

# Annual report.

2021-22

 staffs housing



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# A snapshot of our year.



**298**  
colleagues



**46,761**  
customer calls



**261**  
homes let



**£1m+**  
additional income/ debts  
reduced for residents



**1,547**  
gas safety  
checks



**£3.7m**  
building  
maintenance



**115**  
boiler  
replacements



**408**  
customers  
engaged



**£18.7m**  
annual turnover

# ~~A~~ Another year like no other.



**Tim Sheail**

**DIRECTOR OF  
HOUSING SERVICES**

**Looking back over the last 12 months and remembering the beginning of the financial year, April 2021, we were striding through the COVID-19 recovery roadmap. April's 'step 2' meant gyms, museums and UK holidays were back and we were confident the worst was behind us.**

Sadly that wasn't the case and we all felt the pain of the December crisis. It was only on 24 February, just over a month before the end of the financial year, that all restrictions finally ended.

Although we can now enjoy life without most restrictions, COVID-19 has left a huge mark. We are still struggling with material and labour shortages and the cost of living crisis has added pressures of increased energy, building materials and repair costs.

Together, these pressures and problems have impacted our plans and ambitions.

We are still committed to building more affordable, quality homes and creating communities you're proud to call home but due to these pressures, we weren't able to achieve some of our 21-22 ambitions.

We are positive that these will be achieved in 22-23 and have given more details in this report.

Thank you for your support and understanding over the last year. You and your home matter to us and will always be our priority.

# 2021-2022

This annual report has been customer checked thanks to resident volunteers Graham, Mal, Sue and Kevin. We take our customer relationships seriously so listening to feedback and hearing customer's thoughts is incredibly important to us.

We have also shared an update about our customer voice piece. We have highlighted the impact our six key commitments have had on customers so far and our future plans to make sure we achieve these.

We've talked about the amazing customer support too. Over the last 12 months, 408 customers have supported our teams and engaged with our projects and groups. One of these groups is our building and maintenance group where customers have shared valuable feedback about our new contractor,

communications and service quality. Without this feedback we wouldn't be able to make the right changes and improvements needed.

We've also been able to support customers too. We helped customers complete 122 live and learn courses this year including maths, English, IT and beauty. We also supported customers hoping to gain a university place with access to education courses.

We're here to help connect people to homes but also make sure customers can build a solid platform to continue their own journeys.



# More calls than ever before.



Carrie, Lorna, John, Mary, Jan, Ian, Gemma  
Customer Services Team

## This year 21-22



**35,534  
emails**



**46,761  
calls**

Our Customer Services Team also had a huge increase in the number of repairs reported. This has caused some delays for customers trying to get through but on average:

- Wait time was **3 minutes 35 seconds**
- We spent **5 minutes 9 seconds** resolving a query over the phone
- Overall, customers gave the team an **8/10** customer satisfaction rating.

21/22 saw lots of change in the team. Mary Walker joined as Head of Customer Experience in September 2021 and Customer Service Advisor John Blair was promoted to Team Leader. We now have seven Customer Service Advisors Gemma, Jan, Ian, Carrie, Cath, Laura and Lorna.

The team are also using new systems to make it easier to respond to customer enquiries. When customers call, using the number they registered with, their details and previous call history will appear automatically. This means we can see ongoing repairs, updates and any other important information straight away.

Our new systems also mean that all emails are now responded to within one working day.

Finally, some very exciting news, our brand new self-service tool is now in its final development and should be ready for customer testing soon.

Mary Walker

Head of Customer Experience



**Our  
promises  
to you.**

**1**

We will set up a new customer group called My Home Group to help customers share their feedback. This will help us improve our services and hear customers thoughts about housing management improvements and changes.

**2**

We will run a community environment week where customers, staff and partners come together to improve local spaces.

**3**

We are trialling a new approach to housing management. The Housing Team will include three neighbourhood housing officers responsible for named schemes, two specialised lettings officers, two anti-social behaviour officers and a shared ownership specialist.

**4**

We will strengthen our focus on health and safety by setting up a new health and safety team led by our Head of Compliance.

# Lettings and new homes.

COVID-19 restrictions, material shortages and the huge increase in supplies and labour costs have impacted many of our contractors, with one sadly going into administration. We are now back on track but many of our 21-22 homes will now be ready in 22-23 instead.



## HOMES FOR THOSE LEAVING REFUGE

Staffs Housing have supported Glow for the last nine years. Using a local building, we created six, one bed apartments for people leaving refuge. The main priority was safety with secure door entry, CCTV and video doorbells, then the next – making homes affordable.

We realised that many domestic abuse survivors are forced to rebuild their lives from scratch and without the support of friends, family and a stable income making a home liveable is incredibly expensive.

With this in mind, we installed quality flooring and kitchens complete with integrated

appliances such as a cooker, fridge and freezer. This enabled survivors to move straight in without going into debt or spending months without appliances or flooring.

Residents at the scheme can also access floating support to help them with setting up utilities, council tax and other administration. The specialised domestic abuse support worker also helps find employment and volunteering opportunities, signposts to support programmes and creates safety plans.



## NEW HOMES CREATED IN 2021-22

11

homes built and developed in total

6

one bedroom apartments

4

two bed shared ownership homes

1

one bed apartment in Newcastle

## 58 NEW HOMES BEING BUILT IN 2022-23



# 13

homes being built in Cecilly Mills, Cheadle:

- 8 affordable rent
- 5 shared ownership



# 10

homes being built in Hanley:

- 10 affordable rent one bed apartments



# 30

affordable for rent homes being built in Goldenhill:

- 17 apartments
- 12 three bed homes
- 1 three bed bungalow



# 5

three bed houses being built in Bentilee

# House and home.

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

↑ **261**

homes re-let (last year 243)



↑ **£14.6m**

generated from rental income (last year was £14m)



↓ **88%**

satisfaction rate for our lettings service (last year 89%)



↓ **£1m**

additional income generated by the money advice team (last year was £1.2m)



↓ **6**

new shared ownership homes sold (last year 7)



↑ **1.7%**

of our total rental income was lost because of empty homes (last year 1.49%)



↓ **38**

tenants transferred to a new home (last year 42)



↑ **69**

day average re-let time (last year 58 days)



↔ **9**

mutual exchanges completed (last year 9)



This year we introduced a new health and safety hub available on our website.

The hub includes health and safety advice, updates and more.

**[staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety](https://staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety)**



# Health and Safety.

During 2021-22 we completed:



**1,547**  
gas safety  
checks



**619**  
electrical  
inspection  
surveys



**150**  
scheduled  
scheme  
visits



**138**  
fire risk  
assessments



**£159k**  
spent on  
electrical safety



**£278k**  
spent on  
fire safety



Lorraine, Jon, Jo, Mark, Barbara, Ruth, Simon and Sharon  
Property Services Team



Sharon and Simon  
Property Services Team

# Maintenance.

In total we spent **£3.7m** on the maintenance of our buildings:



**£1.5m**  
responsive  
repairs



**£257k**  
returning empty  
properties to use



**£367k**  
preventative  
maintenance



**£1.6m**  
planned  
maintenance

**£1.6m** was spent on  
planned maintenance:



**68** kitchen replacements



**35** bathroom replacements



**115** boiler replacements



**10** level access bathrooms



**85** smoke detector replacements



**110** carbon monoxide alarms

# It's not just a home, it's a community.

In Autumn we hosted our first coffee morning at Oliver Lodge. The housing, property services and customer involvement teams joined residents for a coffee and a much needed catch up.

We listened to resident's thoughts about what was working and what needed adjusting. We also invited Honeycomb Group team members along too like Revival's Handyperson Service team who have supported residents in the past.

The morning was a success and we now have a full calendar of upcoming coffee mornings.



## CREATING SPACES YOU'RE PROUD TO CALL HOME

We continued to support residents worried about anti-social behaviour.

**57** new cases of ASB  
(86 reported last year)



**2** evictions due to ASB  
(0 last year)



**5** injunctions obtained to prevent ASB (7 last year)

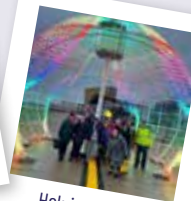


**1** person was given notice because of ASB (4 last year)

We also created a community fund to give residents and local people a £500 donation to a project of their choice. The projects support our local areas and the people that live within them.



Polytunnel at  
Bishop Court

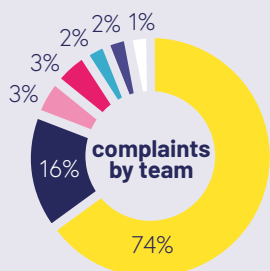


Helping Angels  
Blackpool trip

# 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.

**100** formal complaints  
in 2021-22



## INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

- This year we made it easier for residents to share their thoughts with an online complaint form. During 2021-22 we had a total of 154 complaints through the website. 37 were ASB cases and 86 were referred to the repairs team.

- We have now identified key contacts for customers and made sure customers were regularly updated and received the right information.
- We have completed refresher training with staff and increased the number of information checks.

## LESSONS LEARNED

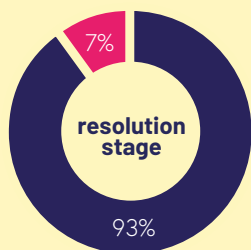
- One of the main complaints was poor communication between our new contractor's contact centre and our customer services team.

## FUTURE PLANS

- We will use our complaints process scrutiny review findings to make recommendations and improvements.
- We will review the way customer complaints are handled through social media.
- We will improve the information we provide about the complaints service.
- We will review our complaints policy to reflect best practice and complete a self-assessment using the Housing Ombudsman services' complaint handling code.

## RESOLUTIONS

- Although some disruption is expected when moving to a new contractor, our customer communication didn't meet our usual standards. To tackle this, we created a new project group to focus on performance and customer satisfaction. This is improving poor communication and customer satisfaction.



No complaints referred  
to the Housing  
Ombudsman

## 6 our six key commitments



### Customer engagement.

This year we shared our customer voice promises which included six key commitments. These commitments will make sure customer's voices are heard and that we listen to and take on-board customer feedback.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

After hearing customers share their passion for local wildlife we jumped at the chance to join Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's latest project. The project involved wildflower garden planting to hopefully increase the amount of wildlife in the area. After attending the Rodwood Nature Reserve customers planted wildflower gardens at their schemes.

#### COMMUNICATION

Katie and Jo from the Customer Involvement Team joined customers during coffee mornings to hear their feedback on services. They also used the catch ups to explain about our live and learn courses.

#### VOICE AND

This year our scrutiny group began a review of our complaints process. Once the review is complete we will take our findings to the customer services committee to make sure any changes and improvements are put into place.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

Customers held us accountable when we didn't meet our repairs service standards during 21-22. Through the Repairs and Building Safety Group, we listened to customer feedback and created a plan to resolve the issues. The group continues to meet to make sure we are remaining accountable.

#### QUALITY

We continued mystery shops where customers visit homes to make sure they remain good quality and a place proud to call home. We also continued our assurances group which makes sure our services remain high quality too.

#### WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

As a result of some maintenance complaints we found some issues were not being prioritised correctly by our contractors. To overcome this we have agreed a new escalation process with our contractor.

**408**  
customers  
engaged

**29**  
customer  
activities

**122**  
courses  
taken

**11**  
hobby  
courses

**36**  
wellbeing  
courses

**20**  
computer  
courses

**55**  
education  
courses

# Money and value.



Jez  
Income Officer

**£18.7m**

total income  
for 2021-22

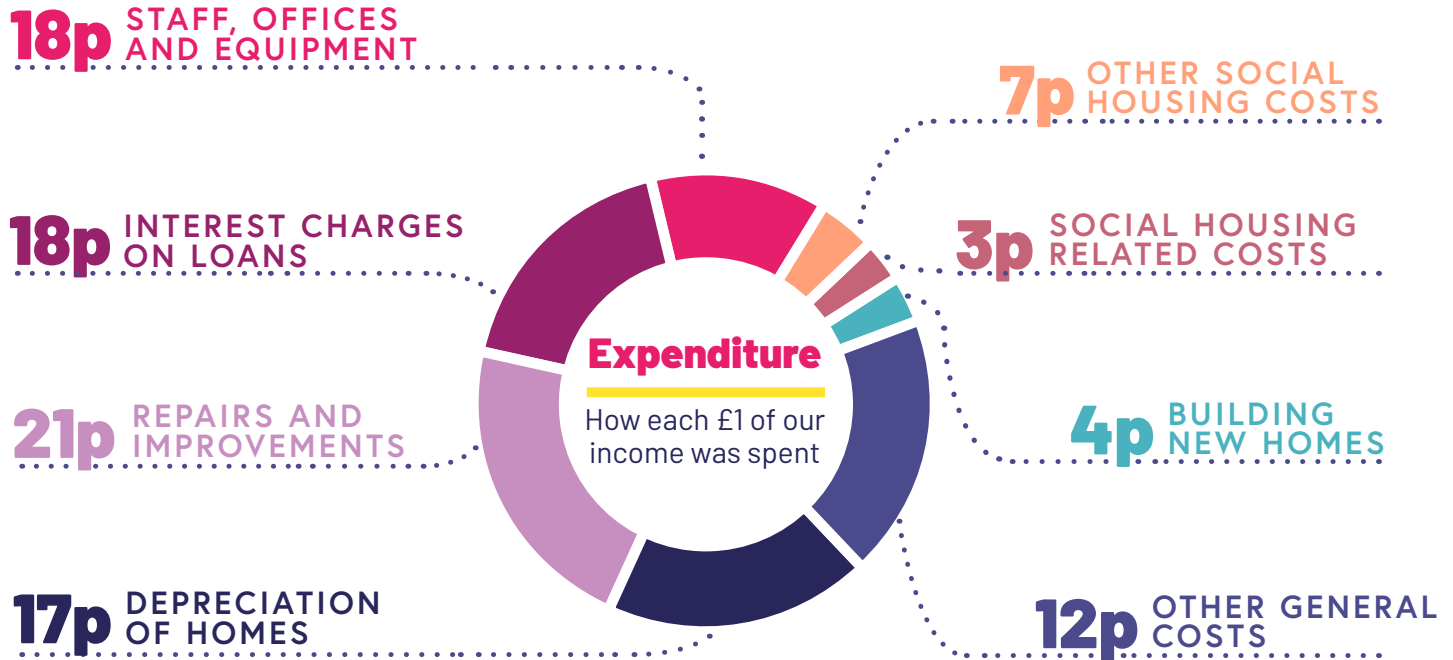
**£14.6m**

of the total  
income came  
from rent and  
service charges



**6p**  
PROPERTY  
SALES





**2.36%**  
of rent due  
was outstanding

↑ (2.17% last year)

**38%**  
of tenants pay by  
direct debit

↑ (36% last year)

We lost  
**2.02%**  
because of  
empty homes

↑ (1.40% last year)

If you would like more information on our annual accounts you can find them on our website at [honeycombgroup.org.uk/accounts](https://honeycombgroup.org.uk/accounts)

## What we said we would do.



Alex  
Housing Officer

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 customers to speak to housing and maintenance staff and give them 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 customer experiences so we can make sure the service fits their needs.



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



We piloted informal coffee mornings across several schemes this year. Members of the housing, maintenance and customer engagement team were on hand to answer questions and listen to customers thoughts, feelings and ideas. They proved a huge success and a coffee morning calendar has been created to help us visit more schemes next year.

We launched our customer group who met with our maintenance and customer service team, as well as our contractor Ian Williams Ltd. Customers shared their feedback about the repairs service which was incredibly helpful for both our teams and Ian Williams Ltd. We are now working together to fix the issues shared by customers and improve our repairs service.

We updated our domestic abuse policy with the latest legislation and best practice. We introduced a new domestic abuse process for staff to follow and a monitoring system to make sure customers receive the right support. Domestic abuse training was also provided to all housing staff.

As we mentioned earlier, COVID-19 and Brexit has had a huge impact on our development plans. Our New Homes and Growth Team has been forced to delay our carbon-zero development trial until the sector stabilises.

Nic and Danielle  
Housing Officers



**What  
we did.**



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.

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 [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

