

My Homes Plus

Our annual report,
with customer input
from start to finish

Keep well
and warm

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online

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news

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News • Updates • Advice



Homes Plus

Issue two 2022

Welcome



A special issue packed with results, advice and information

As we mark the first anniversary of Homes Plus and publish our annual report we also mark with great sadness a pivotal moment in our history with the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, having celebrated her joyous Platinum Jubilee in our last issue.

This report will look and feel different from our previous annual reports as for the first time ever it has been produced with the involvement of Julia, one of our tenants, from start to finish. She has helped us to present our results differently and to prioritise the information that matters to you.

Turn to pages 5-14 to see how your money was spent to make a positive difference to homes, lives, and communities.

I hope that you find it interesting and do please take the opportunity to complete the quick survey telling us what you think about our report.

As well as our annual report, you will **find help and advice about rising energy costs** and the cost-of-living crisis, including **tips to make your money go further** and an update about our digital services for customers.

There is a round-up of news stories that you might have missed, too.

Les Clarke

Executive director of housing and care

GO DIGITAL

Our website, www.homesplus.co.uk, is part of our pledge to reduce waste, save money and go digital to support customers who want to connect with us 24/7, online.

Now, you can choose easy ways to get in touch:



Message

[My Homes Plus Facebook](#)



Visit the

[Homes Plus website](#)



Call free on

0800 048 8955

See our website for details of how to contact us by letter, email or by making an appointment to visit our offices.



Going digital will bring some changes to this newsletter, too.

In 2023, we will move away from routinely printing and mailing copies of your My Homes Plus newsletter but you will still be able to **request** a printed copy. To receive up-to-the-minute news by email just let us know your email address. Call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Don't forget you can also message us through Facebook

Follow the My Homes Plus Facebook page for all the latest news, views, advice and guidance. You can contact us by using the Message button or clicking the Messenger icon, on our page. We aim to respond to these messages within four hours. Please note: messages will only be answered during working hours.

Please don't report emergency repairs this way because we don't see or respond to messages out of hours.

Emergency repairs should always be reported by calling **0800 048 8955**. Calls will be answered 24/7.



KEEP WELL & WARM THIS WINTER

The cost of living is rising more than most of us have ever known and it is going to affect all of us.

In these difficult times, we are providing advice and information to save money, keep our homes warm and stay safe this winter.

We will share helpful tips on our Facebook page. You can also visit the Keep Well and Warm area of our website www.homesplus.co.uk/keep-well-and-warm for a round-up of the support available from the government and central sources.

YOUR HOME

Beat the chills by carrying out some simple checks to make sure your home is winter-ready.

Test your heating is working properly before you need it most. Switch it on, using a low setting. Check your thermostats and radiator controls by turning them up and down and make sure that radiators are hot, from top to bottom. If you find any problems, call us on **0800 048 8955**.

Take a few steps now, to prevent the problem of frozen pipes.

- Disconnect all hoses and turn off outside taps
- Consider protecting exposed pipes using insulation or even newspaper
- Run water through your taps regularly to reduce the chances of freezing
- Get into the habit of checking your plumbing, inside and out, for signs of freezing. Look out for pipes with frost on the outside, those that are covered in ice or bulging



For more information and advice, please visit the Keep Well and Warm area of our website
www.homesplus.co.uk/keep-well-and-warm

YOUR MONEY

Energy bills support

This year, the government is giving every household money off our electricity bills. You don't need to apply for this support. If you haven't received the first instalment by the end of October, contact your energy provider.

Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 25 September 1956, you could be eligible for further help with energy bills, through a winter fuel payment.

Cold Weather Payment

The cold weather payment helps people on low incomes to heat their homes when it is particularly cold.

You can find out whether you are eligible for this help by visiting the [gov.uk website](http://gov.uk).

Healthy Start

If you are more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four

years old, you may be entitled to help to buy healthy food and milk.

Local foodbanks

We help our local foodbanks with grants and food donations. We also provided temporary accommodation for one organisation when its premises were hit by floods.

You can find a directory of local foodbanks, as well as other sources of help and support on the [Keep Well and Warm area of our website](#).

Talk to Plus

Now more than ever, Talk to Plus. Employment and money advice are part of our free and confidential Plus services. If you are struggling with your bills and finding it hard to balance your budget, our expert advisors are ready to support you.

For help and advice, visit our website or pop into your local community hub.



YOUR WELLBEING

Cold weather can make some health problems worse, especially for those who are more vulnerable. Remember to check on your neighbours to make sure they are well and warm. Visit the NHS website for guidance – www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/keep-warm-keep-well/ Don't brush off the 'winter blues'.

Many people experience feelings of loneliness and isolation at this time of year. For mental health information and support, visit the NHS website - nhs.uk/mental-health/

You can also visit our useful contacts page for signposts to mental health support and other help available - www.homesplus.co.uk/useful-contacts/



Visit your local community hub for support and advice. You can also use our onsite IT equipment for free, to help you get online. Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/drop-in to find out more.

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk to do more online



Handy links

Go to **My repairs and maintenance** to report non-emergency repairs online, 24/7.

Go to **My rent** for payment options and to register for My Homes Plus - the extra-convenient way to pay your rent, check your balance and view previous statements online.

Click **My voice** to get involved. Learn about the work of the Scrutiny Group, read about our customer surveys and register to make your views count.

Visit **Find a home** for advice about mutual exchange, your right to buy or acquire and opportunities to move into shared ownership or retirement living properties.

Click **Customer documents** to browse annual reports, view previous copies of this newsletter, Help us Keep You Safe information, all our latest policies and more!



Video tips on our website

We have produced a brand new series of handy 'How To' videos to help you deal with issues you may encounter around your home. Learn how to unblock your sink, isolate a leak, locate and turn off your stop tap and reduce condensation.

You can also discover what to do when your fuse box 'trips' - and how to find out what is causing the problem.

The videos have been filmed in some of our properties. To ensure that only safe techniques are used, our own colleagues demonstrated and recorded the step-by-step instructions.

Search 'How To videos' from the homepage.



WATCH NOW!

Find advice about damp and condensation

Visit our website to find out how you can cut condensation and treat mould quickly and easily, to stop it causing damage.

Important

If you see one of these signs of damp in your home, you need to report it to us, as a repair.

- A clearly defined damp stain
- A 'tide mark' reaching around 900-1000mm above the floor on ground floor walls

Go to **My repairs and maintenance** to report online.



Get help with ASB

We understand that Anti-Social Behaviour (often referred to as ASB) can have a big impact on your health, sense of security and the way that you feel about your home.

We have a dedicated community safety team which works with your local neighbourhood officers to resolve any ASB issues as quickly as possible.

You can find information about ASB on our website, including details of the kind of behaviour that is treated as ASB, advice to help you try and resolve a problem and sources of specialist support.

You can also report ASB online.

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



Message from the chair

The following pages contain our report on our performance during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and details the progress we have made in relation to our vision to make a positive difference to homes, lives and communities.

Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to place restrictions on the way that we could work, we quickly adapted to the fast changing environment and responded to the challenge with a range of creative and flexible solutions, which allowed us to maintain our operations and services. Whilst this resilience of performance owes much to the quality and dedication of our excellent staff, we would like to thank you for playing your part by following our COVID-safe guidelines, which allowed us to undertake essential safety checks, carry out repairs, improve our properties and ultimately provide much needed homes.

Following the harmonisation of our landlords, November 2021 saw the successful launch of Homes Plus, which will enable us to provide you with more streamlined and efficient services.

Our overall results this year will be measured against the ambitions and principles which define us as a 'not for profit' organisation – the difference that we make to homes, lives and communities. With that in mind, I encourage you to read the following pages carefully and to please let us have your feedback by completing our online survey.

Jason Burt
Chair, Homes board



Message from Julia

I am delighted to have been closely involved with the look and feel of this annual report and with the way that the information is presented.

The first difference that you will notice, is more emphasis has been put on how our rent is spent. Having been a tenant for 24 years, the last eight of these as an involved customer, I know how important that is!

You should also find the report easy to understand, with there being less to read and a strong focus on what you want and need to know.

Video and cartoons bring the numbers to life.

Facts and figures are clear to see and there are links to learn more about areas that interest you.

This is a report to us, the 19,000 customers of Homes Plus. I hope it gives you a real understanding of how well our landlord is performing.

Julia
Involved customer



**How your rent
is spent**
page 6

Homes
page 8

Lives
page 11

Communities
page 13

How your rent is spent

Just like any household, we have to budget carefully. Because the majority of our income comes from the rent paid by customers, we have a duty to get the best possible value for money when we reinvest that income into homes and services.

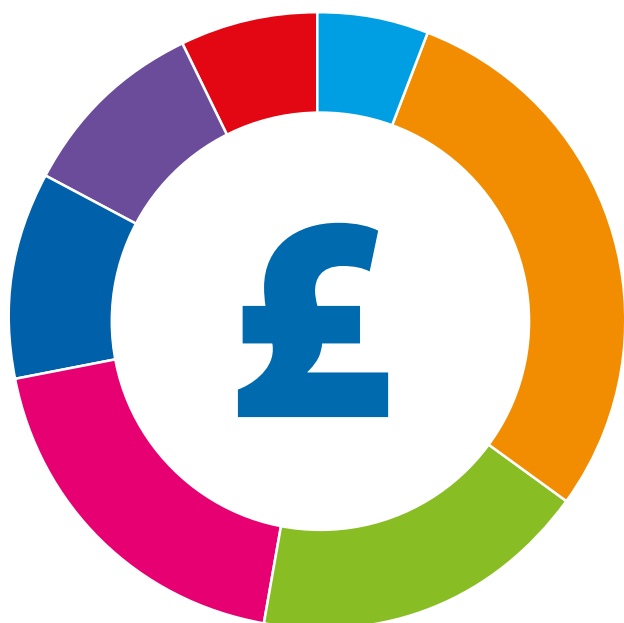
This year, we spent **£22.8m with local suppliers**, supporting 266 businesses providing employment in the areas where we work.

With the support of customers, we launched Homes Plus. As one landlord, we delivered **savings of £1.4m**.

And when energy costs were very low, we fixed gas and electric contracts until October 2024. This has meant that our offices and the communal areas for which customers pay service charges, are receiving energy bills significantly below current rates. Fixing at a time of low cost **saved £900,000** this year.

Negotiating a new contract for the materials used in our home repairs and improvements has also made savings. We cut the cost of boiler and heating components by **£123,000** this year too and achieved a **saving of £10,000** on electrical materials. (Savings are reinvested in homes, lives and communities.)

How each pound of your rent is spent



Money spent on repairs & maintenance
£30,445,894



Money spent on home improvements
£9,271,338

Value For Money (VFM)



Money spent with local suppliers
£22.8m



Suppliers in Shropshire & Staffordshire
266



Customers feel rent offers VFM
88%



Customers feel service charge offers VFM
74%

- Investment in new homes: **6p**
- Staff cost and overheads: **29p**
- Interest on our loans: **18p**
- Repairs and maintenance: **19p**
- Building safety & compliance: **11p**
- Improvements to your home: **10p**
- Services to your home and communal areas: **7p**



Top award for homes and maintenance

"Despite supply chain issues relating to COVID-19, we successfully delivered 99.5% of home improvements planned this year."

Steve Hall, Group planned programme manager

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report for more information.

Or scan to watch now



Customer satisfaction



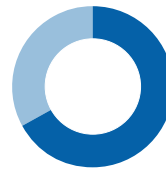
Compliments received

399



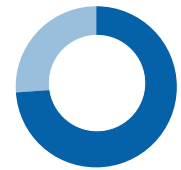
Complaints received

1,069



Overall customer satisfaction

67%



Complaints responded to within 10 days

74%



Average complaints response time

12 days



Complaints resolved at stage 1

85%

Outcome of complaints

- Upheld: 57%
- Partially upheld: 26%
- Not upheld: 17%



Nature of complaints



Failure to complete repair (262)

24.51%



Lack of communication (130)

12.16%



Staff attitude and behaviour (91)

8.51%



Delay in starting the repair (77)

7.21%



Failure to resolve damp and mould (68)

6.36%



All other categories (441)

41.25%

You said

You told us that you were unhappy with the way we handle complaints.

We have increased the number of dedicated officers, to reduce the time taken to respond to complaints and to improve communication.

We did

Satisfaction with complaint handling rose to 67%, compared to 43% for 2020/21.

Homes

This year we made a positive difference by **maintaining and improving homes**. We **developed new homes** to help meet the need for affordable housing. And our Plus services helped customers experiencing financial difficulties to keep a **secure home**.

We also provided the peace of mind of **safe homes** with a wide-ranging programme of safety checks and enhancements.

Your tenancy



Keep rent arrears under 3%
1.75%



Homes let
1,242



General needs homes let
966



Retirement living homes let
276



Communal area fire safety inspections
3,759



Starter tenancies & follow-up calls
750



Tenancy agreement changes
250

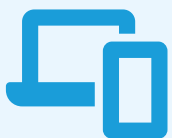
Customer services



Calls answered
149,027



Customer emails answered
16,911



Views of our website pages
273,534



Customer satisfaction
90%



New homes



New homes completed

376



New homes for rent

299



New homes for shared ownership

77



Customers satisfied with their new home

100%



New homes in Stafford

146



New homes in Telford & Wrekin

84



New homes in Shropshire

73



New homes in South Staffordshire

73

Your home



Spend on improvements, maintenance and repairs

£39,717,232



Electrical repairs completed

9,515



Repairs carried out

40,561



Repairs completed within target

90.31%



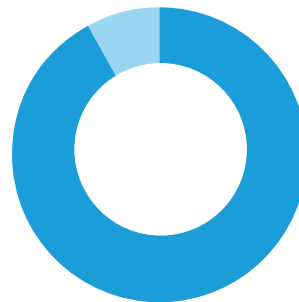
Home improvement waste recycled

99.15%



Tonnes of landfill waste prevented

1,144



Customers happy with repair service

92%



Plus services help customers save £2.78m

"Our Plus services supported customers who were finding it hard to make ends meet."

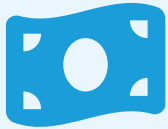
Richard Potter, Head of income

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report for more information.

Or scan to watch now



Improving homes



Money spent
improving homes
£9,271,338



New kitchens
437



New bathrooms
731



New wetrooms
87



New composite doors
434



New boilers
935



Property rewires
401



Homes benefitted from
minor adaptations
246



Homes with disabled
facilities grant work
70



Money secured from
the Social Housing
Decarb Fund
£1.2m



Grant funding for
energy efficiency
improvements
£167k



Homes improved with
this grant funding
107

Keeping you safe



Safety inspections
completed
46,668



Compliance with
statutory checks
99.70%



Gas heating services
completed
16,148



Gas reactive jobs
completed
12,258



Fire door inspections
completed
3,804



Electrical inspections
completed
4,068



Asbestos surveys
completed
3,182



Building safety
site tours
597

You said

That we do not provide help with trees that are causing problems within customers' gardens.

We are developing a new process for managing problem trees in a customer's garden, where they pose a risk to the property and/or the people living at the property.

We did



Lives

Continued restrictions imposed during the pandemic meant that we were not able to spend as much time in our retirement living communities as usual. When we couldn't be there in person though, we kept in touch with residents through regular telephone calls. We were also able to carry out repairs and safety checks.

We changed the lives of people and families by supporting customers into employment and applauded some of our amazing residents with our Local Hero celebrations.

Retirement living



Retirement living communities

57



Retirement living customers

2,172



Customers supported to maintain independence

396



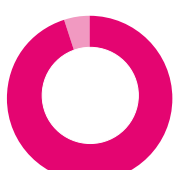
Customers who took part in wellbeing activities

27,935



Wellbeing activities offered

3,829



Retirement living customer satisfaction

95%

Domiciliary care



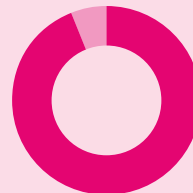
Hours of care and support

103,222



Hours of domiciliary care per week

2,438



Care and support customer satisfaction

94%

The Sandford Nursing Home



100%
of residents feel the care they receive is satisfactory or excellent



100%
of residents feel involved in decisions made about their care



100%
of residents feel they are treated with dignity and respect



Our care and support services change lives

"At The Sandford Nursing Home, 100 per cent of residents feel that they are treated with the dignity and respect that is so important to all of us."

Tracy Smith, Registered manager at The Sandford

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report for more information.

Or scan to watch now



Telecare service



Critical calls received
53,564



Enhanced telecare assessments done in 48 hours
100%



Critical calls answered in 60 seconds
97.3%



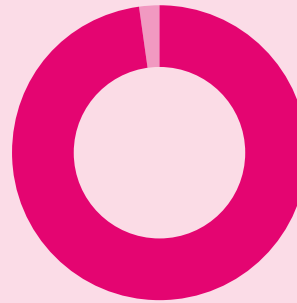
Installations completed within 5 days
99.2%



Telecare customer satisfaction
96.8%



Customers feel telecare offers VFM
96.7%



Customers who would recommend telecare
98%

Customer support



Money savings for customers due to support
£2,783,344



Customers helped by Plus services
1,271



Debt counselling saved our customers
£55,236



Customers supported with specialist debt advice
60



Customers helped into employment
34



Utility bill advice saved our customers
£8,314



Customers supported by Community Hubs
297



Customers supported by Prince's Trust
11



Customers supported by Building Better Opportunities (BBO)
67

You said

That customers are not given enough time to decide on the home being offered to them.

We are developing new processes to inform customers of decision deadlines, with confirmation in writing – either by text message or email.

We did



Communities

Our **Homes Plus My Community Fund** supported great projects run by charities, voluntary groups and our own customers. Grants were awarded to initiatives benefitting communities right across Staffordshire and Shropshire.

We support communities in other ways, too. As one of the area's leading employers we are proud to employ 63 of our tenants.

As part of our Early Careers programme, we developed stronger relationships with schools and colleges. We employed **17** apprentices during 2021-22 and used apprenticeships to upskill our workforce. Some of those completing their training during this year, attended an apprenticeship graduation event in Stafford.

Our commitment to supporting safer communities was recognised with a national award from Resolve ASB, the UK's leading organisation specialising in effective solutions to antisocial behaviour. In surveys carried out during this year, we were pleased to see increased satisfaction with this part of our work.

Our communities



Employees living in our communities
91.52%



Total customers employed
63



Suppliers based locally
45%



New apprentices from our communities
17

Involving and empowering our customers



Involved customers recruited
80



Total involved customers sharing their views
380



Customer surveys carried out
6,400



Hours volunteered by Scrutiny Group
392



Actions from their recommendations
18

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)



New ASB cases resolved
286



Cases resulting in legal action
30



Injunctions
13



Estate issues e.g. fly tipping etc. resolved
147

The Homes Plus My Community Fund



Community organisations who received funding

23



Total funding awarded

£23,362

You can find out more about the Homes Plus My Community Fund at www.homesplus.co.uk/the-my-community-fund



The Homes Plus My Community Fund

"My Community Fund means we can back great projects making a positive difference in the neighbourhoods where our customers live."

Sam Allcott, Director of housing

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report for more information.

Or scan to watch now



You said

You told us that you want safe, clean and tidy communal areas.

We are reviewing which communal areas are cleaned and where there is no cleaning in place, we will consult with customers to implement the service from April 2022.

We did

Learn more about our plans going forward at

www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report

How did we do?

Share your feedback on our annual report to be in with a chance of winning a £25 shopping voucher.

What did you think of our annual report? Your feedback will help us improve the way we present this information in the future and could even win you a £25 shopping voucher.

Simply complete the survey online by **28 October 2022** on our website: www.homesplus.co.uk/annual-report

Full competition terms and conditions can be found at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/terms-and-conditions-customer-magazine-competitions



Scan and you could win



In the news

A round-up of some of the Homes Plus people making the headlines.



Graduation day for our apprentices

Our apprentices were among the high achievers invited to mark the completion of their training at the Stoke and Staffordshire Graduation Ceremony at the County Showground in Stafford.

The graduation recognises the dedication required to combine a demanding vocational qualification with employment.

We joined proud friends, family members and tutors to celebrate their success.

In 2021/22 we created 17 new apprenticeships. Look out for new apprenticeship opportunities, on the careers area of our website

www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/careers

Stuart's pedals raise pounds

Our amazing Fire and electrical projects manager, Stuart Harvey, cycled the length of Great Britain and climbed its highest mountains for a great cause this summer.

Stuart covered more than 1,000 miles and tackled Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon, raising funds to help people with cystic fibrosis and those escaping war in Ukraine.

As a not-for-profit, resilient organisation, we are here to make a positive difference to homes, lives and communities. The people who work here, like to do that too.



How to make a complaint or give feedback

We welcome your feedback as we are committed to giving an excellent service to our customers.

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 we can put it right and improve our services to prevent similar problems from happening again.

You can view a copy of our complaints policy and process on our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/make-a-complaint or request a copy from our complaints team by calling **0800 048 8955**.

You can make a complaint by:

Completing our online website form at www.homesplus.co.uk/make-a-complaint

Calling our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**

Emailing feedback@housingplusgroup.co.uk

Contacting us on Facebook –

www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus

Writing to **Customer complaints and feedback team, Housing Plus Group, Acton Court, Acton Gate, Stafford, ST18 9AP**

If you live in one of our retirement living communities, you can speak to your retirement living officer for further help and guidance.



Housing Ombudsman

As a social housing landlord we are members of the Housing Ombudsman scheme and are committed to complying with their complaint handling code.

Visit housing-ombudsman.org.uk to find out more and to access the hub area for residents, where you can read other residents' experiences.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

If your complaint relates to a regulatory issue, you can visit the CQC website - cqc.org.uk to find out more.



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 9021

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

Useful information

Gas leaks 0800 111 999
(National Gas Emergency Service)

Health and sickness help and advice 111 (NHS Direct)

Police 101 (non-emergency)

Personal concerns, worries and troubles
116 123 (Samaritans)

Councils

Cannock Chase Council
01543 462621

Shropshire Council
0345 678 9000

South Staffordshire District Council 01902 696000

Stafford Borough Council
01785 619000

Telford and Wrekin Council
01952 380000

Christmas closure information

We will close on **Friday 23 December 2022** and re-open on **Tuesday 3 January 2023**. Our usual emergency repair service will operate throughout this period and you can contact us by calling **0800 048 8955**.

Personal, planned care from Care Plus will continue as usual.

MPs

Lucy Allan MP Telford

020 7219 4815 | lucy.allan.mp@parliament.uk

Theo Clarke MP Stafford

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Daniel Kawczynski MP Shrewsbury & Atcham

020 7219 6249 | daniel.kawczynski.mp@parliament.uk

Amanda Milling MP Cannock Chase

020 7219 8356 | amanda.milling.mp@parliament.uk

Helen Morgan MP North Shropshire

020 7219 6104 | helen.morgan.mp@parliament.uk

Mark Pritchard MP The Wrekin

020 7219 8494 | mark.pritchard.mp@parliament.uk

Gavin Williamson MP South Staffordshire

020 7219 7245 | gavin.williamson.mp@parliament.uk

Contact us to request this newsletter in:



Large print



Audio



Other languages

Contacting Homes Plus

Call **0800 048 8955**

Follow www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus

Visit www.homesplus.co.uk

Book an appointment to visit one of our offices by calling **0800 048 8955**

Housing Plus Group 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 to find out more.

