

# Annual report 2020/21



## Welcome

**The word 'unprecedented' was used a great deal in this year, as all of us adjusted to living and working very differently at a uniquely challenging time.**

Strong leadership, dedicated colleagues and the resilience acquired through a period of sustained growth meant that we were able to maintain essential services and protect our staff during an extended crisis.

At the same time, we successfully harmonised our landlord services following the merger between Stafford and Rural Homes and Housing Plus Group, ensuring that customers receive the same quality of service, wherever they live. That work has continued, with our One Landlord vision.

In a year when so many families were experiencing financial difficulties, I am pleased to see that our debt counselling services more than doubled the savings achieved for customers in this year. The support put into place for customers also resulted in a reduction in rent arrears in this period. We saw increases not only in the number of people living in our retirement living communities but in the hours of domiciliary care we were able to deliver.

And of course, our care provision expanded considerably, with the purchase of The Sandford Nursing Home.

With construction sites closed for part of the year, we nonetheless maintained our commitment to build much-needed affordable homes, investing £22.6m in development projects.

There was significant investment too, in our repairs service. Work totalling more than £30m was carried out, safely, in customers' homes and while planned maintenance work was paused in lockdown, the property team flexed their resources to carry out crucial safety checks.

We found new ways of working – introducing virtual viewings and socially distanced sign-up processes that helped people find a new home.

It is important to recognise that, in this year of crisis, our people excelled in ways that might not be reflected in this annual report. They supported and kept each other safe. They made thousands of reassurance calls to vulnerable and isolated customers, they volunteered their time and learned new ways to connect.

Our vision to make a positive difference to homes, lives and communities was undoubtedly fulfilled in this year.

**Gareth Evans**  
Chair, Homes Board

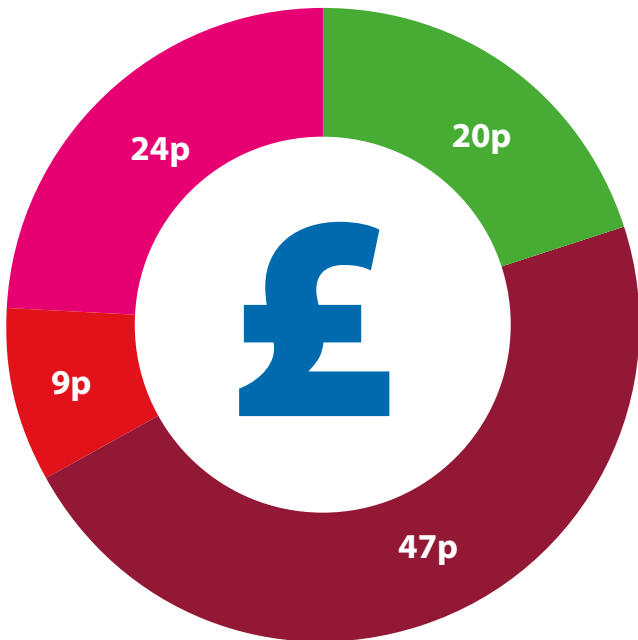


## Making a positive difference Homes, lives and communities

## How your £ is spent\*

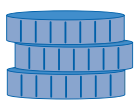
The government sets the level of rents we can charge and we work hard to ensure that the income we receive is well spent and gives value for money.

**How each pound of your rent is spent:**



Management and services	20p
Capital investment	47p
Interest payable on loans	9p
Maintenance and repairs	24p

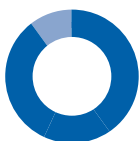
## Value for money



We spent **£29.8m** with **521 suppliers...**

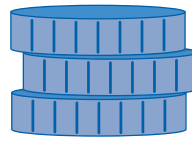


...**198** (38%) of which were **suppliers** in Staffordshire and Shropshire.



**89%** of customers feel their rent provides value for money.

## Your tenancy\*



Current rent arrears are **2.41%**

We made a commitment to keep rent arrears below 3%



We let **493 homes** including **75 new builds**

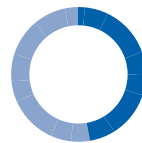
We undertook **990** communal block fire safety inspections.

**376** no access cases for gas and electrical inspections were dealt with successfully.

**991** starter tenancy and follow-up telephone calls were carried out.

**36** tenancy agreement changes were made, including mutual exchanges.

## Customer services\*



**47%** of all calls were answered within 30 seconds.



We answered **55,092 calls** from you.



More than **39,000 people** visited the SARH website to find an answer to their question.



We had **846,963 page views** on our website.



**2,295 people** follow our social media account.

**Please note** that an **asterisk \*** against a section heading indicates that this data refers to **SARH's performance**. All other data is for Housing Plus Group.

## Ron's a lockdown hero

**In these challenging times, a huge positive has been the way that people have supported each other. The anxiety and worry of coronavirus has brought out the best in many of us and the loneliness of social distancing has drawn neighbours closer together.**

We love hearing great news about how our own customers are stepping-up to make a positive difference. Whether they are keeping in touch with vulnerable neighbours, collecting shopping and medical supplies for others, working in vital frontline roles or lifting the spirits with beautiful garden displays, they're our local lockdown heroes.

One of these lockdown heroes is Gnosall resident, Ron. A seasoned volunteer, Ron has been everything from a jovial Santa to an enthusiastic tour guide. In recent months, though, he's been calling on his experience as a bingo caller to hold sessions over the phone.

Supporting the award-winning BeConnected project in Stafford borough, Ron's telephone bingo sessions have brought some very welcome laughter into the lives of people who can often experience particular feelings of loneliness at this time.

"We're sometimes so busy laughing and chatting that we forget the bingo!" he admits. "Friendship is about giving something back and making people realise, they're not alone. In normal times it means a lot but in lockdown, that sense of isolation has been so much harder for a lot of people.

"I enjoy getting involved and if I can be there for a chat and make someone laugh then I feel as though I've achieved something."

One of those who have been taking part in Ron's telephone bingo sessions is Christine, from Stafford. She told us how important they have been for her during lockdown: "Living on my own, I found lockdown very hard. It's terrible when you don't see anyone. Ron makes us all laugh and reminds us about the lighter side of life. It's made such a difference."



Ron says: "I'm lucky to live somewhere with a really strong sense of community and we look out for each other. Little things can make a difference. During the first lockdown at Easter, I left chocolate eggs on the doorsteps of my neighbours and if we're going shopping, we phone round to see if anyone needs anything."

### Do you know a Local Hero?

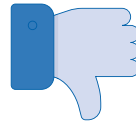
We love hearing great news about how our customers are stepping-up to make a positive difference.

[www.sarh.co.uk](http://www.sarh.co.uk)

# Feedback\*



**157 compliments** were received.



**256 complaints** were received.

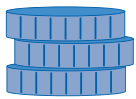


**241 resolved** at Stage 0



**15 escalated** to Stage 1

## Customer support



Our Employment and Money Advice (EMA) team achieved money savings of **£1,616,492** for our customers.



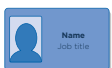
**568 customers** were supported by the EMA team, helping them to reduce debt, maximise income and budget efficiently.



Our debt counselling service helped customers make savings totalling **£30,566**.



**28** people secured volunteering, work placements or were supported into education and training.



**11** people were helped into employment.



Through our partnership working with the Prince's Trust and Wolverhampton College **9 young people** received life skills training and support.

## Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)\*

We are committed to helping customers experiencing ASB.



We dealt with **126 new cases of ASB**.



**7 cases** resulted in us taking legal action...



...including **7 injunctions**.



**109 environmental ASB cases** were also resolved, which included fly tipping and abandoned vehicles.

# Involving and empowering our customers



**100 involved customers** have been recruited...



...giving us a total of **372 involved customers** across the Group.



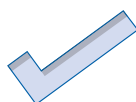
**Our 372 involved customers** regularly share their views to help us improve services.



**4,876 surveys** were carried out to get customers views on our services.



The Scrutiny Group volunteered **244 hours** of their time to give feedback on our services.



**15 actions** were implemented from their recommendations...



...in **four key projects.**

## You said, we did.

### You said:

Customers told us they were unhappy with the way we handled complaints.

### We did:

We have established a centralised complaints team with dedicated officers to reduce the time taken to respond to complaints and to improve communication. This has resulted in a **9% improvement** in the time taken to answer a complaint and has seen satisfaction levels with complaint handling **rise by 31%**.

### You said:

Customers would like better information when reporting ASB and an explanation of what to expect throughout the process.

### We did:

We have **updated the information on our website** to make it clear how you report anti-social behaviour and we've included an overview of what you can expect as your complaint is progressed. We have also added this information to all our customer welcome packs.

### You said:

Customers wanted to see an overall improvement to the repairs service.

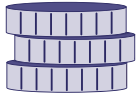
### We did:

We have listened to the views of our customers through surveys and complaints. We have also worked with our Scrutiny Group to dive deeper into the things that matter to our customers and understand how our services can be shaped to provide an even better experience.



# Your home

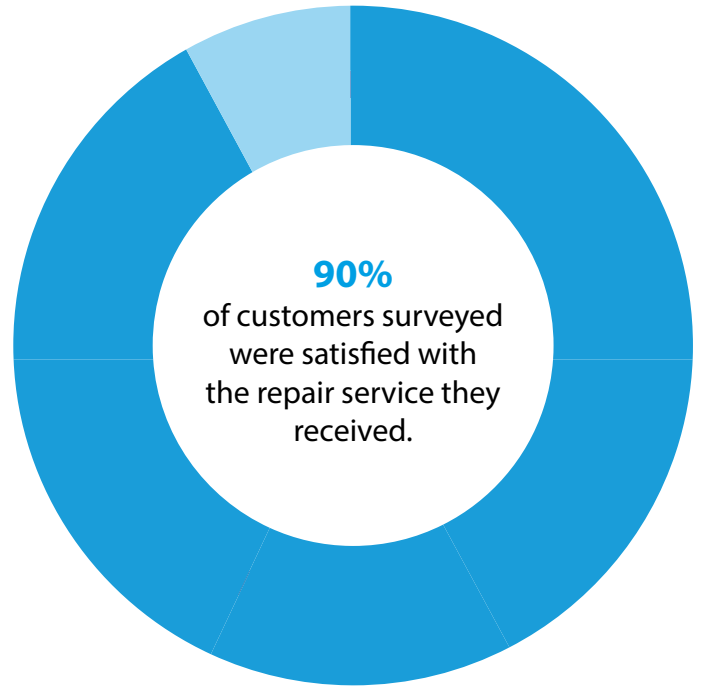
## Well-maintained homes



We spent more than **£30,000,000** repairing, maintaining and improving homes.



**32,984** property repairs were carried out.



**30,248 safety first inspections** were carried out at customers' homes.



**80%** of responsive repairs were completed within target time.

## Improving homes

**£5,329,000** of our total budget was spent making planned improvements to our homes.



**282 new kitchens** were installed.



**378 new bathrooms** were installed.



**507 new boilers** were installed.



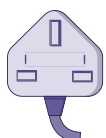
On average **97% of waste** was recycled...



**443 new doors** were installed.



...stopping **150 tonnes of waste** from going to landfill.



**127 homes** were rewired.

**During 2020-21, COVID-19 had a significant impact on our routine repair timescales and the delivery of our home improvements programme.**



# Working together to stay safe during unprecedented times

**Coronavirus restrictions haven't stopped us from ensuring our customers remain safe in their homes.**

Clearly, we've had to look at new ways of working but essential safety checks have continued throughout lockdown and this has only been possible by working in partnership with customers while taking practical steps to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

Alongside a successful information campaign, these steps have helped us ensure compliance with government legislation on mandatory gas checks, electrical testing and fire risk assessments.

The measures we've taken are included in an eight-point plan that's followed whenever an operative visits a customer's home and have certainly been well received.

John, a customer who lives in Stafford, said his recent visit from an engineer went very well and the contractor was quick and polite, and worked



with him to ensure they maintained a safe distance from each other.

This thorough approach provides additional peace of mind for customers, especially those who may be particularly vulnerable or have members of their household in an 'at risk' category.

All these sensible steps have been backed up by our 'Help us keep you safe' campaign, which includes online guides and leaflets to help customers understand the approach we're taking, along with investment in 'Gas Tag' technology which collects real-time data about the gas boilers and appliances in all of our homes.



For the latest COVID-19 guidance, visit [www.sarh.co.uk](http://www.sarh.co.uk)

# Care and support

**When we recruit for many of our roles, we value personal qualities above specific experience. People who are caring, dedicated, collaborative and determined to make a positive difference can very quickly become part of Care Plus.**

Those qualities really came to the fore last year as we saw frontline staff continue to provide great care and support, safely and with courage.

Our domiciliary care teams worked day and night to provide close personal care enabling people to live safely and in some cases die at home with the people they love. The retirement living team quickly adapted to working very differently, providing reassurance, advice, clear communication and practical help to 2,000 residents who were among the most vulnerable in our communities.

Our telecare team faced huge challenges, too. Some of the only staff unable to work remotely during lockdown, they maintained a 24:7 emergency response in what they described as “Relentless and exhausting” weeks in our offices.

And as we focused on support for customers and colleagues, we didn’t lose focus on our growth agenda.

During this year we purchased The Sandford, our first nursing home, in the wonderful setting of Church Stretton. As well as beautiful building, we gained a team of dedicated caring nurses and care staff some of whom have worked at The Sandford for many years. The home and the staff team there are hugely respected by the local community and The Sandford makes a great addition to the Care Plus offering.

We continued to prepare for the opening of Wren House, which will increase the specialist supported housing provision available in Stafford and saw work progress on The Burgesses in Kinver.

We also completed a successful integration process following following the merger between Stafford and Rural Homes and Housing Plus Group. During 2020-21 we harmonised our services across Staffordshire and Shropshire and re-structured to deliver efficient, effective, caring services throughout our operational area.

**Les Clarke**  
Executive Director  
of Housing and Care



# Retirement living



We have **54** retirement living communities.



**2,381 customers** live in our retirement living communities.



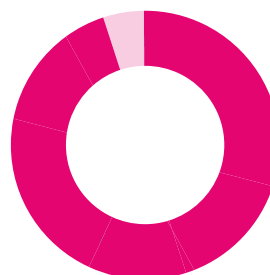
We helped **892 customers** maintain their independence in Shropshire through our support service.



**13,389** people attended our wellbeing activities.



**2,288** wellbeing activities were organised in our retirement living communities and extra care schemes.



**95%** of customers said they are happy with our retirement living communities.





## Care Plus acquires Shropshire nursing home

**Care Plus completed the purchase of a south Shropshire nursing home, extending the wide range of support services available to customers.**

The Sandford Nursing Home provides accommodation for up to 35 residents in the market town of Church Stretton.

During Victorian and Edwardian times the town was known as 'Little Switzerland' because of its stunning landscape and became a health resort favoured by people looking for rest and relaxation. We are excited to offer residential care for our customers in this beautiful setting.

Les Clarke, Executive Director of Housing and Care said: "We are warmly welcoming the team working at The Sandford into the Care Plus family. They will continue to provide the high standard of care and support that is so important to residents and their families.

"As life expectancies increase and more of us live to old age, we want to offer people a wider range of support to live their best life. The purchase of The Sandford allows us to provide more choice - from

the reassurance of telecare support to purpose-built retirement living communities, high quality care in your own home and residential nursing accommodation."

The purchase follows our 2019 investment of more than £1m to improve the standard of housing and facilities for older people living independently with access to support in their own home. It is part of our commitment to making care and support available to more people in our communities, which will continue with the completion of new retirement apartments at Wren House, in Stafford and The Burgesses, in Kinver.

Join Care Plus at this exciting time. For opportunities to become part of our fast-growing success and to make a difference to the lives of older people in Staffordshire and Shropshire, see our current vacancies

[www.care-plus.org.uk/jobs](http://www.care-plus.org.uk/jobs)

# Domiciliary care



We delivered **99,694 hours** of care and support.



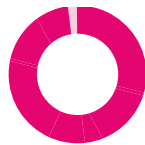
We provided around **1,833 hours** of specialist, domiciliary care per week.



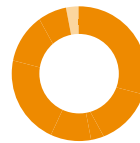
# Telecare service



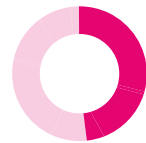
**134,802** telecare calls were answered.



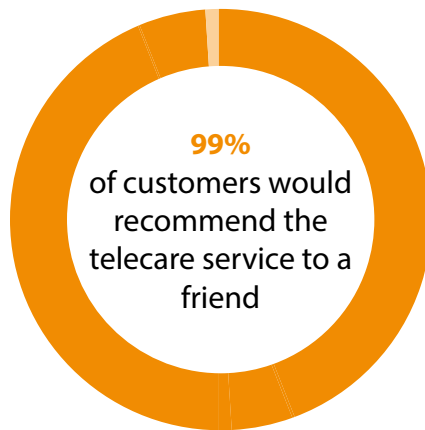
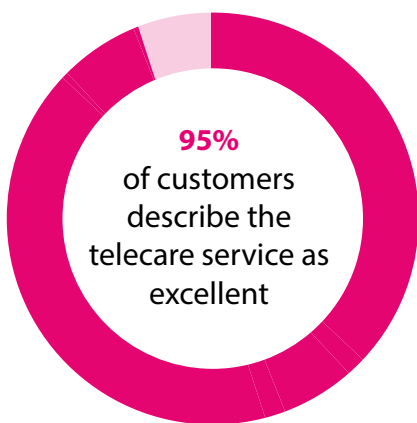
**98%** of enhanced telecare referrals and assessments, where customers have complex and urgent needs, were completed within 48 hours.



**96.97%** of calls were answered within 60 seconds.



**48%** of basic telecare installations were completed within five days of first contact.



# New homes



We completed or acquired  
**191 homes**



**128**  
for social rent



**63**  
for shared ownership sale

# Locations



**42 homes** in Stafford



**26 homes** in South Staffordshire



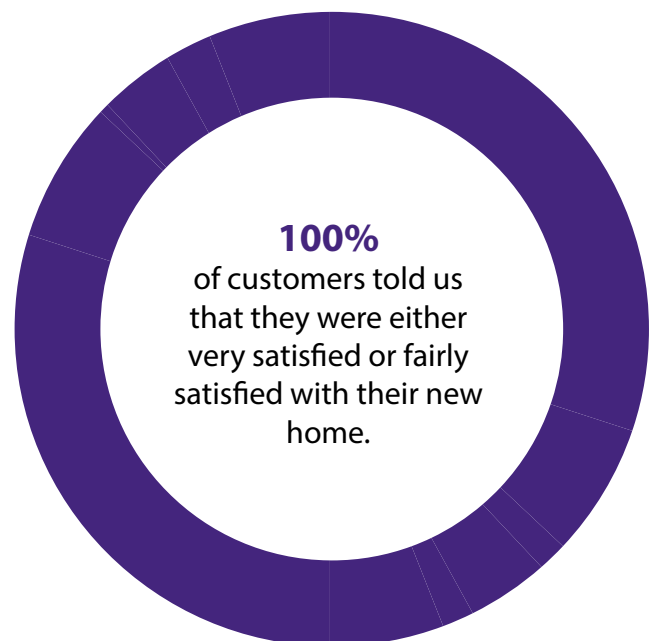
**6 homes** in Cannock Chase



**56 homes** in Shropshire



**61 homes** in Telford and Wrekin



# 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 answer the following questions and return the survey to us at the address below or if you prefer, you can complete the survey online on our website:

[www.sarh.co.uk/annual-report-2021](http://www.sarh.co.uk/annual-report-2021)

## 1. How easy did you find the annual report to read and understand?

- Very easy                       Somewhat easy                       Indifferent  
 Somewhat difficult                       Very difficult

Comments

## 2. How successful do you think the report is in providing an insight into our performance?

- Very successful                       Somewhat successful                       Indifferent  
 Somewhat unsuccessful                       Very unsuccessful

Comments

## 3. What did you enjoy most about the report?

- Stories                       Performance figures/  
information                       Other (please provide  
further details)

Comments

## 4. Are there any suggestions or improvements that you would like us to take into consideration when creating next year's report?

Comments

## 5. To enter the draw to be in with a chance of winning a £25 shopping voucher, please share your details:

Name

Address

Please return your feedback in an envelope to **Annual report survey, Freepost SSHA** by **Friday 29 October 2021** to be in with a chance of winning a shopping voucher.