%)



**↑ 42**

tenants transferred to a new home (last year 34)



**↓ 58**

day average re-let time (last year 19 days)



**↓ 9**

mutual exchanges completed (last year 10)



increased or decreased vs last year

# Health and Safety.

**Your safety is our priority. That's why we invested £103,000 in electrical safety upgrades to our homes, with a further £42,000 in fire safety measures and £220,00 will be spent on more fire safety improvement work in 2021-22.**

During 21-22 we will also upgrade fire doors in more of our homes. The upgrade will take around four years so we will be in touch when your scheme is due.

Did you know our Staffs Housing health and safety website section has had a makeover?

The site has been refreshed with lots of advice, guidance and videos now available. Take a look over here:

[staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety](http://staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety)



## THE NUMBERS

During 2020-21 we completed:



**1540**

gas safety checks



**460**

electrical inspection surveys



**560**

scheduled scheme visits by technical staff



**135**

fire risk assessments

# Maintenance.

**We spent nearly £1.5m on responsive repairs including £291,000 bringing empty homes to our lettable standard.**

During the COVID-19 lockdown, we maintained our emergency service with all routine jobs recorded and attended to as soon as restrictions were eased.

Although it has been a very challenging year where some services and contractor work was suspended, we were still able to carry out the following improvements. We are also continuing with our planned programmes to pre COVID-19 levels.



## CONTRACTOR UPDATE

The repairs contract with Novus came to an end. We listened to your feedback and involved you in our contractor selection process. Ian Williams Ltd was awarded the contract. They are one of the UK's largest independently owned property services companies and will bring plenty of experience in delivering repairs. We think our shared values of quality homes and reliable, honest communication will help us continue our mission to provide quality, affordable homes. If you have any feedback about Ian Williams skip to page 19 to discover our new contractor customer group.

## OTHER UPDATES

We're planning for the future! We are beginning work on our adaptations and replacements programme which will make sure any kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and more are up to standard. We'll share more once the programme is ready.

**we replaced**

**20** kitchens  
**32** bathrooms  
**90** boilers

**we made**

**5** homes adaptations to improve access and mobility

**we updated**

**35** storage heating systems

## Estate management.

92% of people found their gardens and outdoor spaces 'extremely important' for their health and wellbeing during lockdown.

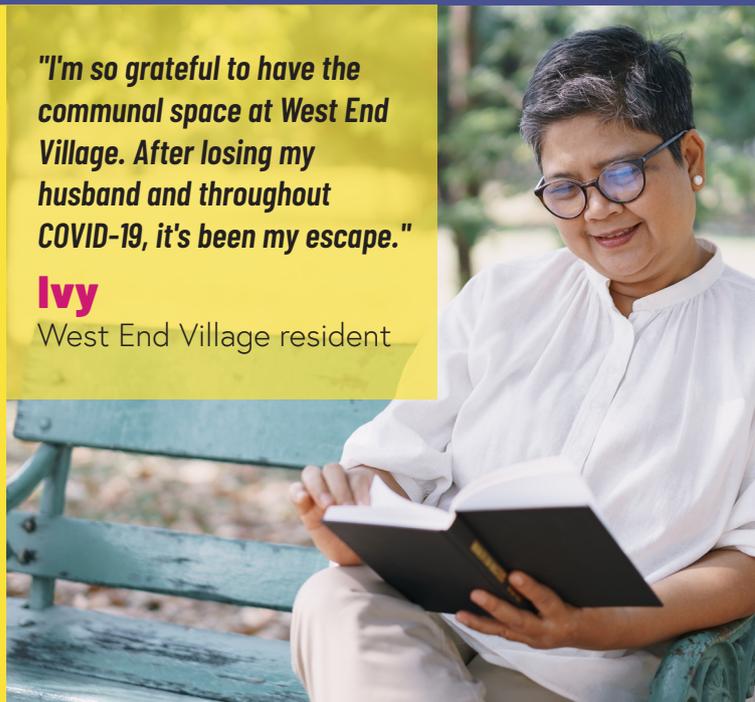
That's why we made sure our Gardening Team continued to care for your green spaces. Although there was a short time during the first lockdown when we had to stop work to make changes, the team returned to work in early Summer 2020.

A big thank you to everybody who shared lovely feedback about our outdoor spaces. Creating great places that make you smile is the most exciting part of our job.

*"I'm so grateful to have the communal space at West End Village. After losing my husband and throughout COVID-19, it's been my escape."*

**Ivy**

West End Village resident



## Anti-social behaviour (ASB).

**86**

**new cases of ASB reported in 2020-21**  
(96 reported last year)



**0**

evictions due to ASB  
(4 last year)



**7**

injunctions obtained to prevent ASB (2 last year)



**4**

people were given notice because of ASB

## ASB improvements.

This year we've continued to deal with anti-social behaviour and stepped in to prevent it when we needed to.

We have installed CCTV at one scheme along with additional security measures including improved lighting to reduce incidents of ASB.

**We've also introduced a noise app to help you report unreasonable noise levels.**



# Dealing with complaints.

Formal complaints are used as a valuable form of customer feedback. We don't set targets, but we do aim to resolve complaints as early as possible.



- repairs
- estate services
- tenancy management
- rents
- new homes
- Revival services

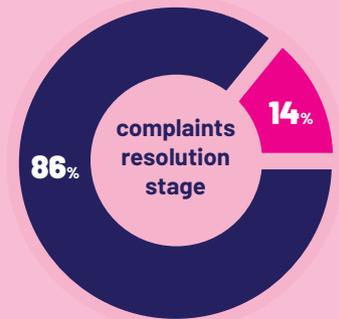
**37** complaints in 2020-21

**34** of those were for Staffs Housing and Revival (3 were for Concrete and Glow)

**86%** of complaints were resolved at the first stage

**78%** of complaints were resolved within our 14-day target (29 of the 37)

**72%** of all complaints we received were related to the repairs service



- stage one
- stage two

## LESSONS LEARNED

Once complaints have been dealt with it's important to put things in place to make sure they don't happen again. In the past year we:

- realised customers needed more communication around the progress of issues and what was going to happen next.
- recognised and valued the importance of how customers feel about issues even when there is not clear evidence of who is at fault.
- will fully investigate when customers have damp problems and what might be causing it.

## HERE'S WHAT WE'RE PUTTING IN PLACE:

- we will make communication easier by creating a single point of contact for you, especially for complex complaints.
- we will continue to deliver customer experience training to all staff to make sure we are always empathetic and understanding.
- we will keep customers in the loop when things are on order or there are justifiable delays to repairs.

# Customer Engagement.

Here's how we engaged with customers and continued to listen to what matters most.

**Despite the challenges of COVID-19 resulting in many changes to the way we work, having contact with customers has remained a priority.**

For the first six months we focused on welfare calls, particularly to those living alone and self-isolating.

We developed great relationships with some customers who hadn't

engaged with us before, and asked if we could use this opportunity to ask some questions. This feedback was really beneficial as it has helped us adapt services to better fit your needs. It's also helped us recognise how we can engage with more customers and develop our new customer engagement strategy coming soon.

## **Customer assurances group**

During the year our customer assurances group continued to meet online and provided feedback from the quarterly customer intelligence report.

## **Thank you event**

Instead of our annual event for customers we delivered 138 thank you packs and afternoon teas to say thank you for your time and commitment.



**28**  
customer  
involvement  
activities

**356**  
customers  
engaged  
with us

## REPAIRS FOCUS GROUP

We invited customers to meet with a group of Staffs Housing staff and a consultant to help set the standards for the new responsive repairs and voids contract. We wanted to hear what was most important to you to make sure the tender requirements fitted your needs. We also invited customers to the tender selection process to ask questions on your behalf.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

Customers helped to influence and develop our customer voice document, published in July 2021. We wanted to make sure you felt the document was useful and answered all of your questions, so we asked customers to share their thoughts before it was designed.

## SCRUTINY GROUP

We carried out a scrutiny of the customer experience across the whole group, after introducing a new phone system. We then used this information to feed into our customer experience training for all staff.

## MYSTERY SHOPPING

Our customers were still carrying out mystery shops on our ready-to-let properties, working remotely while restrictions were still in place. They were able to do this by looking at photos of the properties and discussing over the phone and by email.

**88** live and learn courses taken:

**20**

wellbeing courses

**28**

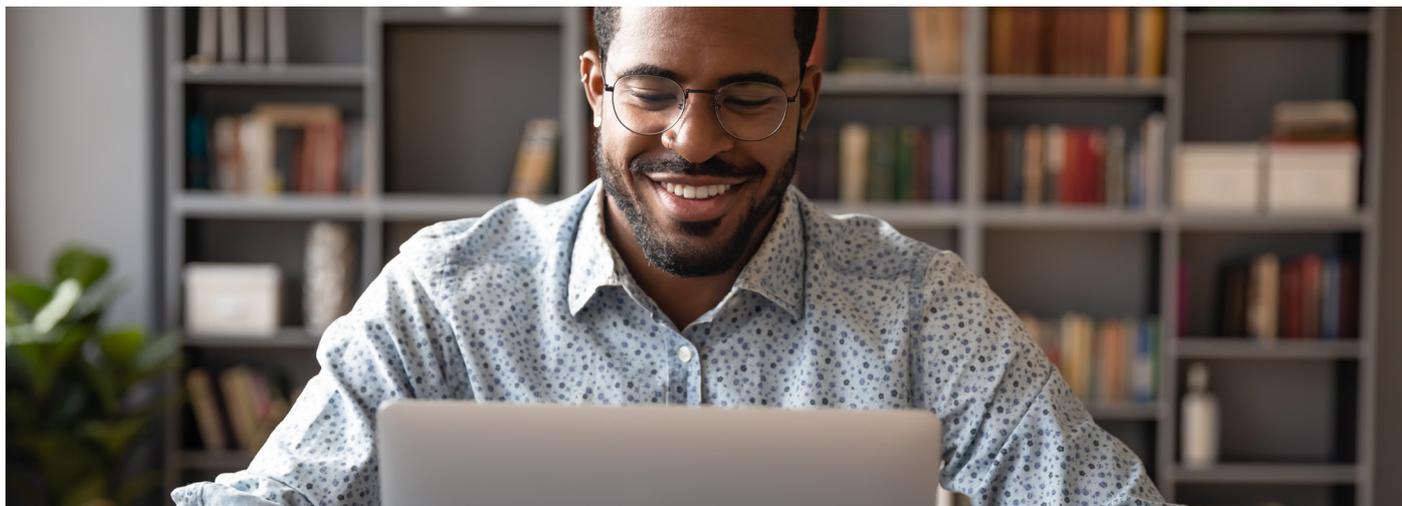
vocational courses

**24**

interests & hobbies

**16**

computing courses



# Money and value.

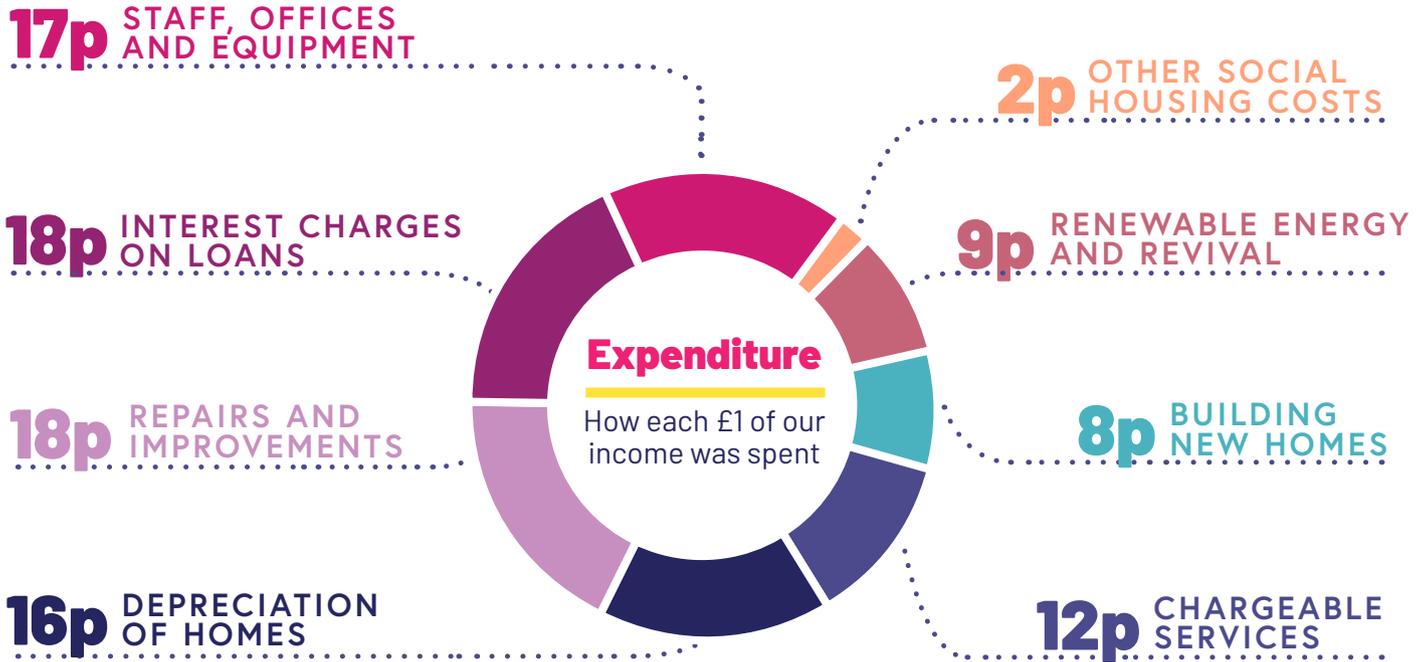
**Our total income for 2020-21 was £23.4m**

**This income came mainly from rents, service charges and shared ownership sales.**

We're a not-for-profit business which means every pound we make is invested back into repairs, improvements, new homes and covering our business costs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS CHECK OUT OUR ANNUAL ACCOUNTS ONLINE AT:  
[honeycombgroup.org.uk/howwerefunded](https://honeycombgroup.org.uk/howwerefunded)





**2.17%**  
of rent due  
was outstanding

↑ (2.13% last year)

**36%**  
of tenants pay by  
direct debit

↓ (39% last year)

We lost  
**£102k**  
because of  
empty homes

↓ (£107k last year)



**what  
we said**  
& WHAT WE DID

**1  
upgrading  
our  
services  
online**

We wanted to improve our website so that you could manage your tenancy when it suits you. We hoped to do this by creating a brand new customer portal where you can check your rent account, make a payment or report a repair.

Most of the work for the new customer portal is now complete. We're just waiting on a few things from an external supplier which has delayed the project slightly. We will now launch the portal next year.

**2  
we'll use  
your  
information  
better**

We wanted to improve your customer experience by improving the way we hold and collect information about you, so every time you get in touch our staff have a record of previous conversations, repairs or complaints.

We are now making better use of our customer relationship management system which means all authorised staff have access to the same information and your communications preferences.

**3  
improve  
home  
safety  
information**

We wanted to improve the home safety information available to you. We wanted to make our guidance easier to access and available 24/7 on our website.

We transformed the health and safety section on our website and trialed a new way of communicating fire risk assessment updates across flats and apartments. Soon all residents with communal areas will have easy access to their fire risk assessment.

**4**  
**review**  
**property**  
**standards**

We wanted to work with you to review the standard of our empty homes, focusing on the things that you tell us are important.



We've completed a review and made some changes based on your feedback. The consultation will continue in 21-22 so we can keep taking on-board your thoughts and sharing these with our teams.

**5**  
**we'll**  
**involve**  
**you more**

You know our services best. That's why we wanted to trial different ways of involving you to enable more people to give feedback and influence our services.



Throughout the year we tried different ways to help you stay involved. We set up Zoom calls and Facebook groups to get your feedback. This was useful during lockdown but once it's safe we'll still use face-to-face communication for some things.

**6**  
**review**  
**our fair**  
**deal**  
**standards**

We wanted to review our Fair Deal service standards and get you involved to tell us what could be updated or changed.



We've completed a review, made some changes and we'll be asking for your feedback very soon. A consultation will start in 21-22 to discuss what you think we could be doing differently.



**what**  
**we said**  
& WHAT WE DID

# Customer Services.

Although our offices closed in March because of government guidance our Customer Services Team transformed the way they work to make sure you could still get in touch and we were there for you!



**9,834**  
wellbeing  
check-ins  
completed

Just like everyone else the pandemic was a surprise to us too. When we closed the office we needed to use a new remote system to make sure you could still contact us. In the beginning, it took some time to get right and we want to say thank you for bearing with us on this. We now have a permanent remote system in place which also prioritises customer cases and remembers your details. We hope this will create a better customer experience for you.

We couldn't record customer contact during the first six months of the year but from September 2020 to March 2021 we received a total of:

 **24,710 calls**  
8,585 repair calls

 **22,743 emails**

During the lockdowns, you were our priority. We offered practical support to those that needed it like help with collecting prescriptions and food parcels to people who were self-isolating along with friendly catch-up calls too.

Overall, we made 9,834 check-ins via phone calls, texts, emails and letters to customers during September 2020 to March 2021.

Although our offices have had to remain closed to the public, we are hoping to reopen in October 2021. You can still get in touch in many different ways including email, phone calls, texts and social media messages.

## CONTACT US

 **01782 744533**

 [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)

 [facebook.com/staffshousing](https://www.facebook.com/staffshousing)

# Our commitments to you 2021-22.

## 1

We'll test a new approach to scheme visits with friendly meet and greet sessions. These will be held across our communities as an informal way for you to speak to housing and maintenance staff. And give you a chance to ask those all-important questions.

## 2

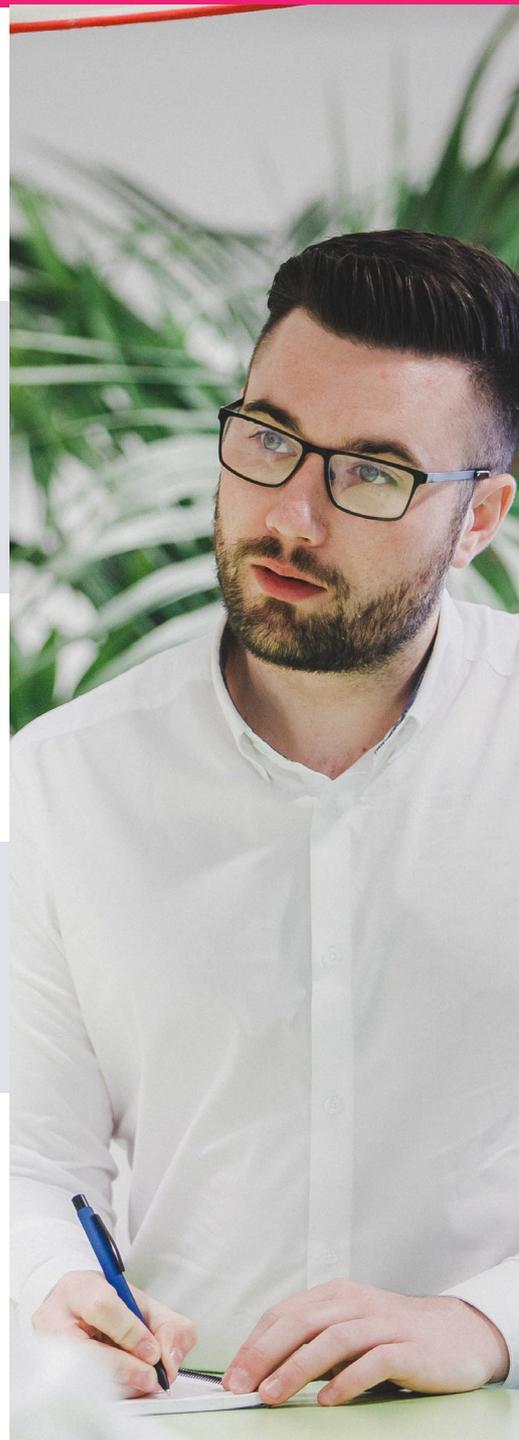
We'll set up a customer group to meet with our new maintenance contractor Ian Williams Ltd. We'll want to know about your experiences so we can make sure the service fits your needs. More details about the group are coming soon.

## 3

We'll review how we respond to domestic violence. We want to be there for you when you need us most. We'll review our processes to make sure we're following best practice and have the right tools in place if you need them.

## 4

We're going carbon-zero! That's right, we're planning our first carbon-zero development in Chesterton. The trial will shape our approach to sustainability. We'll also be trialling new off-site construction methods that could be used in the future.





If you have difficulties reading this document, please let us know and we will look at alternative ways of providing the information.

## Contact us.

**Online** [staffshousing.org.uk](http://staffshousing.org.uk)

**Email** [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)

**Customer Services** 01782 744533

**Head Office** 308 London Road, ST4 5AB

## Let's get social.

 [@staffshousing](https://twitter.com/staffshousing)

 [facebook.com/staffshousing](https://facebook.com/staffshousing)

 [youtube.com/staffshousing](https://youtube.com/staffshousing)

Staffs Housing is a part of the Honeycomb family:



HONEYCOMB  
GROUP



glow

