

My Homes Plus



**Homes Plus
supports
Stafford and
Shrewsbury
Pride**

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News • Updates • Advice



Homes Plus

Issue 6

Improving your experience

Customer annual report 2023–24

This year we worked even harder to listen to your views about the services we deliver and what is important to you.

We learned from your complaints and your compliments about what we can do better to meet your needs.

Over a thousand customers completed our Tenant Satisfaction survey and we are pleased that so many of you said that you are satisfied with our landlord services, that you feel your neighbourhood is a great place to live and that you feel safe in your home.

We know there are areas where we can do better. We are committed to further improving our repairs service, maintaining the communal areas in flat blocks and keeping in regular contact with you about any issues you are experiencing.

I am so proud that we could open a new Homes Plus Community Hub in the heart of Stafford in 2023. Our customers are over 3 million pounds better off because of our team's advice about employment, benefits and savings.

And we continued to support grass roots projects through the Homes Plus My Community fund, too. You can find out more about the support we offer on page 14.



Les Clarke,
Executive director
of housing and
care



Jason Burt,
Chair,
Homes board

Our involved customers have an even stronger voice and even more influence over the decisions that matter most to you.

The Homes Plus Customer Partnership Panel reviewed and gave feedback on new and updated policies that were introduced. Their feedback was considered and put in place, where possible, before being shared with all customers. That's why you'll see the **Customer approved stamp** on Homes Plus documents.

A member of the panel has been appointed to the Homes board and comes along to our meetings to help us better understand your views.

We have also created a new Customer Experience Sub-Committee of the Board to help us understand the causes of complaints to improve our services.

And we're looking forward to seeing how a Your Views Matter initiative will further improve services for customers.



Our Customer Partnership Panel make sure that your views remain at the heart of everything we do

We are pleased to publish our 2023-2024 Annual Report, which has been co-created with you, our customers.

At Homes Plus we are committed to improving your experience. We believe the way to do this is by listening to your views and involving you in the way we shape our services, to make sure they are meaningful and effective.

This includes involving you in how we report on our performance. That's why we created our Annual Report with a group of involved customers from our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP), who helped to inform the design and content of the report. They told us the report should be kept short and simple and that they would like to see comparisons of some of this year's results against the achievements of last year.

The panel members also appear in a short video, included in the report on the Homes Plus website, where they spoke about the positive differences they have made during 2023-24. It was a busy year for the CPP, working with our repairs team on a new damp and mould process, providing feedback on how we manage complaints leading to the creation of our new Customer Advocacy team and reviewing new and updated policies that we introduced.

Our CPP, board members and Homes Plus colleagues also took part in an away day which focused on our Customer Engagement Strategy, our new Service Improvement Tracker and a discussion about how we are

building a stronger relationship between the CPP and the Homes Plus Board.

Pam, a CPP member and co-creator of our Annual Report, said: "As a CPP member we're able to get together with other people who are part of the Homes Plus family. We're part of a process that can help Homes Plus as an organisation to improve and make a positive difference for customers going forward."

"We're part of a process that can help Homes Plus as an organisation to improve and make a positive difference for customers going forward."

"Homes Plus brought the Annual Report to us and we were able to review it and ask questions and it's great to have that communication between Homes Plus and its customers."

Annie, a CPP member and co-creator of our Annual Report, said: "I enjoy being part of the

CPP as we get to meet people who work for Homes Plus in online meetings, but also in person at the Homes Plus offices and most recently at the Burton Square Community Hub.

"As a member of the CPP I want to make sure the feedback we provide helps to make improvements for other tenants, so it's great to see the positive changes we have helped to make in the You Said We Did campaign."

"We had some very good feedback sessions about last year's Annual Report and I hope we have helped to make this year's report even easier to understand for customers."

We are very grateful for all our involved customers' suggestions and feedback, and we hope you enjoy this new, shorter style of annual report.

You can read more information about the changes they've been involved by visiting www.homesplus.co.uk/you-said-were-doing



If you would like to make a positive difference by helping us improve services, we'd love to hear from you!

Simply complete our online form at www.homesplus.co.uk/get-involved, scan the QR code or call us on 0800 048 8955, to let us know that you are interested in getting involved.



#BEMOREINVOLVED

My voice

This year, we launched our customer engagement strategy which sets out how we are putting you at the heart of Homes Plus, by involving you in the way we shape our services, to make sure they are meaningful and effective.

You can share your views on our services by joining our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) or Virtual Customer Panel (VCP), depending on the type of involvement that suits you best.

We will also ask you to share your views of our services by completing surveys. This could be after you have received a repair, or other service, or you could be selected at random and contacted by Acuity, our contractor, to complete a perception survey.

We are now required by the Regulator of Social Housing to report on, and publish, the results of these perception surveys. Known as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), they show how we are performing and how satisfied our customers are across a range of areas. Our 2023–24 TSMs results can be found in your last newsletter, or on our website.

Listening to all this feedback is important, but acting on it is the key to improving your experience. You can see all the service improvements we have been making, thanks to your feedback, on page 16.

Actions taken from our Customer Partnership Panel's recommendations: 26

compared to 17 in
2022–23

Launched in July 2023, our new Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) make sure that your views remain at the heart of everything we do.

The CPP is just one of the ways that we're giving customers a stronger influence on the decisions, policies and procedures that matter most to you.



Your Views Matter

This year we introduced a new-look team reshaping the way that we respond to your complaints and feedback.

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Customer policies in almost 100 languages

ReachDeck is a toolbar available on our websites and can help if you struggle with reading, have a visual impairment or prefer to read in your own language.

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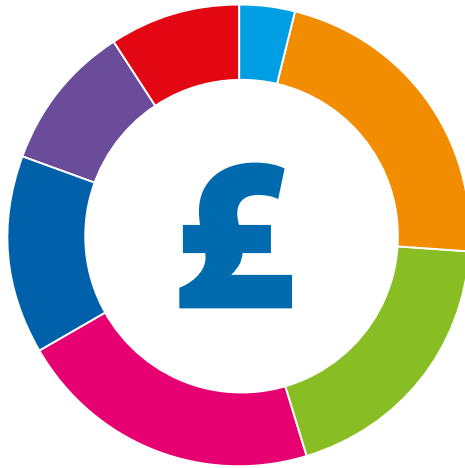
Building stronger relationships with our customers

In November, we held our second away day for our CPP, who were joined by members of our Homes Plus and Property Plus board.

Read more at www.homesplus.co.uk/customer-annual-report-2023-24

Our performance

How each pound of your rent is spent



- Investment in new homes: **4p**
(2022-23 - 9p)
- Staff costs and overheads: **22p**
(2022-23 - 24p)
- Interest on our loans: **19p**
(2022-23 - 18p)
- Repairs and maintenance: **21p**
(2022-23 - 19p)
- Building safety and compliance: **14p**
(2022-23 - 12p)
- Improvements to your home: **10p**
(2022-23 - 9p)
- Services to your home and communal areas: **9p**
(2022-23 - 9p)

Value For Money (VFM)



Money spent with local suppliers
£34.8m

Suppliers in Shropshire and Staffordshire
190



Remuneration paid to all Directors, per unit
£53

Remuneration paid to the highest paid Director, per unit
£14



Management costs, per unit
£1,175

Involving and empowering our customers



Involved customers recruited
11



Total involved customers sharing their views
81



Hours volunteered by Customer Partnership Panel
453



Customer surveys carried out
5,445

Your Views Matter



This year we introduced a new-look team reshaping the way that we respond to your complaints and feedback.

Our new Customer Advocacy team manages your complaints centrally, streamlining the process for you and making it easier for us to see where we can identify improvements and learn from our mistakes.

They also work with you through the complaints process, making sure that your views are heard and helping to bring about a resolution.

Becky Hughes, interim director of improving the customer experience, said: "An advocate is someone who gives a voice to someone else by supporting them and helping them express their views. So, as well as managing complaints and using an understanding of that feedback to improve our services, we are being very clear that this team will be advocating for our customers."

How to make a complaint

We know that sometimes things go wrong or the service you receive falls short of your expectations. When this happens, we want to hear from you so that we can put it right and improve our services to prevent similar problems from happening again.

You can make a complaint by contacting us in the following ways:

- Complete our online form at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/complaints-form
- Call us on **0800 048 8955**
- Email feedback@housingplusgroup.co.uk
- Send us a private message at www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus
- Speak to us on live chat on our website
- You can find more information about our complaints policy by visiting www.homesplus.co.uk/feedback

We are registered with the Housing Ombudsman and are committed to complying with their Complaint Handling Code.

Please be aware that you can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of your complaint for further advice and assistance:

- Tel: **0300 111 3000**
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Leave a compliment

Our compliments form is a great way of letting us know if we've done something well or if you feel a staff member has gone the extra mile.

The easiest and quickest way to send us a compliment is to complete our online form, which you can find at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/compliments or call us on **0800 048 8955**



Our performance

Complaints customer satisfaction



Compliments received


478





Complaints received

1,573


Outcome of complaints


 Upheld: 58%

 Not upheld: 21%

 Refused: 0.13%

 Partially upheld: 16%

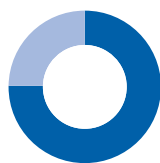
 Withdrawn: 4%

 Cancelled: 0.77%



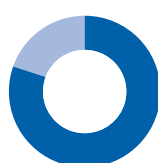
Complaints resolved at stage 1

81%



Overall customer satisfaction

75%



Complaints responded to within 10 days

80%



"Whilst not all customers are going to be satisfied with the outcome following a complaint, we should be kept informed throughout the process and feel listened to."

We thought Homes Plus could improve the way they manage complaints and an independent review was completed.

This resulted in the creation of the new Customer Advocacy team, who work with customers to resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

They are working hard to understand the common themes of complaints and are working with the team responsible to make sure improvements are made."

Annie, Customer Partnership Panel member

Nature of complaints



Delay in starting repairs (82)

5%



Failure to resolve damp and mould (147)

9%



Delay in resolving the issue (200)

13%



Failure to repair heating/hotwater (85)

5%



All other complaints (861)

55%

Find out more about customer satisfaction in our 2023-24 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) results which can be found in your last newsletter, or on our website.

Information about how we approached the TSMs, including details of how we carried out the survey, can also be found on our website. If you'd like for this information to be posted out to you, please call our Customer service team on 0800 048 8955.

www.homesplus.co.uk/AR23-24-TSM

My home

My tenancy

We want all our customers to have homes they can be proud of. This year, we have implemented a wide range of improvements to our homes, making sure they are suitable for our customers now and in the future.

119 homes have benefitted from wall and loft insulation, draught proofing and improved heating systems, making homes more energy efficient.

We also want you to feel safe in your home, so we made it easy for you to report concerns about damp and mould and created a Priority repairs team so that we could respond quickly to this important issue.



Homes let
1,044



General needs
homes let
820



Retirement
living homes let
224



Communal area fire
safety inspections
5,319



Number of mutual
exchanges
completed
81



Celebrating our apprenticeship success stories

National Apprenticeship Week brings together everyone passionate about apprenticeships to celebrate the value, benefit and opportunity that they bring.



Residents get keys to new affordable homes in Bilbrook

A scheme to deliver affordable homes in a Staffordshire village has been completed, with the contractor handing over the site to Homes Plus.



Homes Plus customer 'couldn't be more pleased' with home energy upgrade

We are making our homes across Staffordshire and Shropshire warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

Our performance

We kept rent arrears under 3%

Rent arrears 2023-24 - 1.58%
compared to 1.9% in 2022-23.

Keeping arrears down means that we can help tenants avoid rent debt, as well as maintaining our income to pay for home improvements and repairs. By providing employment and money advice and encouraging customers to talk to us about money worries, we kept rent arrears below our target of 3%, despite a cost of living crisis.

New homes



New homes completed
178



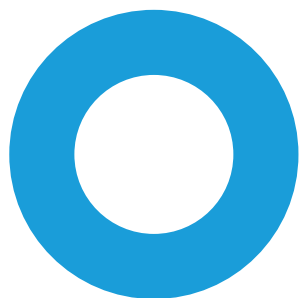
New homes for rent
89



New homes for shared ownership
54



Shared ownership homes sold
76



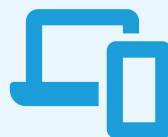
Customers satisfied with their new home
100%

Customer service satisfaction



Calls answered
136,510

Customer emails answered
29,419



Views of our website pages
842,587

Calls answered within 30 seconds
68%



Customer satisfaction
90%

Social media messages answered within 4 hour target
80%



Calls resolved at first contact 2023-24 - 79%

compared to 80% in 2022-23.

Our aim is to make every contact with our customers count and meet your needs the first time you get in touch. We introduced a new way for customers to access help and advice from our chatbot, Chaticcus, and recruited more people to our customer service team this year to help us improve our success rate.

Our performance

My home



Repairs completed
45,755



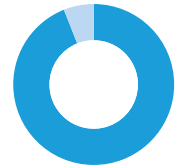
Tonnes of landfill waste prevented
1,837



Repairs completed within target
73.29%



Home improvement waste recycled
97%



Customers happy with repair service
94%

Improving homes



New kitchens
346



New bathrooms
500



New wetrooms
120



New external doors
650



New heating
769



Property rewires
237



Homes benefitted from minor adaptations
427



Homes benefitted from disabled adaptations
91



Homes benefitted from energy related works (SHDF, ECO and Warm Homes Funding)
119

Money spent on repairs and maintenance in 2023-24: **£31,071,050**

compared to £29,031,332 in 2022-23.

Work to repair and maintain homes increased this year. Our property teams carried out more fire inspections to meet new safety rules, and we fitted more carbon monoxide alarms in our homes. To help us respond quickly to reports of damp and mould, we also introduced a new Priority repairs team.

Money spent on improving homes (including building safety) in 2023-24: **£15,875,000**

compared to £13,948,304 in 2022-23.

Despite increased costs, we continued to make our homes more energy efficient with wall and loft insulation, draught proofing and improved heating systems. We also fitted more wetrooms and external doors, this year.

Our performance

Keeping you safe



Safety inspections
completed
77,224



Compliance with
statutory checks
99.21%



Gas heating services
completed
16,333



Gas reactive jobs
completed
12,411



Fire door inspections
completed
18,994



Electrical inspections
completed
3,082



Asbestos surveys
completed
1,974



CO alarms
fitted
16,540



Number of customers
reporting damp and
mould
1,546



Overall, no access
for damp and mould
enquiries received
347

"A Homes Plus See it - Report it! campaign encouraged us as tenants to report issues of damp and mould in our homes. This led to very high numbers of repairs requests which affected normal repairs timescales and wait times on phone lines.



We, the Homes Plus Customer Partnership Panel, worked with the repairs team on a new damp and mould process. More operatives were recruited and a new Priority repairs team was introduced to address these issues promptly.

Surveyors now conduct inspections within seven days of a report and can action any needed repairs straight away.

More people were added to the Customer service team, too, to reduce the impact on phone wait times."

Dave, Customer Partnership Panel chair

Damp and mould

See it - report it!

To report damp or mould in your home call us on **0800 048 8955**, send us a private message on Facebook or complete our online form www.homesplus.co.uk/damp-and-mould

We'll arrange an inspection to identify the cause of any issues that you are experiencing and work together to make sure these are resolved as quickly as possible.

Our performance

Retirement living



Retirement living communities

57



Retirement living customers

2,261



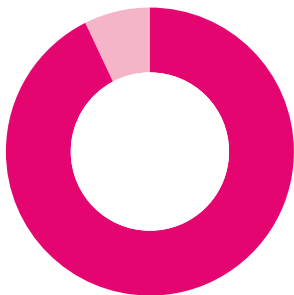
Wellbeing activities offered

7,948



Customers who took part in wellbeing activities

42,370



Retirement living customer satisfaction

93%

"The CPP were involved in testing Chatticus, the Homes Plus chatbot!"

Chatticus can be found on the Homes plus website and can provide you with instant answers to your questions 24/7, 365 days a year.

You will also find the **ReachDeck toolbar** icon on the Homes Plus website providing a speech, reading and translation service at any time."

Leda, Customer Partnership Panel member



My support



Money savings for customers due to support

£3,351,884



Debt counselling saved our customers

£105,166



Customers supported with specialist debt advice

33



Customers helped into employment

42



Utility bill advice saved our customers

£37,266



Customers supported by community hubs

1,596

Looking for an immediate answer to your query?

Chatticus can help you chat with us!



If our chatbot cannot find the answer to your question, just type 'chat to the team' to live chat with a member of our Customer service team, during office hours.



To get started, click the icon in the bottom right corner from any page of the Homes Plus website.

Our performance

Drop-in and see us

Whether you need help to get into work, support to get online or advice to get your finances back on track, we're here to help at our Homes Plus Community Hubs in Shrewsbury and Stafford and our brand-new Tuesday morning sessions at Wombourne Library.

To find out more about the help and support available to you and opening times, visit www.homesplus.co.uk/drop-in-and-see-us

How to find us



Burton Square Community Hub

Burton Square, Stafford, ST17 9LT



Castlefields Community Hub

69 New Park Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2LE



Meole Community Hub

25 Maesbrook Road,
Shrewsbury, SY3 9NL



Wombourne Library (Tuesday mornings)

Church Road, Wombourne,
WV5 9EZ

NEW

Are you looking to gain new skills which could help you get into work?

We've partnered with the Virtual College and The Safer Food Group to offer free online courses to Homes Plus customers, that could help boost your job prospects.

These include:

- Microsoft Office packages
- Food hygiene
- First aid
- Safeguarding

Interested?

Talk to us in one of our Community Hubs or contact us by emailing ema.shropshire@homesplus.co.uk or ema.staffordshire@homesplus.co.uk

"We supported over 3,000 Homes Plus customers with our employment and money advice services.



One of the customers we supported said that our help had changed his life. I'm really proud that we've been able to make such a positive difference for our customers, when they have needed it the most.

We've now been given the go ahead to trial three new flexible Hubs, working with partners to use established spaces within the communities we want to reach such as libraries and fire stations.

These will complement our already established Hubs in Shrewsbury and Stafford."

Andrew, Employment and Money Advice (EMA) officer

Customers helped by our employment and money advisors 2023-24: 3,139

compared to **2,181** in 2022-23.

We helped even more customers through the continued cost of living crisis this year with specialist advice on money management and benefits, as well as support with getting into work. We also opened a new Community Hub in Stafford, giving customers more ways to access free and confidential support from our dedicated team.

My community

The Homes Plus My Community Fund

This year we expanded our support by opening our third community hub. Based in the heart of Burton Square, Stafford, the site has been transformed into a valuable facility, where our Employment and Money Advice team (EMA) provide free and confidential advice on benefit entitlement, how to best manage finances and help writing CVs and gaining employment.

The dedicated and passionate EMA team supported more than 3,000 Homes Plus customers and increased their household income by more than £3.3 million!

Our Homes Plus My Community Fund also awarded grants to 38 initiatives benefitting our communities across Staffordshire and Shropshire.



Community organisations who received funding

38



Total funding awarded

£ 33,585

Find out more about the different groups we've supported, and apply for a grant today at

www.homesplus.co.uk/sponsorship



Homes Plus money advice service boosts customers' household income by £3m

Our dedicated and passionate employment and money advice team (EMA) increase our customers' household income.



Employment and money advice officer thanked for helping customer out of homelessness

A customer supported by our employment and money advisor Toni Roberts, has credited her with changing his life.



Parent & toddler group receives funding boost from Homes Plus

Children are benefitting from new toys and play equipment thanks to a donation from our Homes Plus My Community Fund.

Read more at www.homesplus.co.uk/customer-annual-report-2023-24

Our performance

My community



Employees living in our communities
89.13%



Customers employed
62



New apprentices from our communities
7



Suppliers based locally
33%



Percentage of total spend with local suppliers
61%

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)



New ASB cases resolved
468



Number of evictions due to ASB
4



Cases resulting in legal action
12



Injunctions
6



Estate issues resolved e.g. fly tipping
168



Injunctions for gas no access
8



Injunctions for electrical works no access
16



Number of cases referred to community safety for gas no access
884



Number of cases referred to community safety for electrical inspections no access
83



Number of cases referred to community safety for electrical rewires no access
20



Number of cases referred to community safety for remedial electrical works no access
50

You said, we did

You said

We could improve how we manage noise complaints.

We have developed a good neighbourhood management policy which sets out how we can support you to resolve issues in your community, such as noise complaints. It clarifies the difference between neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour (ASB) and will help us to respond to these issues more effectively.

We did

You said

You wanted to have more of a say in how we manage complaints.

We have created the Customer Experience Committee. This committee is made up of involved tenants and reviews our complaints performance as well as our learning from these complaints, our TSM results and our performance quarterly. All findings are reported to the board through the customer co-optee.

We did

You said

You wanted to help shape our policies and have more input.

All our policies are reviewed by our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) to make sure that their feedback has been considered and put in place, where possible, before being shared with all our customers. Their feedback recently helped to shape our new revised corporate plan.

We did

You said

We could make our corporate plan more customer friendly.

Our Customer Partnership Panel reviewed our corporate plan and based on their recommendations we have changed some of the language used and removed jargon.

We did

See the latest progress on projects at
www.homesplus.co.uk/you-said-we-are-doing

You said

We are doing

Did you know that our customer policies are now available in almost 100 different languages?

ReachDeck is a toolbar available on our websites and can help if you struggle with reading, have a visual impairment or prefer to read in your own language.



Leda

It gives you the choice to experience our websites in whatever way is best for you, which includes:

- Having pages read aloud (and even downloading these as an MP3 for listening on the go)
- Translating our websites into up to 99 languages
- Using the screen mask which allows you to apply a colour filter to your screen to reduce visual stress
- Magnifying smaller text
- Simplifying a webpage which removes pictures and colours allowing you to focus on the text
- And accessing a picture dictionary to show the meanings of words through illustrations

In the last year, this toolbar was used over 46,000 times by visitors to our Homes Plus website, and now it can be used to read our customer policies, too.

This popular toolbar has been recently tested by a member of our Customer Partnership Panel, Leda. She said "The 'read aloud' feature is such an effective tool for people with dyslexia, like me.

I like that I can select the bit that I need to hear, and even download it as an audio file to be saved for later".

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/documents/ to find our policies and click the 'speak' icon to access them in any of these formats, at any time. Don't worry though, our policies are also still available to download, for anyone who prefers to read them this way.

You can also let us know how easy you found it to read and understand our policies. When you are reading our policies on the Homes Plus website, in whichever format you have chosen, you will also have the option to answer a quick survey to let us know your feedback. Just look out for the 'feedback' pop-up on the right of the screen.



Homes Plus supports Stafford's first ever Pride festival



We are proud to have to have been a sponsor of the first ever Stafford Pride Festival and Parade!

Homes Plus is an organisation that encourages diversity and we simply couldn't miss the opportunity to celebrate with our Stafford community.

We talked to attendees about the services we offer, any housing related queries and discussed careers in housing at our stand inside Victoria Park.

Homes Plus Executive Director of Housing and Care, Les Clarke, explained: "I'm proud to be part of an organisation that engages with and supports the LGBTQ+ community and I'm delighted that we were able to take part in the first ever Stafford Pride. It is a great opportunity

to support our colleagues and customers in the LGBTQ+ community.

"At Homes Plus we strive to create a workforce and service where everyone feels free to be who they are, helping us to better engage with the diverse communities we serve."

Earlier this year we were proud to sign up to the HouseProud Pledge, a scheme designed to make sure LGBTQ+ residents can enjoy their homes without fear of discrimination. We are committed to addressing the unique challenges faced by our LGBTQ+ residents and shaping our services so we can better support our customers and colleagues.

We also had a fantastic time seeing our Shropshire customers at Shrewsbury Pride. Look out for a story about the event on our Homes Plus website soon.

How are we doing?

Our latest 2024-25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs*) can be seen at www.homesplus.co.uk/TSMs-2024-25 or by scanning the QR code.

**TSMs were introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing to allow tenants to scrutinise our performance and give us insight about where we can improve.*





First birthday party for Burton Square Community Hub

Our Burton Square Community Hub, in Stafford, recently celebrated its first birthday.

Located in the heart of Burton Square, it offers residents free and confidential support and advice on managing their money, benefit entitlement and gaining employment.

Whether that's helping them to get into work, support to get online or advice to get their finances back on track, our Employment and Money Advice (EMA) team are on hand to help.

Residents who have benefited from these services or haven't had a chance to visit the Hub yet, were invited to join us in marking this milestone.

More than 60 people popped into the hub on the day to celebrate its success, where there was a free prize draw and plenty of cake!

Our Employment and Money Advice team leader, for Staffordshire, Claire Poulson said: "We're so proud of what we have achieved in the first year of being open. We've helped hundreds of people,

from getting them into work to helping them with their energy bills. We're also a lifeline for anyone who just wants to come in for a cuppa and a chat.

"The Burton Square Community Hub came about because we knew there was a need in Stafford. We knew that people needed support in accessing services that could help them during difficult times and seeing just how many people have walked through the doors shows how vital this facility is to the community.

"They can use the hub to access advice on what benefits they could be entitled to, advice on managing their money or they can use it to develop their IT skills, ask for help writing a CV and how to prep for an interview.

"We're proud to be able to help make a positive difference to the community."

The Hub is open on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9am – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 4pm.



DIY, home improvements and alterations

Before making any improvements, alterations or additions to your home, it is essential that you obtain written permission from Homes Plus and any other approvals required, before any work is started.

It's vital to ensure that the work you want to complete is safe to undertake and will not lead to faulty or sub-standard work being carried out, which could put your safety at risk.

To find out more and to request permission to undertake improvements, visit our website at www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements



Paying your rent

Paying your rent by Direct Debit is convenient and the easiest way to ensure that you pay your rent on time.

If you prefer to make payments over the phone, you can do this 24/7. Simply call **0800 048 8955** and select 'pay your rent' to be directed to our quick and easy automated payment service.

To find out how to set up a Direct Debit or for more information about paying your rent, visit www.homesplus.co.uk/paying-my-rent

Reporting a non-emergency repair

Repairs are an important part of looking after your home. Sometimes repairs are necessary because of general wear and tear, or because things go wrong and need a little extra attention.

You can report non-emergency routine repairs by:



Calling our Customer service team on **0800 048 8955**



Completing our online form at www.homesplus.co.uk/request-a-repair



Sending Homes Plus a private message on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus

If you need to report an emergency repair, you can call our Customer service team on **0800 048 8955 (24/7).**

Plus, don't forget to check our website and follow our Facebook page for help and advice.

Are you insured?

If you can't afford to replace it, you should really think about insuring it!

While it's our responsibility to insure the building in which you live, this insurance does not include your personal belongings.

By taking out contents insurance, that can cost just a few pounds a week, you can relax knowing that they can be replaced.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/contents-insurance





ReConnected project celebrates one year of bringing people and communities together in Staffordshire

The ReConnected project hosts a variety of free events for people aged 55 and over, fostering community engagement, physical activity and social interaction in Stafford Borough and South Staffordshire.

Since its launch in July 2023 with support from the National Lottery Community Fund, ReConnected has attracted over 450 members who have participated in more than 80 free activities.

Members have delved into genealogy, tested their knowledge during quiz afternoons and even solved a thrilling murder mystery while sipping on mocktails. They also enjoyed a cream tea while listening to a concert by the talented vintage harmony duo Bluebird Belles and got in the festive spirit while watching a Christmas pantomime.

Lisa Fisher, ReConnected project coordinator, reflects on the successful year: "It's been a fantastic first year of ReConnected, and we are delighted with the positive response. As we move forward, we eagerly anticipate helping more people from the wider community step out, stay active, and forge new connections in the coming year."

To learn more about the ReConnected service and explore upcoming events and regular clubs held in your area, visit **www.care-plus.org.uk/ReConnected** or call **0161 768 9255** (calls are charged at a local rate).



Could you be our next volunteer?

We are looking for befrienders, gardeners, readers, dog walkers, bingo callers, photographers, quiz masters and more!

All you need is enthusiasm and a desire to help. You can choose how much time you offer, and we'll provide the training and support.

Our amazing volunteers are already making a positive difference to our communities throughout Staffordshire and Shropshire. If you would like to join them, we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch by emailing

Engagement&Volunteering@Care-Plus.org.uk



Life-saving defibrillator installed at Meole Community Hub

We're delighted to announce the installation of a defibrillator at our Meole Community Hub!

This vital piece of equipment will increase the chances of survival for anybody who suffers a sudden cardiac arrest.

Huge thanks to the Henry Angell-James Memorial Trust, the Meole Estate Community Action Group and the Meole Village Community Group for making this possible!

Do you have an email address?

By signing-up to receive updates from Homes Plus by email, you will be helping us to protect the environment, reduce our carbon footprint and make cost savings.

You will receive monthly customer e-bulletins full of interesting updates, digital copies of your My Homes Plus customer newsletter and other important news about our services. To get involved please call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955** and let them know your email address.





Carbon monoxide alarms

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas. You can't see it or smell it, but an alarm can detect it.

As your landlord, we will check these alarms on an annual basis, normally as part of other routine works such as gas safety checks or electrical safety inspections. But regular testing by you is the most important and efficient way to make sure these alarms are working correctly.

You must not prevent your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms from operating in their intended manner.

Please do not tamper with, damage or remove them, or cover them up.

Find out more at
www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS

Fire safety in communal areas

A fire in a communal area can spread between homes. It could make it more difficult for the emergency services to reach you and might prevent you from leaving the building in an emergency.

Communal areas are places in your building that other people share, like landings, entrance lobbies, corridors, meter cupboards, lifts, open walkways and balconies.

If you live in a building that includes any of these spaces, you must ensure that you don't keep or store anything that could:

- Stop you escaping quickly
- Prevent emergency services reaching you or your neighbours
- Give off toxic smoke or gas when burning
- Explode in high temperatures
- Cause fire to spread more quickly

We carry out regular safety inspections in apartment blocks and as part of that work, we remove objects left in communal areas. To find out more please visit our website –

www.homesplus.co.uk/my-home/communal-areas



Neighbourhood issues, environmental issues and ASB

The safety and wellbeing of our customers is always our number one priority.

We understand that neighbour disputes, environmental issues and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) can have a significant impact on people's mental health and sense of security as well as harming the wider community. You can report these to us, in the following ways:

Neighbourhood issues

Wherever possible, and when it is safe to do so, step one in neighbour disputes is to try talking. If there is any reason that you cannot approach your neighbour or you would like our help to try and resolve an issue, please get in touch.

Neighbour disputes can cover a variety of issues including:

- Issues with parking spaces
- Boundary disputes
- D-I-Y that is occurring during reasonable hours
- Issues arising from a difference in lifestyle



Tell us about neighbourhood issues

Environmental issues

Environmental issues can include:

- Condition of property that is causing a hazard to health
- Littering/fly-tipping
- Dog fouling
- Graffiti



Report environmental issues

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is defined as behaviour by a person, not of the same household, which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to someone.

ASB includes:

- Threats of violence or actual violence
- Harassment and intimidation
- Threats of criminal damage or actual criminal damage
- Constant and unreasonable noise nuisance
- Alcohol or drug related nuisance



Report ASB





Homes Plus customer 'couldn't be more pleased' with home energy upgrade

We are making our homes across Staffordshire and Shropshire warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

The energy efficiency of our existing housing stock, particularly older homes that were not built to today's stringent energy-efficiency standards, is being upgraded by installing wall and loft insulation, draught proofing and improved heating systems including low carbon solutions such as air source heat pumps and solar panels.

Customer Rhonda, whose home was upgraded this year, said the operatives were respectful, friendly and kept any disruption to a minimum. She said: "The new windows, insulation and rendering has made such a difference, it's so much warmer in here and it will be a great benefit in the winter.

"With the new air source heat pump system and solar panels, my electricity bill has halved. In previous summers I was paying £30 a week and I'm using just £15 now.

"The work didn't cause much disruption to me. They did the work as quickly and efficiently as they could.

"The amount of compliments I've received on the improved appearance of my home is also unbelievable. People have been saying it looks like a new build.

"We live by a canal and just the other day a man was unloading his car onto one of the boats and he said how fantastic and modern the houses looked. Whenever I have people round, they say what a difference it has made.

"We couldn't be more pleased with what has been done."

Funding towards the scheme was secured from the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

Providing affordable homes in rural areas of Staffordshire and Shropshire

Affordable housing is at the heart of thriving rural communities, that's why we have been working hard to boost the level of affordable housing in rural areas of Staffordshire and Shropshire.

Over the last year we have completed three rural housing developments that are helping people with local connections remain in the villages they grew up in, instead of being forced out by rising house prices.

Working together with Homes England, South Staffordshire Council, Shropshire Council and local parish councils, we've completed 48 new affordable homes in Oaken, Baschurch and Pontesbury.

This includes 28 homes for affordable rent, 15 for shared ownership and five for social rent.



Oaken

Kerry Bolister, Director of development at Housing Plus Group, explained: "I am really encouraged to see so many new rural affordable homes delivered this year by our housing association with the vital support of our partners.

"It's fantastic news for these communities and will mean a significant increase in the amount and choice of affordable housing on offer."

The Oaken development, in South Staffordshire, is the result of many years of work - with numerous consultations with the local community and support from local councillors.

The scheme of four one-bedroom bungalows, one two-bedroom bungalow, four two-bedroom homes and one three-bedroom home is called Platinum Grange, after the Platinum Jubilee for Queen Elizabeth II, in 2022, when work began on the site.

In Shropshire we have built 20 homes in Parry Close, Baschurch, and 18 in Mount Close, Pontesbury, which are all exclusively for people with a local connection to the villages.



Baschurch

The Mount Close development includes a mix of two and three-bedroom homes and one and two-bedroom bungalows. All the new homes benefit from solar PV panels and air source heat pumps, which will help reduce running costs.

KEEP WELL & WARM

If you're struggling financially or concerned about heating your home, we're here to help.

Advice and information to help you save money, heat your home and look after yourself, can be found in the Keep Well & Warm area of the Homes Plus website -

www.homesplus.co.uk/keep-well-and-warm

Keep Well & Warm is your **one-stop round-up of useful advice and support.**

- **Your money** for energy saving tips. Find signposts to help available, savings on broadband, information about the Healthy Start scheme and lots more
- **Your home** to help you keep your home warm and avoid cold weather problems like frozen pipes
- **Your wellbeing** for information about free community events and signposts to mental health support

Repairs update

We are sorry if you are having to wait longer than usual for a repair. This is due to extremely high demand.

Please bear with us, as we are doing everything we can to resolve this temporary situation.

Emergency repairs are not affected.

Please continue to report emergency repairs 24/7 by calling **0800 048 8955**.

Please see www.homesplus.co.uk/repairs-service-status for current wait times.

As your landlord we have important legal duties and obligations.

Most of these responsibilities involve safeguarding you, your home and family. By law, we must carry out safety checks and it's an important condition of your tenancy that you give us access to your home to carry out these vital inspections.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS



PLEASE NOTE: You must not install log burners or solid fuel heaters. There is an increased risk of fire with an appliance that has an open flame.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements

Your Community Job Hub

Are you looking for a new challenge?

Our recruitment team will be hosting regular drop-ins at a Homes Plus Community Hub near you.

The team will be on hand to tell you more about a career at Housing Plus Group, from **property** and **care** to **neighbourhoods** and **central services**.

SEE YOU THERE

6 November 2024 - 10am - 12pm

Burton Square Community Hub, 15 Burton Square, Stafford, ST19 9LT

3 December 2024 - 10am - 12pm

Meole Brace Community Hub, 25 Maesbrook Road, Shrewsbury, SY3 9NL



Find our latest vacancies at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/careers

As a responsible landlord, the safety of our customers is our priority.

We want to make sure that you know how to get help and advice if you're worried about a possible safeguarding problem in your neighbourhood.

Safeguarding means protecting the rights of an adult or child to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect

can take place at home or in a public place and can take a lot of different forms, including domestic and sexual abuse, physical, psychological and discriminatory abuse, human trafficking and slavery.



It's often difficult to identify abuse or neglect but if you have any concerns, always Speak Up.

You can report a safeguarding concern to your local council:

www.staffordshire.gov.uk -

Tel: 0345 604 2719

www.shropshire.gov.uk -

Tel: 0345 678 9044 (adult) /
0345 678 9021 (under 18s)

www.telford.gov.uk - Tel:
01952 385385

Useful information

Gas leaks 0800 111 999
(National Gas Emergency Service)

Free urgent healthcare advice and treatment for non-life threatening physical or mental health issues. 111 (NHS Direct)

Police 101 (non-emergency)

Personal concerns, worries and troubles 116 123 (Samaritans)

Councils

Cannock Chase District Council
01543 462621

Shropshire Council 0345 678 9000

South Staffordshire District Council 01902 696000

Stafford Borough Council
01785 619000

Telford & Wrekin Council
01952 380000

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Contacting Homes Plus



Visit www.homesplus.co.uk to complete an online form



Contact **Chatticus**, the Homes Plus chatbot, by clicking the icon in the bottom right corner of any page of our website



Private message us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus



Call **0800 048 8955 (24/7)**

We will be keeping COVID-secure working practices in place. We believe this the safest decision for our customers, staff and communities. Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/covid-19 to find out more.