



Customer Annual Report

2022-23



Building a better future by investing in
affordable homes, services and communities

platform
●●●● housing group

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Welcome

Like your household, Platform has had to bear the pain of massive price increases, for almost everything we buy.

We could see that this would continue to make things very difficult for many of our residents, so we willingly kept our rent increase for this year below the Consumer Price Index (CPI) cap and increased the level of assistance available in our Wellbeing Fund to **£2 million**.

Despite all of this, our primary focus has been to invest in our existing homes, improve energy efficiency, keep critical services to support our customers and build much needed new homes.

Throughout the year we caught up on our repairs backlog, which built up during the Covid lockdowns and I thank you for your patience while we did this. In total we did **157,000 repairs**.

Keeping these things at the top of the list has seen an improvement in our Customer Satisfaction from 68.8% last year, to an average across the year of **70.7%**. Our target was 75% so we know we still have many things we want to improve over the coming year.

Our survey system allows us to ask you what your experience was in relation to services and works we have delivered. Last year we did almost **35,000 surveys** which allows us to hear, from you, what worked well and what didn't, and enables us to learn what would help to improve your experience.

Building a better future by investing in affordable homes, services and communities

This report shares our performance between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, highlighting our ongoing progress to deliver our mission to **build a better future by investing in affordable homes, services and communities**.

Just like any household, each year we must budget very carefully. Most of our income comes from the rent you pay, so we are

Our Customer Hub remained busy with nearly **268,000 calls** coming in. However, it was pleasing to see so many of you engaging with us differently, by adopting easier routes. We handled **127,000 digital contacts**, nearly **18,000** customers are registered to use our **customer portal** and over **51,000** of you let us call you back rather than hanging on the phone.

Over the coming year we will add further new functionality to the customer portal to ease how you access routine services.

As you read this report, we are aware that we are heading into Winter and know there will be many more difficulties for us all to deal with, so will endeavour to be there when you need us. The launch of our new and bigger Customer Voice Panel we also ensure that we will be listening to what you need from us.

You, our residents, are at the core of everything we do, and I hope you enjoy the highlights in this report, showing some of the great opportunities we have had to interact with you across our communities and deliver the service levels we are always striving to achieve and improve.

Wishing you all safe and well.

Elizabeth Froude
Group Chief Executive



committed to securing the best possible **value for money** when we reinvest this income into your homes and the services that we offer.

Our number one priority is to provide you and your family with a safe, secure and well maintained home. During the year we have invested more than **£86.4** million repairing, maintaining and improving homes and have developed or acquired **1,114** new homes to help meet the ever increasing need for affordable homes. Our wide-ranging programme of safety checks and inspections also gives you peace of mind that your home is **safe**.

The sad death of toddler Awaab Ishak in Rochdale led us and the housing sector to look at the way concerns of **damp and condensation mould** are handled. This saw us launch a new robust policy and process for dealing with your concerns, along with extensive colleague training and the development of a handy new range of guidance leaflets. We also looked back at any historical reports to ensure that we can successfully deal with issues already reported to us.

Following a thorough survey of all our customers living in one of our retirement housing schemes, a new way of delivering services and bespoke offers was created, to make sure that we are matching customers' expectations and needs.

The continuing cost of living crisis has made times hard for many of us. That's why I'm particularly proud of all the **support we offered** during the year, whether from our Successful Tenancies team, £2 million Wellbeing Fund, Annual Kindness Campaign or Warm Hub Funding, which has helped customers experiencing financial difficulties keep a **secure home and reduce isolation**.

Our **Community Chest Fund** has also helped some great projects run by customers, charities and voluntary groups. Grants totalling nearly **£150,000** have been awarded by our Customer Experience Panel Members to initiatives that benefit customers and communities right across our neighbourhoods.

“ We have **changed the lives of people and families** by supporting customers into employment and training and providing money and benefits advice. ”

We have **changed the lives of people and families** by supporting customers into employment and training and providing money and benefits advice. We have also celebrated some amazing customers in our annual **Community Heroes Awards** that highlight the unsung heroes who live in our homes and communities and **make a positive difference**.

Delivering our **Communities Connected** programme of events enabled us to get out into the heart of our communities and offer support in other ways too. A staggering **245 events** were held, attended by over **2,500** customers, colleagues and partners, all aimed at either improving the local neighbourhood or delivering new services.

Our dedicated Neighbourhood Officers and Community Safety team are committed to helping **build stronger, safer communities** and work hard to improve our neighbourhoods. They are regularly out and about in your local area offering support and delivering **Neighbourhood Walkabouts** for local partners and customers to come together to discuss any concerns you may have.

And finally, listening and acting upon our **Customer Voice** and making sure that our involved customers are strategically aligned and work closely with our Board, is key to us continuing to deliver services that you want and need.

Our **co-creation journey** with customers, who are involved at the outset and design of a new service will ensure that your thoughts, ideas and opinions directly influence our work.

I really hope you enjoy reading this review of our year and learning more about all the things we have planned for the year ahead, highlighted in our Looking Forward sections.

Kind Regards,

Marion Duffy
Chief Operations Officer



Year at a glance



April 2022 Wellbeing Fund

April saw the launch of our £1.75 million Wellbeing Fund, which was increased to £2 million later in the year, to help customers experiencing financial hardship and needing short-term support.

During the year, we helped more than 6,800 customers, providing grants totalling almost £2 million.



May 2022 Communities Connected

From litter picking and tree planting to building bird boxes, the first of our two Communities Connected fortnights saw our customers, colleagues and partners volunteering to get involved in making a difference in their local community.



June 2022 Development award

Our development of 30 affordable homes in Bakewell was awarded Best Small Development at the Midlands Regional Property Awards.

These new homes made it possible for local people, who might otherwise have found it hard to afford to stay in the area, live in their hometown.



October 2022 Top G1 and V1 rating

Following a reassessment, we retained our top G1/V1 rating from the Regulator for Social Housing, reaffirming for the second year running that we are performing at the highest level possible for both governance and financial viability.



November 2022 Refurbishment of Alexandra Court

Work was completed on our DIY SOS style communal areas refurbishment at our retirement living scheme at Alexandra Court in Skegness.



December 2022 Christmas Kindness

Our Christmas Kindness Campaign spread a little Christmas cheer and extra help to those who may have otherwise missed out on the festivities.

We donated more than £35,000 from our Community Chest Fund to local food banks, community groups and charities.



July 2022 New homes in Watery Lane, Newent

Work started at our first ever site in the Forest of Dean – Watery Lane, Newent – to build 40 new homes, giving local people more affordable ways of renting or owning a home.



August 2022 Cost of Living support

To help customers navigate the cost of living and rising energy costs crisis we created a new help section on our website, sharing how we can help, along with any government and specialist support available.



September 2022 Recruiting and developing apprentices

Our Property Care workforce was increased by recruiting 10 young people from our communities to train to become carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and multi-skilled operatives.



January 2023 Tenant Satisfaction Measures pilot

To help us establish a clear baseline for the Social Housing Regulator's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), introduced to drive up standards for customers, we carried out a pilot customer survey to help us create an action plan.



February 2023 Warm Hub funding

A warm welcome was offered to our customers, thanks to £20,000 from our Wellbeing and Community Chest Funds, along with £10,000 EEM grant funding, which helped fund existing and new local community warm hubs.

TAPPI project launch

Harling Court Retirement Village in Ledbury was selected as a test site for a national innovation project, aimed at improving the way technology is used in housing and care for older people.



March 2023 Community Heroes Awards

We judged the winners of our Community Heroes Awards which recognise the unsung heroes who make a real difference in their local communities.

Damp and condensation mould

A new process for tackling reports of damp and condensation mould was launched, the key message being that everyone has a responsibility to report damp and condensation mould – if you see it, report it!

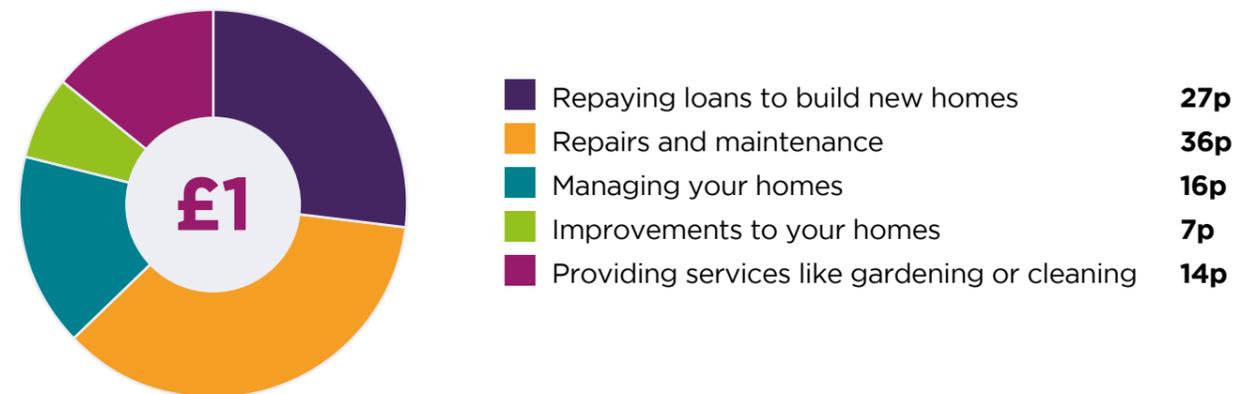
Value for money

Just like any household, we must budget carefully. As most of our income comes from the rent you pay, we work hard to get the best possible value for money when reinvesting this income into our homes and services.

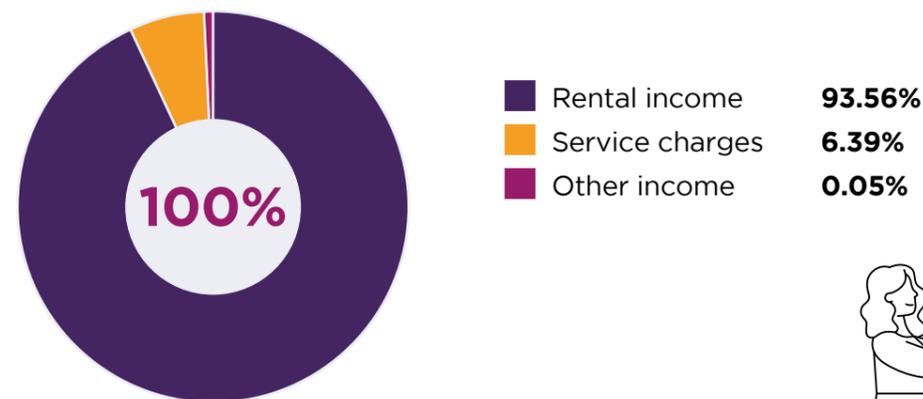
Each year, we spend a lot of money with **local suppliers**, supporting businesses that provide employment opportunities in our neighbourhoods and communities.

Negotiating new and existing contracts with our suppliers is one of the key ways that we can ensure that the rent you pay delivers great value for money and is invested in the services you want and need.

How each £1 of income is spent:



Where our income comes from:



Building new homes - Places for you to call home

Our vision to build more new affordable homes for our customers remains a key priority.

During the year, by working with Homes England and our local authority partners, we have built **962** new homes. This means that once again we are one of the largest developers of new affordable housing in the country and the largest in the Midlands.

All the homes built this year are designed to achieve an Energy Performance Rating of B or above.



Branching out into new areas

We have branched out and started on site at our first ever development in the Forest of Dean. Forty new homes are currently being built in Watery Lane, Newent and are due to be finished towards the end of this year.

Homes owned and managed by Platform **48,082**

New homes built **962**



Looking forward to 2023-24

Next year, we will invest in even more new homes

- ✓ We plan to build 1,371 new affordable homes in areas where they are most needed.
- ✓ With an investment of more than £209.5 million

Managing our income and supporting you

The last 12 months have been challenging for everyone, as we have all tried to navigate the ongoing cost of living crisis, particularly the rise in energy costs and higher prices in shops and supermarkets.

The rent you pay covers the cost of repairs in your home and means we can invest in improvements like new bathrooms, kitchens and energy efficient boilers.

It also funds the extra support services that we provide, as a landlord that is here for you. Things like our Wellbeing Fund, employment, money and benefit advice, Community Chest, safeguarding and ASB help.

As anticipated, rent arrears started to rise during the winter period, when the effects of increased energy costs really started to bite.

This is when our Successful Tenancies and Wellbeing Fund teams stepped in to help. You can read more about the vital support they provided on pages 34 - 37.

Despite these challenges, and by ensuring that you accessed the right support at the right time, overall rent arrears remained low at the end of year, and well within target.

All arrears
2.56%
- target 3.2%

Rented home arrears
2.58%
- target 3.2%

Shared ownership arrears
2.38%
- target 1.5%

The rent you pay covers the costs of repairs and improving your home and providing support services.



“I would encourage customers who are struggling to make rent payments, no matter what your situation, to get in touch.”

By working in close partnership with Bromsgrove and Redditch Borough Council, our Income Management team prevented three families, with young children, losing their homes due to rent arrears.

“It’s not always easy to talk to customers who have high rent arrears, which is understandable, as most people who are finding it hard to manage their money tend to ignore worrying debt issues.” explains Rent Officer, Chantelle.

“Our ultimate aim is always to try and work with our customers to offer any support and solutions available, as making anyone homeless is an absolute last resort.”

There were long standing rent arrears with these three families who were struggling to make consistent payments towards their rent.

Legal action had already started and was progressing, so Chantelle worked with the customers and local authority to achieve a positive outcome.

Payments totalling nearly £9,000 were secured from the local authority’s homeless fund, which is a substantial amount of money for a small local authority, and shows our joint commitment to supporting people.

“I would encourage any of our customers who are struggling to make rent payments, no matter what your situation, to get in touch as we will do everything we can to help!” added Chantelle.

Please talk to us, we can help

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please get in touch. We can work together to help you avoid rent debt and the risk of losing your home. You can make a self-referral via the Your Platform customer portal or by calling us on **0333 200 7304**.



Listening and acting on your feedback



We are delighted to report that last year we received **532 compliments**, the majority being about the great service delivered by our colleagues. This is a common theme that we see through compliments and customer survey feedback.

There has been an increase in the number of formal complaints we received during the year - **1,249** compared with **835** in the previous year. This is in line with increases being seen across the sector.

278 of these complaints reached the **final review** stage of our complaints process, which means that **24%** of our complaints were escalated.

Reasons for escalation included:

- Actions committed to, but not completed.
- Lack of communication with the customer.
- Increase in compensation.
- Inaccurate/incorrect information.

71.84% of formal complaints were responded to within **10 working days** and where complaints were not responded to on time, we kept customers informed.



532

compliments



1,249

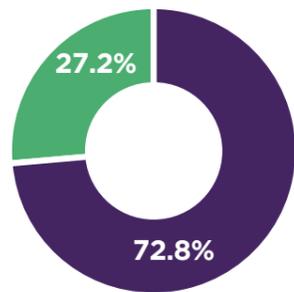
complaints received



1,140

complaints investigated, an increase of **355** on the previous year.

Complaint outcomes:



Complaints upheld

Not upheld

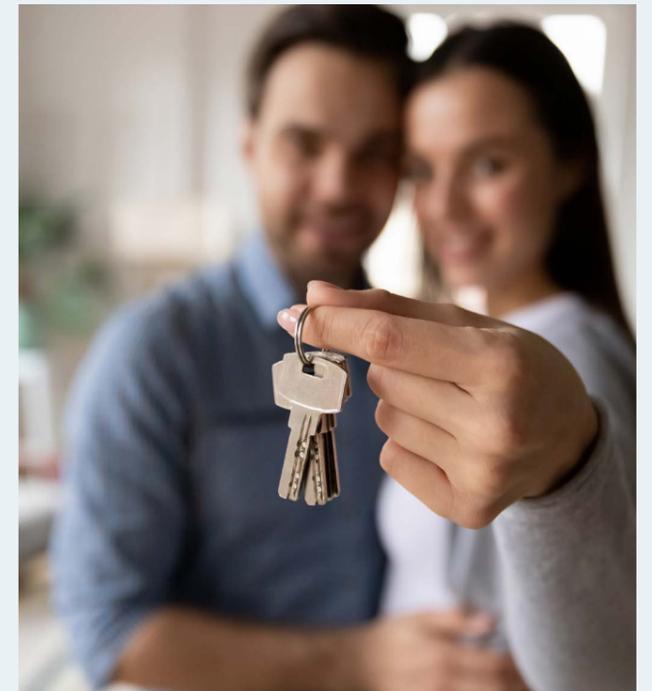
Nature of complaints:

The top 6 categories of the complaints investigated during the year were:

- Time taken to complete repairs - **26.6%**
- Not right first time - **16.4%**
- Not communicating with customers - **16.3%**
- Challenging decisions - **7.9%**
- Damp and condensation mould - **7.9%**
- Not doing what we say we will - **7.9%**

Key initiatives completed

- Introduced a quality assurance function to professionalise how we handle complaints, along with monitoring and tracking complaint follow-ups.
- Launched a revised complaints policy and ensured that all our Complaints team colleagues are fully aware and adhere to the revised Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Worked with teams across our organisation to identify learning from customer feedback and supporting them to make changes that resulted in a significant customer service improvement.
- Completed a pilot customer survey prior to the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) being introduced to give us a clear baseline of our current position.



Lessons learnt

There were **21** lessons learnt during the year. Here are some of the highlights.

You said	We did
There is a lack of communication about when and how my planned work will be done.	We have created a new suite of letters, which provide information on when your work will be starting, an introduction letter from the contractor completing your work, a design survey letter and a consent form. We have also created useful FAQs for kitchens, bathrooms, heating and window improvement works.
You experience delays in tenancies being converted from a starter tenancy.	We have created a visual dashboard which enables our Neighbourhood Officers to quickly and easily see which tenancies are due/overdue for renewal to ensure these are regularly reviewed and actioned.
The temporary heaters you supply are too expensive to use.	We have produced a new use of temporary heaters leaflet, which explains how the heaters can be used efficiently, how to calculate the cost of using them so you are able to budget, along with tips on how to use them safely.
You experience difficulties getting through to the Hub on the phone.	We have recruited more Customer Service Advisors to help reduce call wait times, and after a successful trial we launched new Chatbot software on our website allowing you to self-serve at a time that suits you.
I don't understand all the texts I get about my repairs.	We have rolled out the use of Voicescape software across our business, which delivers a phone message rather than a text, for our electrical and gas safety and servicing appointments. This has improved access to homes and reduced the number of missed appointments. We are planning to expand this to all routine repairs appointments.

Customer satisfaction

Overall satisfaction April 2022 – March 2023



Satisfaction
70.7%



Number of responses
34,980



Target
75%

Last year, we continued to use our in-house developed surveying tool to gather and report on customer satisfaction. We ask you to complete a survey after you have received a service from us, so that we can rate your satisfaction level. It also enables our Customer Experience team to follow up on any possible ongoing issues identified.

We ask you to score the service you have received out of 5 and then tell us the reason why you have given this score. We have continued to add different service

transactional surveys during the year and the overall customer satisfaction result is now gathered from ten different surveys.

The customer survey tool has been in place for 18 months and is enabling us to gather customer insight in your own words.

One of the most important things that the survey feedback has shown us is how much you value our people. There are overwhelmingly positive comments about how our colleagues help and interact with customers every day.

We are delighted to report that customer satisfaction has steadily increased over the last 3 years:



Year ending March 2021 – Satisfaction

55.4%



Year ending March 2022 – Satisfaction

68.8%



Year ending March 2023 – Satisfaction

70.7%



Looking forward to 2023-24

To improve our customer experience services, we plan to:

- ✓ Develop new customer service standards.
- ✓ Review and revise our current customer experience strategy.
- ✓ Go live with a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that will enable us to follow your customer journey and see when you have contacted our different teams.
- ✓ Report against the new regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which will allow you to see how we are performing and compare it with other social housing landlords.
- ✓ Restructure the Customer Experience team so we can continue to deal with your feedback quickly and efficiently.

Platform Hub - Keeping you connected

Keeping connected with you is our number one priority, along with our promise to offer more ways to get in touch with us and making it simpler for you to access our services.



Answered
267,772
phone calls with an
average call time of
13 mins 22 secs



Responded to
86,628
emails



Answered
5,554
social media messages



Increased the number of
Your Platform customer
portal users to
17,976



Handled
127,000
contacts made digitally – an
increase of more than **9,000**
than the previous year



Made
51,268
call backs within **67 mins**
– target **60 mins**



Dealt with
31,275
enquiries via Your Platform



Received
118,408
visits to our new website since
its launch in March 2023



Have over
4,800
Facebook followers



Your level of customer service has been of an extremely high standard.



Thank you for listening and helping me today. I am going through a very difficult time and it was lovely to speak to someone so kind and caring.



New technology to make it easier for you to get in touch

Video calling

Innovative technology that enables us to interact with you via live video was successfully launched last year, and is already proving extremely beneficial to help us handle your repair reports.

In some instances, we have resolved a simple repair task or concern by diagnosing what the problem may be and talking you through how to resolve it.

This software has also enabled us to downgrade many emergency reports to routine repairs or resulted in a different outcome, which means that our Property Care team works efficiently, and emergency repairs are quickly dealt with.

Along with enabling us to accurately assess repairs, video chat allows us to capture real time images for our Property Care team to review, prior to visiting your home to carry out a repair.

Chatbot and Live Chat

An encouraging four-week trial which included involved customers in December 2022, led us to launching a new 24/7 chatbot on our website, along with offering an improved live chat advisor experience during our normal opening hours.

Between December 2022 and March 2023:

- **2,778** Chatbot interactions were recorded.
- **6,044** of your questions were answered, without the need to transfer to advisor live chat to resolve your enquiry.
- Average response time – **0.63 seconds**
- Average confidence score – **almost 76%**

In the year ahead, we will be looking at the data to refine the questions our chatbot can answer to improve our overall average confidence score.

These two new digital service innovations which we plan to build on in the year ahead will ensure we provide you with excellent customer services and help us to meet any future challenges.

Between Oct 2022 and March 2023

1,712

video chats took place allowing us to handle your emergency repairs quickly and efficiently.



Getting in touch

The quickest and easiest way to get in touch is through our digital services. Options include:

- Your Platform customer portal. Simply visit: <https://your.platformmhg.com/register-tenancy/> to register. You will need your tenancy reference number, date of birth and email address.
- Platform website – www.platformmhg.com
 - Speak to our Chatbot 24/7
 - Live chat with our customer advisors
 - Complete online enquiry and reporting forms, including non-urgent repairs, changing repairs appointments and reporting ASB.
- Facebook – www.facebook.com/PlatformHousing

If you don't currently do digital, don't worry, you can call us on **0333 200 7304**. Call waiting times can vary, so if your call is not an emergency you can request a call back.



Engaging and investing in our communities

We are committed to making a difference for you and the communities you live in and deliver a huge range of community initiatives to support this aim.

Throughout the year our Community Engagement Officers work with customers and partners in neighbourhoods across all our areas to deliver regular community engagement activities.

Here is a snapshot of some of the larger projects that they have been involved in.

Communities Connected

Each year we take to the road to deliver our Communities Connected programme of events aimed at bringing customers, colleagues and partners together who are committed to creating stronger, healthier and thriving communities.

Last year's programme of events, held in spring and autumn, were a huge success and encouraged everyone to come together to make a positive change in our local communities.

There were community clean-ups, health and wellbeing activities, digital and community safety events, along with advice and support sessions on the cost of living crisis.

Find an event near you!
 This year's Communities Connected programme of events is even bigger, so why not take part in an activity near you? Head over to our website - www.platformhg.com/communities-connected-2023 to find out more.



Communities Connected clean up event

Community Chest Fund

Our **£150,000**, 2022-23 **Community Chest Fund** was open to applications from charities, clubs and not-for-profit organisations. Funding was approved to those that could demonstrate how their project or initiative would make a positive difference to our customers and people living in Platform communities, under our Health and Wellbeing, Community Cohesion, Skills & Employability, Community Safety and Digital Inclusion themes.

All applications were assessed by involved customers who are members of our Customer Experience Panel. The table below outlines the number of applications we received last year, the total applied for and how much funding was awarded.

	2022-23	2021-22
Number of applications	124	115
Total amount applied for	£249,862.83	£266,819.58
Total amount awarded	£138,999.80	£149,979.65

Making a positive difference

Our Community Chest funding made a real difference to the charities and people it supported. In total we granted a huge **£138,999.80** supporting **98 community projects**, across the whole of our geographical area.

We also donated a further **£10,000** to support our Community Warm Hub funding initiative, which you can read more about on page 21.

£138,999.80
funding awarded

98
community projects supported

Delivered **245** events and activities

In **23** local authority areas

More than **2,500** people took part

445 Platform colleagues got involved

We worked with **70** community partners

Here are just a few of the projects our Community Chest Fund supported last year.



Broughton Astley Parish Council, Leicestershire

£2,000 funding towards two new community defibrillators

"We are delighted that the two new defibrillators have now been installed in a decommissioned telephone kiosk and at a local recreation ground. Both are now working fully and registered with the ambulance service."



What Makes You Beautiful Makes You Happy, Malvern, Worcestershire

£1,500 funding for fun, family day out to Legoland

"We would like to thank Platform Housing Group for their Community Chest Funding, which enabled us to organise a coach trip to Legoland, something that many of the children and families that we support wouldn't ordinarily be able to do."



Alford Town Football Club, Alford, Lincolnshire

£3,000 funding for young players team coats

"We are very grateful for the generous grant which has enabled us to provide good quality winter coats for general use, including school, for approximately 130 children aged 6-15 years old, currently playing for our teams."



Freedom Leisure, Matlock, Derbyshire

£2,925 funding to deliver free seated exercise classes

"The impact of this work goes beyond supporting residents with their physical health, providing them with the opportunity to come together to socialise and improve their mental wellbeing."



Toynton All Saints Primary School, Spilsbury, Lincolnshire

£700 funding for new playground friendship bench and school library books

"As a school we feel fortunate to have received Community Chest funding to buy a new friendship bench for our playground, a set of class dictionaries and some new French books for our library to further develop the curriculum we offer."



Platform customer David Heywood, who volunteers at the Community Warm Hub, is pictured with Chris Stacey from St Paul's Church.



Jordan at the Malvern Help Centre

Community Warm Hub funding

By securing a £10,000 grant from the EEM Trust Cost of Living Fund and adding a further £20,000 from our Wellbeing Fund and Community Chest, we were able to ensure that our customers received a warm welcome at more than 50 local community warm hubs.

Located in the heart of local communities, warm hubs are designed to support vulnerable and isolated people, as well as those on lower incomes, as the cost of living continues to be a daily challenge.

The EEM Trust Cost of Living Fund offers grants for projects that support local people struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Chris Stacey from St Paul's Church which received funding said, "We have more than 300 people accessing many different groups over the week and this donation will help towards easing the financial pressure we all face when trying to keep these provisions open. Thank you for your support to our charity which is hugely appreciated."

Digital help sessions lead to new job!

Digital Champion volunteer Jordan has recently moved into his first ever paid employment, after gaining new skills volunteering at one of our Digital4Everyone sessions.

"I started working at Platform's Help Centre in Malvern a year ago, helping people with IT basics as a Digital Champion," explains Jordan.

"I've never done paid work before, only work experience, so the opportunity to interact with so many people on a regular basis really helped my confidence. The experience inspired me to look harder for paid work."

Jordan did just that, and successfully secured a job in catering.

"Catering is my passion and I'm delighted to say that I have now secured my first ever paid employment as a relief catering assistant. I started my training this week and I love it. It's a small start but I'm so pleased and so is my Mum!"

Let's get Online

Our Digital4Everyone sessions are a free one stop shop to help customers and communities access digital services.

We work with our community partners and volunteer Digital Champions to support regular events in our neighbourhoods to introduce people to what's possible when they get online, like looking for work, connecting with friends and family, booking appointments and shopping online.

If you need help with computer basics, want to learn more about email or social media or looking for work online, we can help. Simply head over to our website - www.platformhmg.com/digital4everyone



Christmas Kindness campaign

Platform's annual Christmas Kindness Campaign saw us donate more than **£35,000** to support **50** vital, local charities in the run-up to the festive season.

One of the organisations to benefit was the Jigsaw Foodbank. Our funding enabled the foodbank to purchase special Christmas food parcels and children's gifts to help struggling families, who were already dealing with many other challenges, enjoy Christmas.

Ruth Longfellow, Jigsaw Foodbank Coordinator said: "Jigsaw Foodbank has used the donation to make sure that an incredible toy or gift has been provided for each child in the families we are supporting.

"The gifts are distributed in a discreet bag along with wrapping paper and sticky tape so that the families can wrap them up and know the gift is from them. So, thank you Platform – your generosity has really made a difference."



Platform's Director of Housing, Lisa Fairlie (right) is pictured presenting the donation to Jigsaw's Support Worker, Sarah Earlam (left) surrounded by all the children's gifts.

People make Platform – Partner with us

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is very important to us. Our approach is to focus on acknowledging diversity, learning about it and celebrating it as a strength. By truly embracing the differences within our communities we can offer our customers better customer service.

We've been working hard within our localities to support some of the amazing projects and charities who do just that, every day.

Apply for a grant

Each year we offer grants to those who want to make a difference in your communities by highlighting its diversity, breaking down barriers and encouraging residents to take part in activities.

Applications can be made by community groups and charities to support work that will benefit our customers, especially those from minority groups. Simply email: info@platformhg.com to find out more.





More than
£35,000
Kindness Campaign
funding was
donated



Supporting
50
vital, local
charities

Recognising Community Heroes who make an amazing difference in our local communities

Platform's Community Heroes Awards recognise and celebrate the unsung heroes who do incredible work in our local communities and make a real difference to others.

Made possible by our partners who sponsor the event, eight winners were crowned as Community Heroes in 2023.

Our Community Heroes Young Person Award winners are everyday superheroes and a voice for their community. Superhero Jack is 8 years old and lives with Autism. He is always ready to use his superpowers to help anyone and is a fantastic representative for his community.

Jack and his mum, Mel, have written and published a book with Jack as the main

character, sharing how Jack's Autism gives him superpowers, like supersonic hearing and x-ray vision!

On hearing that he had won, Jack said, "Oh my gosh! I am so happy to win! I'm not going to stop being a superhero though, I want to be the voice of my community and other superheroes."

Why not nominate now!

If you know an unsung Community Hero who deserves recognition for what they do, you can nominate them throughout the year using our online form – www.platformhg.com/community-heroes



Winner Jack is picture with his mum Mel receiving his award.



Turning up the volume on our Customer Voice

Putting customers at the very heart of everything we do and ensuring that your voice is heard is central to ensuring that we deliver the services you want and expect.

We understand that life can be hectic, which is why we always strive to make it as easy as possible for you to get involved and have your say.

Our involved customers represent the voice of all customers to help influence and shape our services. Identifying what we do well and making recommendations for improvements in areas where we could do better, is a key part of their role.

During the year, our involved customers provided feedback on a whole range of scrutiny projects, focus groups, new policies and procedures, surveys, customer letters, documents and leaflets.

Co-creating Services

Co-creation is a way of putting customers at the very centre of developing new services and processes. It involves customers and colleagues coming together as equals to discuss how services can be delivered in a way that works for everyone involved.

We started our journey into co-creation by completing a pilot project about fire safety and how we share this essential information with customers who live in our high-rise flats.

There were some great discussions where our involved customers got the opportunity to tell us what was really important to them on this topic. An action plan was put together for our Building Safety team to deliver.

Following the evaluation of this pilot project, more exciting, co-creation projects will be delivered going forward.



Scrutiny Panel meeting



Platform colleagues looking forward to welcoming customers to our new Community Conversations Roadshows.

Customer Experience Panel

The Customer Experience Panel (CEP) is at the heart of our customer involvement structure.

This panel of customers take a strategic role in reviewing our performance and contributing to our policies and strategies.

The customers who make up our panel are all passionate about making a difference, improving services and ensuring we are developing services from a customers' viewpoint.

They meet every eight weeks with our colleagues and Board members to ensure that your Customer Voice is heard and areas for improvement are discussed and recommendations swiftly acted upon.

During the year, we have further developed the role of the Customer Experience Panel and recruited new members from more of our communities, to ensure that our panel is reflective of our diverse Customer Voice.

Here are some of the key things that the panel has done over the year:

- Researched and reviewed 13 policies and strategies and given their recommendations for improvement.
- Taken an active role in a range of project focus groups.
- Regularly evaluated and approved Community Chest applications to ensure that the funding delivers maximum impact for our customers and communities.

Customer Scrutiny Panel

The Customer Scrutiny Panel is a group of 15 customers who undertake in-depth reviews of our services and make recommendations to improve the services we offer.

Although they often review service areas where we know that improvements need to be made, they also choose topics to investigate based on their own observations of our performance.

During the year, the panel carried out a complete review of our mutual exchange process to make sure that it's straightforward and easy for customers to use. They made some important recommendations, which were actioned to upgrade the process and improve your customer experience.

Panel members also joined our colleagues to look at how we deliver grounds maintenance. This resulted in some services being delivered by our in-house Property Care team.

Regular catch-ups have also been introduced so that panel members can keep up to date on key hot topics, are kept fully informed on what's happening across Platform and are in a strong position to review and scrutinise services.



Why not sign up to get involved – we'd love to hear from you!

Whether you have a lot of time to give or a little, we have lots of ways that your voice can be heard, whether virtually or in person. Getting involved can bring many rewards: you can meet new people, earn vouchers, learn new skills and help us improve the services you receive.

Simply head over to our website – www.platformhg.com/get-involved – complete our online form and our team will be in touch!



Looking forward to 2023-24

- ✓ A review of our existing customer engagement framework is already underway to make sure that we can turn up the volume on our Customer Voice and deliver the services you want and expect.
- ✓ We are launching a new Customer Voice Panel and are on a mission to recruit new members. Find out more below.
- ✓ A Customer Voice Conference has been planned so that our Customer Voice and Scrutiny Panels members can come together to discuss and review the important role they play representing the voice of all customers.
- ✓ We have kicked off our new Community Conversations Roadshows, to connect with customers face-to-face. Keep a look out for when we will be in your neighbourhood.
- ✓ We will continue to develop our approach to co-creation to ensure that the views of our customers are taken into consideration on a wide range of service improvement projects.



Mavis with her Community Heroes Customer Involvement Award.

Join our Customer Voice Panel

Do you want to get involved and turn up the volume on our Customer Voice?

We are recruiting customers to join our **Customer Voice Panel**, to work alongside our colleagues and Board members to ensure we deliver excellent services.

You don't need any previous experience as we offer full training and support so that you can provide vital feedback and turn up the volume on our Customer Voice.

It's a great opportunity for you to represent the voice of all customers, learn new skills and receive a payment of **£2,500 per year**, plus all reasonable expenses, although you can choose to be a non-paid voluntary member.

If you would like to know more, we'd love to hear from you!



Simply click on the QR code, or head over to our website www.platformhg.com/customer-voice-panel – complete our online form and we will be in touch.

“I am really proud of the differences I have made!”

Our Community Heroes Customer Involvement Award winner Mavis has been an involved customer for a staggering 23 years! In that time, she has made sure that customers have their say and been instrumental in bringing about important service improvements.

Over the last two decades Mavis has demonstrated tremendous dedication to her various roles and always worked for the greater good of all customers, providing feedback and pushing for improvements to benefit everyone.

“When I became a widow, I had the time and the inclination to get involved and truly believe that by working together we can make a real difference.” shares Mavis.

“I really feel that customers should get more involved to help make the service better which is what we all want. I am really proud of the differences I have made!”

Gem Murphy, Platform's Head of Customer and Community Engagement added, “Mavis always considers the bigger picture and the impact of decisions on not just herself or her immediate community but all Platform customers.

“Although she is extremely humble about the impact she has had, we recognise that she is a real hero, so thank you Mavis!”



I really feel that customers should get more involved to help make the service better which is what we all want. I am really proud of the differences I have made!



Managing your home

Our Neighbourhood teams deliver an extensive range of services to customers across our large operating area, which is split into three areas known as localities. These are named after the main rivers in each region:

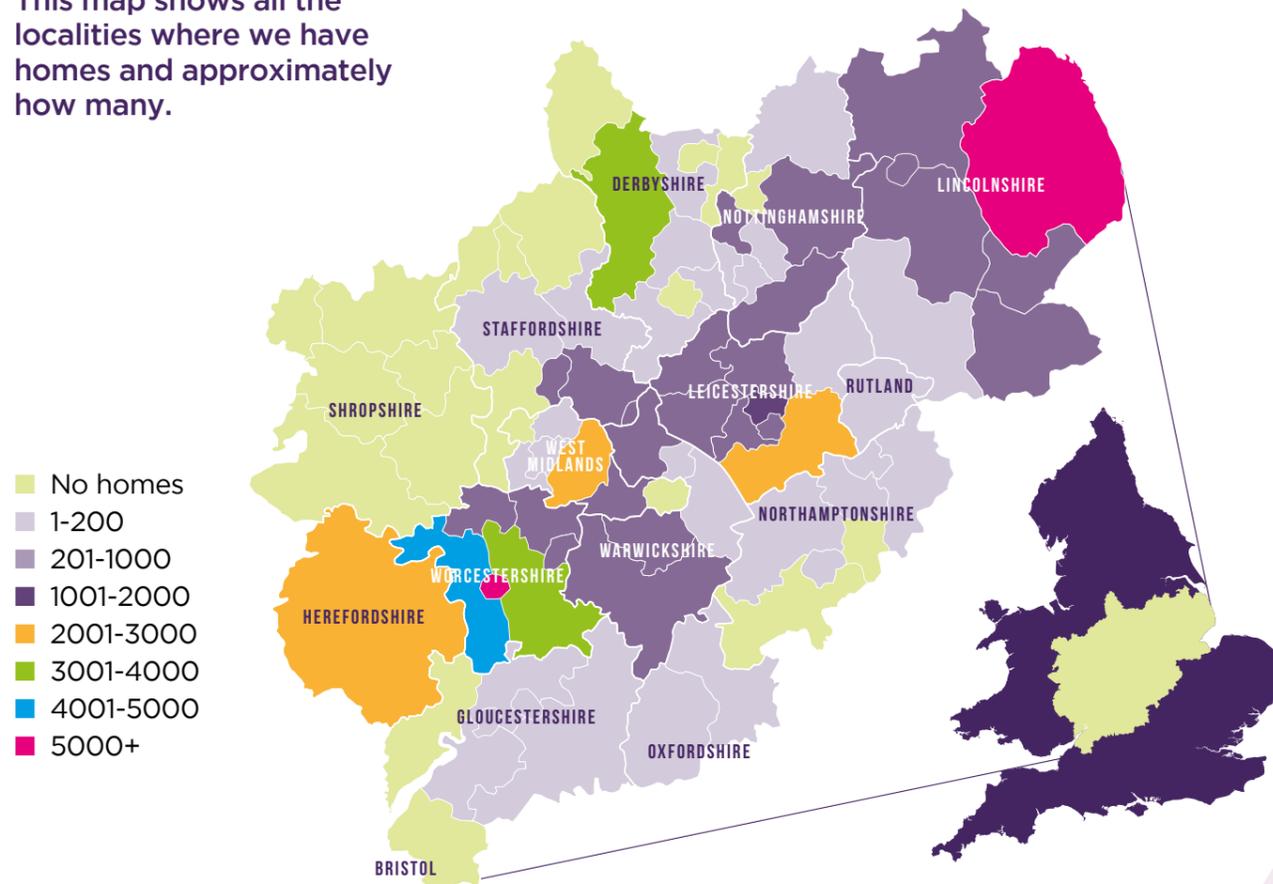
Severn locality	Tame locality	Witham locality
Herefordshire Worcestershire Gloucestershire Oxfordshire	Derbyshire Leicestershire Shropshire Staffordshire West Midlands Warwickshire	East Ridings Lincolnshire Nottinghamshire Rutland Cambridgeshire Northamptonshire Leicestershire



Platform colleagues and partners out in the community raising awareness about the dangers of loan sharks.

Where we have homes

This map shows all the localities where we have homes and approximately how many.



Silent Customer Initiative

Following the widely publicised sad death of a tenant who was found in her housing association home two years after she died, we have looked at how we can improve and maintain ongoing contact with you.

This led us to launching our Silent Customer Initiative that aims to develop new projects to identify and prioritise customers who we have had no contact from, or with, for some time.

This has helped us to grow our existing Tenancy Health Checks and target home visits to customers that may be most at risk, have unreported repairs or unmet needs.

We are doing this in a phased approach which has enabled us to initially focus on customers who we feel are more likely to be at risk.

Phase 1	210 customers identified, aged over 65 .
Status	Contact successfully made with all 210 customers.
Phase 2	279 customers identified aged 45 to 65 , plus any new 65+ who became silent.
Status	Under 10 customers remain silent. Attempts to contact ongoing.
Phase 3	General customers aged under 45 and those aged 45+ who become silent.
Status	Ongoing

Tenancy Health Checks

Last year, as part of our Silent Customer Initiative we enhanced our Tenancy Health Checks to include a general wellbeing check.

Our Tenancy Health Checks enable us to speak to you face-to-face about your tenancy, including:

- How you are feeling about your home and if you are experiencing any problems.
- The account information we hold for you, to ensure that contact details are correct and that our records accurately reflect who is living with you.
- Whether you have unreported or outstanding repair jobs.
- A general wellbeing check to see if you need any additional help and support.

Our Tenancy Health Checks take place as part of a normal tenancy review and renewal or because we have already arranged to see you. Over the last 12 months our Neighbourhood Officers have also been steadily working through visits to those customers we haven't heard from for a while.

2,000
tenancy
health checks
completed

20%
of those visited
had unreported
repairs

Safeguarding our customers and communities

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

Safeguarding training is compulsory for all our colleagues, irrespective of their role and we regularly raise the importance of speaking up about any concerns, emphasising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

In April 2022 we launched new in-house software for recording all safeguarding cases across our organisation. Investing in this software has ensured a consistent approach to recording and managing any safeguarding reports and led to it being shortlisted in the UK Housing Innovator of the Year Award.



441

safeguarding concerns were raised



35%

increase on reports from the year before



89%

of reports were for adults



11%

of reports were for children

Working together to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

The safety and wellbeing of customers is always our number one priority. We understand that anti-social behaviour (often referred to as ASB) can have a significant impact on people's mental health and sense of security, as well as harming the wider community.

Our dedicated Community Safety team is committed to helping build stronger, safer communities and work hard with customers and local partners to improve community safety and reduce incidents of ASB in our neighbourhoods.



3,972

new ASB cases recorded



97%

of ASB reports were responded to within 3 working days



100%

of hate crime reports were responded to within 24 hours

Top four issues reported:



1,100
noise issues



662
verbal abuse or threatening behaviour



363
pet problems



410
drugs related



47
Additional hate related reports

Report it!

If you're concerned about a possible safeguarding issue or you are experiencing ASB please report it. You can report safeguarding concerns to your local authority safeguarding adult or child team. ASB can be reported online on our website - www.platformmhg.com/antisocialbehaviour

You can also alert us to any safeguarding or ASB concerns by calling our Customer Hub on **0333 200 7304**. If you or someone else is in immediate danger or a crime has been committed, call the police on **999**.



Kia and Zoe are pictured taking part in one of Platform's Have you Heard podcasts.

"I'm getting to grips with what can be challenging situations"

After struggling to recruit trained ASB officers to join our Community Safety team, we heard about Resolve's innovative new apprenticeship programme. After finding out more, Platform advertised to recruit an apprentice Community Safety Officer.

In 2022, Resolve launched the first ever ASB apprenticeship programme in the country for apprentices to study a Tackling ASB and Improving Community Safety qualification.

"Kia joined our team as a Community Safety Apprentice and has already started to get to grips with the complexities of dealing with ASB and the need to build strong relationships with both the victims and where possible, the perpetrators." explains Kia's mentor, Zoe.

Resolve's blended learning approach, with on the job training, online learning and formal assignments to assess our apprentice's progression and development has already started to deliver impressive results for our Community Safety team.

"I was delighted to be given the chance to learn on the job, whilst gaining a formal qualification." said Kia.

"Zoe is a great mentor; she has worked in Community Safety at Platform for more than 15 years and is always willing to share her insight and experience to help me investigate and manage ASB cases."

When asked about her future career aspirations, Kia said, "I'm getting to grips with what can be challenging situations and hope that in the future, I will become a fully trained Community Safety Officer and secure a role in Platform's dedicated team."

Resolve's Apprenticeship Programme Lead Claire Wakefield said, "Resolve is delighted to see Platform's apprentice, Kia, flourishing in the programme. Kia's success is a testament to Platform's commitment to the programme, and the constant mentoring Kia receives from someone who is already doing the job that Kia will go into."

Keeping you safe – Capped Gas App

In August 2022, to help us deliver on our promise to ensure that all our customers live in a warm and safe home, we launched a new capped gas app.

Where available, it's essential that a home's gas supply is operational so that the heating system and other appliances, such as gas fires and cookers are working. Without adequate heating, homes can develop damp and condensation mould, which can have an impact on a customer's health and wellbeing.

Developed internally, the new app flags homes where the gas supply has been capped off. It sends a prompt to the local Neighbourhood Officer who calls the customer to discuss why they have no gas supply and to ultimately ensure that you have a working heating and hot water system.

In some cases, this call has led us to raising safeguarding concerns, providing further relevant support and working alongside local partners who offer more specialist help.

Initial outcomes are very encouraging:

- **566** of the **730 capped gas** cases logged have been resolved.
- **441** customers have had their gas supply uncapped.
- We are working to resolve the **164** live cases.
- **109** of these gas supplies remain capped, through customer choice. We are offering further support and exploring options with these customers.

Since going live, we have further developed the app so that our Neighbourhood Officers can schedule and book appointments for the gas to be turned back on, which speeds up the process.



Platform colleagues and community partners on a Neighbourhood Walkabout.



“It’s so nice to have a lovely deep warm bath.”

Following numerous failed attempts to access a home to carry out an annual gas service check the gas was capped, to ensure that we remained compliant with stringent gas safety regulations that help keep people safe.

The app flagged this case, so we visited and found that the customer's boiler had been condemned and their only source of heating and hot water was using an expensive immersion heater. It was sadly obvious that they were struggling to manage the condition of their home, along with their large number of cats.

We worked with the police and several local residents to turn the condition of the property around, and the cats were rehomed by the RSPCA. This encouraged the customer to redecorate their home and we installed a new boiler and heating system.

The customer was delighted and said, “Thanks for sorting my boiler out, it's so nice to be able to have a lovely deep warm bath and not worry about how much it will cost now I don't have to use the immersion heater!”



Neighbourhood Walkabouts

Our annual programme of Neighbourhood Walkabouts gives you the chance to meet with your Neighbourhood Officer, local council, police and other community partners to walk around your neighbourhood, highlighting any concerns you may have.

They were developed to try to:

- Ensure that our homes, open spaces and communal areas are being maintained to a good standard.
- Offer you the opportunity to get to know your neighbourhood officer and community partners to chat about neighbourhood and community matters.
- Ensure that your neighbourhood is a safe place to live.
- Identify areas and themes for future Communities Connected activities.

Improving customers' mutual exchange experience

Last year, we completed a project aimed at upgrading our mutual exchange process and improving customer experience, which resulted in a new and improved process being launched.

While you can continue to use Home Swapper to find a suitable swap, we have introduced a new solution called Swap Tracker, which enables you to monitor the process of your exchange online, along with any tasks that you need to complete.

You can find out more on our website - www.platformhg.com/rent-home



Supporting your wellbeing

Last year, the cost of living crisis in such close succession to the pandemic, presented huge challenges for everyone.

The **Successful Tenancies Team**



To help you during this difficult time we grew our support services, which included raising the total value of our Wellbeing Fund to **£2 million** and increasing the number of Successful Tenancies Advisors available to help you.

Initiatives such as Stay Nimble and Fusion also enabled us to offer you employment advice, whether for a career change due to redundancy or navigating moving into a job for the first time.

To enhance our support, we also partnered with the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) who offer expert energy advice and Money Helper (Money & Pensions Service) for specialist debt support.

Successful Tenancies

A staggering **£2,583,000** of extra income was secured for customers by our Successful Tenancies team through benefits applications and awards, grant applications and rental income.

Specialist advisors worked with customers, who are normally referred to the team by our colleagues, to help them maintain their tenancy and, where possible, maximise income.

Last year, the team received **6,317** referrals, which was a **16%** increase on the previous year. The highest number of monthly referrals were received in March 2023, with **689** new cases opened.

Our skilled team:

- Carry out benefits entitlement checks.
- Make benefits, grants and scheme applications.
- Offer expert budgeting tips and advice.
- Make onward referrals for further support, such as debt, energy and employment advice.
- Keep up to date with the ever changing energy price increases and any associated support packages made available.

Fusion Job Coaching

During 2022-23 Platform employed three Job Coaches, funded by Building Better Opportunities grant funding. Our Job Coaches provided support and advice to customers facing barriers to employment and moving forward with their lives.

Whilst the project funding ended in March 2023, over the last 6 years we:



“Life is looking up for me and my family.”

Arslan came to the UK as part of the Afghanistan resettlement programme and was referred to the Fusion programme by his resettlement support worker at Worcestershire County Council.

Arslan had been searching for employment for over a year, without success and naturally was feeling despondent. Primary goals were set with the aim to find employment in an administrative and customer service role. Although there were a few leads, no job materialised, which left Arslan feeling discouraged.

Our Job Coach emailed details of two administrative jobs available at Platform, which he applied for and was delighted to be invited to interview for an Apprenticeship Administrator vacancy. Successful in his first interview, he was invited to a second interview, which really boosted Arslan’s confidence.

Together they prepared for the second interview and Arslan was successful, being offered the job on the same day as the interview!

“I am so grateful for the support that my Building Better Opportunities Job Coach provided. In particular, the encouragement, knowledge and confidence that he had in my ability to find employment! said Arslan.

“I am so happy to find my first job in the UK and I am looking forward to learning as much as possible and developing a career. Life is really looking up for me and my family.”

“I’m finding it really difficult to manage.”

Sharon initially contacted us by phone as she was finding it really difficult to manage. She was in part time work and a lone parent to a child with behavioural issues.

A benefit check showed that she would be better off by around £50 per week, after allowing for lost Tax Credits, if she claimed Universal Credit (UC). This was put into action straight away and a claim was also made for Council Tax Support.

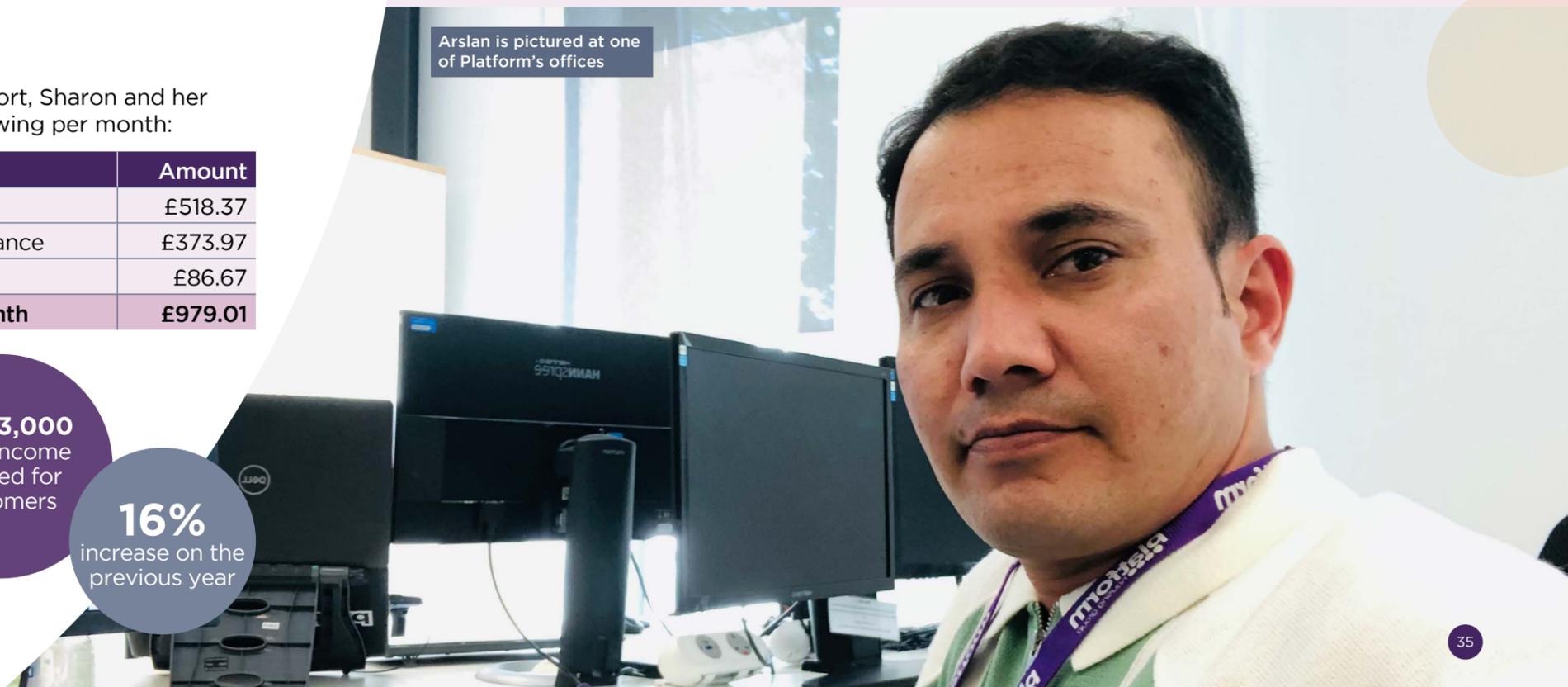
During a home visit, a claim was made for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for her child. Sharon was also advised to update her UC journal as she was due additional UC.

As a result of our support, Sharon and her family gained the following per month:

Benefit	Amount
Universal Credit	£518.37
Disability Living Allowance	£373.97
Council Tax Support	£86.67
Total increase per month	£979.01



Arslan is pictured at one of Platform's offices



Wellbeing Fund

Platform's Wellbeing Fund is open to all customers who are experiencing financial hardship and in need of short-term support.

The fund can help cover **essential** food and energy costs, especially if you are waiting for your first benefit payment. You can also apply for help to purchase **essential household** items, such as beds, along with **additional and special project support**.

Last year, we made **6,488** awards to customers experiencing financial difficulties. **£1,982,604.49** was spent supporting customers with food, energy, household essentials, white goods, essential furniture, employment, digital inclusion and wellbeing support.

Requests for foodbank vouchers peaked at the start of 2023, due to the cost of living crisis hitting the hardest during the winter months.



10,549

customer applications



6,488

awards, totalling
£1,982,604.49



2,358

support package funding



5,703

essential support
funding – up **136%**
compared to 2021-22



Special Projects funding

£83,000



Stay Nimble

Change Your Future – Build Your Career – Thrive with Career Coaching

Through our partnership with Stay Nimble we can offer customers six hours of free specialist coaching and bespoke support.

Available through their easy to use website tools, help is on offer so you can understand more about your strengths and skills, build confidence and be inspired to explore job opportunities and future career goals.



90

customers registered
in 2022-23.



Since the initiative started

189

customers have registered.

Find out more

To find out more and sign up for Stay Nimble head over to our website – www.platformhg.com/career-coaching.

“I am getting my life back together piece by piece and I’m feeling very positive about my future.”

Last year, we helped Becky settle into her own home, move on from abuse and start looking forward to her future. Here Becky shares her personal story.

“Before I moved into my Platform home, I had been homeless due to a relationship breakdown. After months of living through mental abuse and a toxic relationship, both my mental and general health were deteriorating.

“Sadly, it all came to a violent and very distressing end, and I just had to get out for my own safety. I was very lucky that my employer had a camper van that they let me stay in for more than three months, something that I will always be incredibly grateful to them for.

“A lovely lady called Ann who works in Platform’s Lettings team, helped to find me somewhere to live – she was fantastic and very patient, as I was feeling so desperate.

“I heard about the Platform Wellbeing Fund through my Housing Officer Helen, who has been so supportive and helpful. It was quite easy to apply and Jenn from the Wellbeing Fund team was absolutely fantastic, so helpful and kind.

“I was able to purchase a washing machine and cooker using the Wellbeing Fund, which was great as I just couldn’t afford these items, although they are obviously an everyday necessity. My employer gave me a bed and fridge and family and friends gave me a sofa, microwave, pans, etc., to get me started.

“I absolutely love my new home, it’s perfect and my future is looking really good! I have my job; I have my beautiful home and I have support from family and friends. I am getting my life back together piece by piece and I’m feeling very positive about my future.

“Out of what was a very dark and difficult time has shone a new beginning, a new brighter future. I am so incredibly grateful to everyone for all their help and support – Thank you!”

Getting in touch

If you would like to find out more about our Wellbeing Fund and how it might be able to help you, please visit our website – www.platformhg.com/platform-wellbeing-fund or call our Hub team on **0333 200 7304** and one of our advisors will be happy to help you.

Specialist Housing support



Our dedicated Specialist Housing team look after older customers living in our Retirement Housing and young people in our Supported Living Housing.

Each of our specialist communities offer customers the support, peace of mind and environment to live their best life, independently.

Following an extensive consultation with all customers living in one of our retirement housing schemes, which provided real insight into how our residents would like our retirement housing improved and developed, we launched a new, enhanced bespoke way of delivering services.

With a real focus on independence, communication, technology, wellbeing and health, activities and maintenance of homes and external spaces, initial feedback is proving extremely positive.

Retirement Housing

Our 12 retirement villages and 75 retirement living schemes, provide a friendly and safe place for people over 55 to live independently in their own home.

Situated in the heart of our communities, with many local services such as health care, leisure and social activities within close proximity, customers can enjoy a lifestyle that focuses on enjoying life a little more each day, having less worries and being with like-minded people, which promotes wellbeing and reduces social isolation.



Residents are pictured testing a tipper kettle.

The secrets to living a long and fulfilling life

Earlier this year, two lovely customers who live at our Epperstone Court, Retirement Housing scheme in Nottingham, both reached the remarkable age of 100!

First to celebrate her special day was Carolie, who turned 100 in January. She has lived at Epperstone Court for more than 10 years; a home she refers to as nice and comfy, with friendly neighbours, a great garden and plenty of activities to keep her mind and body active.

“Carolie always has a ready smile and is a very active member of our lovely community here at Epperstone Court. We were honoured to be part of her birthday celebrations and view her letter from our new King marking the special occasion – something that she was very proud of.” explains Lorraine DeCosta, Platform’s Retirement Housing Officer.

When asked about her secret to living



to such an incredible age, Carolie told us, **“I’ve always taken life as it comes, made the most of life – good or bad – and always been kind.”**

Our second birthday girl was Iris’, who turned 100 in March and was made queen for the day by her friends and our retirement housing colleagues.

Lorraine added, “I’m delighted to say that Iris’ special day is the second 100th birthday we have had the honour of celebrating. Iris has lived at Epperstone Court for an incredible 26 years, being one of the first residents to move in when it was built in 1997.”

Known and loved by everyone at Epperstone Court, when asked about her secret to living to such a remarkable age, Iris shared this golden nugget: **“Early to bed, early to rise makes you healthy, wealthy and wise.”**



Shaping digital services for older people

In September 2022, our Specialist Housing team successfully secured funding to enable us to involve our older residents in creating and shaping new digital services.

The pioneering Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (TAPPI) project seeks to investigate the opportunity that technology has to enrich and enhance the everyday lives of our ageing population and aims to improve the way technology is used in housing and care for older people across the country.

Our Harling Court Retirement Village in Ledbury was chosen as one of only six test-bed retirement housing schemes. This ongoing project is proving to be a real hit with our residents and colleagues, who regularly test different digital devices, apps and systems, and decide which innovations to put forward for potential development. A range of devices have already been given to residents to improve their safety and independence including GPS personal alarms, fall detectors and tipper kettles.

Our dedicated TAPPI Project Officer has overseen the distribution of 42 tablets to help residents get online, along with individual coaching and weekly sessions aimed at reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Rosemary, who is 76 years old and has been a resident at Harling Court for 14 years, said, “Today’s technology tends to worry many elderly people and really it shouldn’t.

“Many of us have seen so much innovation in our lives. As a child, we didn’t have electricity until I was seven and my mother never overcame her fear of it. The difference now, is that technology moves a lot faster and as you get older your brain doesn’t move as fast. What we don’t understand, we fear, and I want to change that through TAPPI.”

The TAPPI project is funded by The Dunhill Medical Trust and supported by the Housing LIN and Tec Services Association.

Supported Living

Our Supported Living homes help the most vulnerable young people in our Worcester communities by providing a range of supported housing options with easy access to local public transport and amenities.

For single, young people at risk of homelessness, we provide temporary housing and support services offering practical life skills to enable young people to thrive and be able to sustain a permanent tenancy when they move on from our services in the future.

We also manage supported housing for customers living with learning disabilities where we provide the accommodation and our partners provide specialist care.

Making a difference for young people

Our Supported Living team is always looking to build and improve relationships with customers and with other agencies, who can also offer support.

Here is just a snapshot of some of the initiatives and events our young residents got involved in last year, in addition to the onsite support and guidance they receive on a daily basis.

Mental Health Week

During Mental Health Awareness Week in May, residents and colleagues worked together to plan and enjoy a week's worth of activities which included a movie night, tennis, pizza and pool competition, mental health quiz and a games night.

Awareness session

The local police attended one of our Resident Representative meetings to deliver an important awareness session about the dangers of drugs and County Lines, how easily it can be to be drawn into this kind of life and the personal and local community issues that it can cause.

Queen's Jubilee

In June 2022, residents got involved in celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee at an event with colleagues, which was a huge success. A BBQ and garden games were enjoyed by all, with Platform's Community Engagement team helping to fund the new garden games equipment, for use at future events and initiatives.

Communities Connected

Residents and colleagues took part in a local Communities Connected 'clean up' event, which included clearing out the bike shed and improving the overall appearance of the car park at one of our supported living schemes.

Find out more

If you or someone in your family needs a little help to get more out of life, while still being independent, we can help. You can find out more about the different types of homes we offer, along with the extra support and help available, on our website – www.platformhg.com/find-a-home



Platform colleagues rolled their sleeves up and worked hard preparing and painting the new lounge area.

DIY SOS style makeover!

The official opening of our refurbished retirement living scheme in Lincolnshire took place in December 2022, following a DIY SOS style makeover.

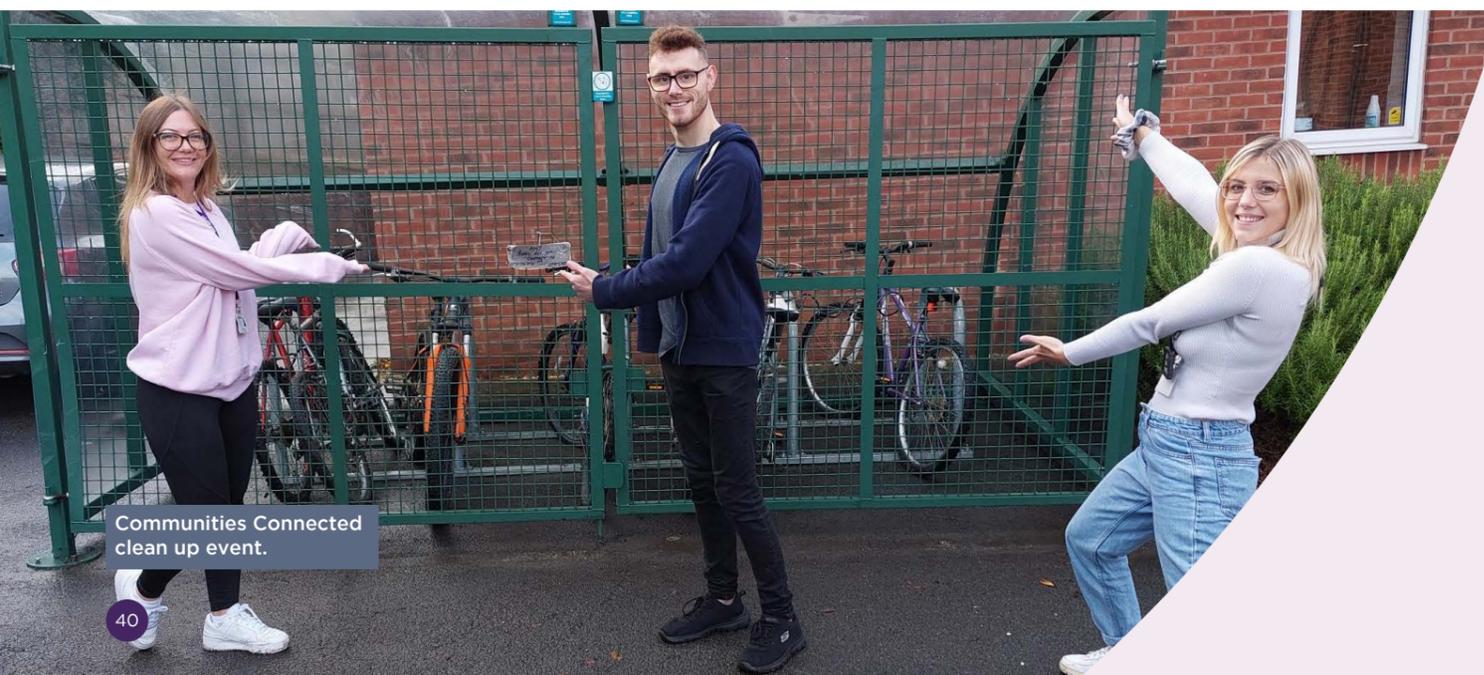
The communal areas at Alexandra Court in Skegness were refurbished thanks to an investment of £22,000 and Platform colleagues rolling up their sleeves and working in partnership with our suppliers who donated building materials and supplies.

"Identifying schemes that need a makeover is a key part of ensuring that our customers live comfortably. As a group of managers, it was also a good exercise for us to go back to basics and really make a difference!" explains Platform's Director of New Customers and Specialist Housing, Sarah Sutton.

Alexandra Court – which has 27 flats and 5 bungalows – was chosen for a makeover to bring it up to more modern standards. Residents were consulted and responded positively to the refurbishment work going ahead and chose the colours and furnishings.

Jan Baldwin, Alexandra Court resident, said, "This new area is warm and inviting and I like the comfortable seating, so now I come and watch the TV. The new kitchen is great, and I am excited to use it. I want to say thank you to Platform and the contractors for all the work they've done."

Matt Blackburn, Territory Representative from Howdens, who supplied the kitchen, said, "We work well with Platform and it's good to be able to give something back from time to time. We're a charitable company and like to give to schemes such as this; it has been great to see how the new kitchen will benefit the residents."



Communities Connected clean up event.

Repairing your home

We are delighted to report that although we had a large number of repair jobs outstanding due to the pandemic at the start of the year, all these outstanding jobs have now been completed.

Whilst there were still a number of ongoing challenges for our repair teams, they have completed more than **157,000** repairs – an increase of more than **52,500** compared to the year before.

We always want to know how happy you are with any repairs we have completed and **88%** of you, who took part in our surveys, told us that you were satisfied with your repair, which is an increase of **5.4%** on the previous year.

 **£86.4m**
overall spend on repairs, maintenance and improvements

 Customer satisfaction **88%**
up from 82.6%

 **157,000**
Total number of repairs carried out

 **23%**
of these repairs were emergencies

 Majority of emergency repairs completed within **10 hours** – target 24 hrs

 Each day **3.5** responsive repair jobs completed – up from 3

Challenges during the year

Like many housing associations up and down the country, it has been a challenging year financially, with many of our suppliers and contractors requesting contract increases due to rises in materials and labour costs.

We are pleased to report that although our three main suppliers requested increases of more than 10%, we negotiated all of these down. We have also seen sub-contractor price rises of between 10% and 25%, so continue to negotiate to achieve best value for money.

Recruitment of skilled operatives has also proved difficult, as there is a countrywide shortage of qualified workers. By reviewing salary and benefits packages and how we advertise vacancies, we are starting to see an improvement in employing these essential colleagues to strengthen our property care workforce.

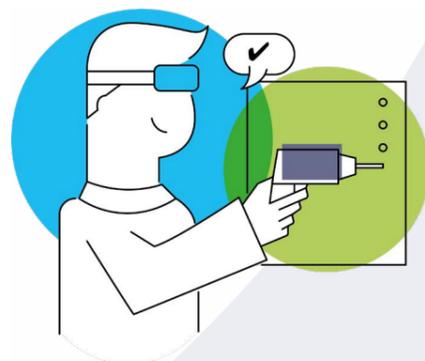
Emergency repair jobs represent 23% of our total repairs, which continues to drive inefficiencies, as we cannot properly plan for these works and these jobs can lead to extensive travel across a day. The introduction of video calling is helping to reduce the number of emergency repair jobs actioned, as we can view any issues remotely in your home to fully evaluate the repair problem and categorise it correctly.

Empty homes

Last year, the number of homes unoccupied, where work still needed to be completed, prior to the home being let, reduced from **392 homes to 286**. We are spending more to repair these homes to meet with our improved lettable standard to ensure that customers move into good quality homes.

 **3,258**
empty homes repaired for re-let

 **6,042**
stock condition surveys undertaken



Using technology to improve services

Making sure that customers are aware of upcoming gas servicing checks and how they can quickly cancel or reschedule an appointment is essential.

To help with this we have invested in a new software solution called Voicescape Compliance, which is already delivering some great results.

This new software automates the process of booking, confirming and rescheduling appointments with you before they happen, to help lower the cost of no access visits

– money that could have been spent on improving homes. During its initial 8 month trial period, the rate of no access visits **reduced by 20%**.

Last year, also saw the launch of our new **Doorstep Appointment** project, so if we are unable to complete a job at the first appointment, we will leave a follow up appointment date and time with you. This reduces the need for you to call us to chase a repair and keeps you informed about what's happening.

We are also planning to upgrade all our appointment scheduling software in 2023-24 and will be able to tell you more, very soon.

Looking forward to 2023-24

So that we can continue to improve repairs services, we are:

-  Planning to spend nearly £107 million on repairs, maintenance and improvement work.
-  Continuing to deliver a focused recruitment campaign to bring more qualified operatives into our business, so that we can reduce the number of sub-contractors we employ to complete repairs.
-  Looking to reduce work in progress jobs from 10,000 to around 6,500.
-  Planning to reduce the time it takes us to complete responsive repairs from 15 working days to 12.
-  Aiming to increase customer satisfaction from 88% to 92%.
-  Working to raise the number of repair jobs completed in a day from 3.5 to 4.
-  Continuing to look at how we can reduce fuel and leasing costs for our fleet of property care vehicles. The introduction of 40 new electric vehicles in 2023-24 will help with this and support the aim to reduce our carbon footprint. It will also move us a step forward in changing to a fully electric fleet, within the next 5 years.
-  Undertaking a full review of our ground maintenance services. Consultation with customers has already begun to develop a co-created new ground maintenance service to make sure we deliver what customers want.

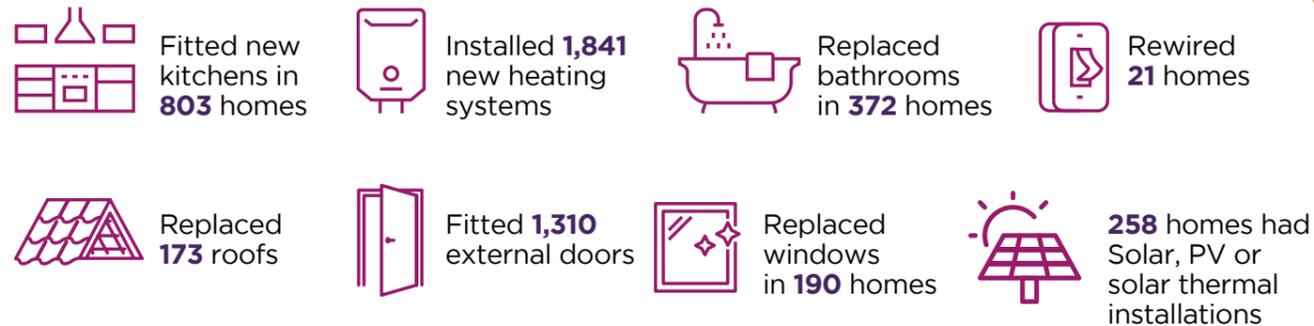
 The two operatives who came to my home today were really informative and seemed really happy, explained everything in simple terms.



 Your gas engineer was very polite, happy and explained what he was doing at different times.

Improving your home

Last year, we invested more than £36 million improving and maintaining homes, including the following planned improvement works:



If your fixtures do not fit the age criteria, they will continue to be repaired until sufficiently old enough for replacement and when our team is next in your area.

Type of improvement	Replacement age
Kitchen	20 years old
Bathroom	30 years old
Boiler	15 years old
External doors	30 years old

Tackling damp and condensation mould

The sad death of toddler Awaab Ishak in Rochdale led us and the housing sector to look at the way reports of **damp and condensation mould** are handled.

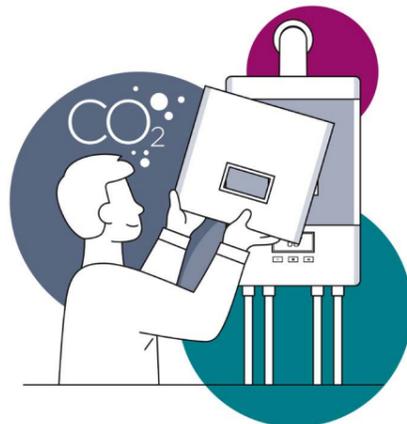
A complete review of the way we deal with reports was carried out, which saw us launch a new robust policy and process for dealing with your concerns.

Extensive colleague training has been completed, no matter what their role, and we have created a full range of handy new guidance leaflets. You can use these to help you spot any possible problems in your home, handy tips on how to deal with damp and condensation mould, along with how to get the best from your heating system.

We also looked back at any historical reports made by customers, who we contacted with a follow-up call, to ensure that we have a clear

picture of any outstanding work required, so that we can successfully deal with any issues you have already reported to us.

Find out more
 You can find out more and view the new handy guides on our website - www.platformhg.com/damp-and-condensation-mould



Keeping you safe

As a landlord we have important legal duties and obligations to keep you and your family safe. By law, we must carry out essential safety checks and it's an important condition of your tenancy that you give us access to your home to carry out this work.

This wide-ranging programme of safety inspections, including gas and electrical safety tests, fire safety, asbestos, legionella and many more, gives you the peace of mind that you and your family are safe.

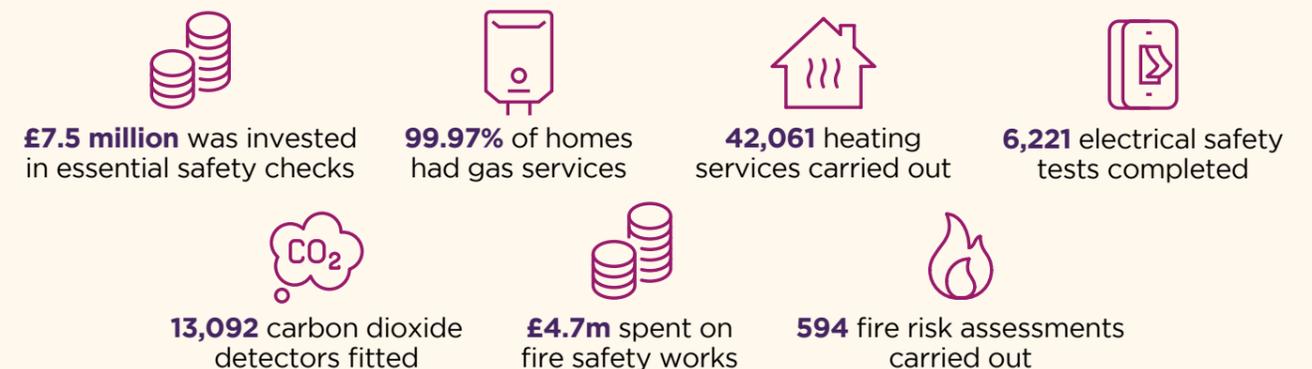
Only 11 homes were non-compliant at the end of 2022-23, due to problems gaining access. This is the lowest since March 2020, helped by the investment we made into a new powerful digital solution which automates the process of booking, confirming and rescheduling appointments.

You can help us to keep you safe

There is no charge for any of our safety inspections, including our gas servicing and safety check, which is a quick and simple process.

Sadly, each year, people die due to faulty gas fires or appliances in the home. You can't smell or taste carbon monoxide, but it can kill within minutes. That's why it's vitally important that you let us in to your home to do this essential work.

You can change your gas appointment by calling us on **0333 200 7304**.



Looking forward to 2023-24

We have big plans for next year and have committed even more money to carry out improvements. We plan to invest:

- ✓ **£58.8 million** improving your homes
- ✓ **£1.3 million** modernising our retirement living homes
- ✓ **£4.4 million** carrying out fire safety works

Climate change - Going green

We are committed to reducing the impact we have on the climate and last year we continued to invest in a number of projects to help us do this.

Energy Rating Performance

By 2030 we need to move all our homes to an Energy Rating Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C or above. We have 11,138 homes that need upgrading and have already started an ambitious investment project to carry out this retrofit work, which will take up to 7 years to complete.

Retrofit refers to any improvement work on an existing home to improve its energy efficiency, making it easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.

By taking a fabric first approach, which means focusing on reducing a home's heat loss, we can achieve a low carbon, sustainable home that's affordable to heat.

Improvement works typically include insulation, highly efficient windows and doors, ventilation, heat pumps and solar PV panels.

Current EPC ratings of our homes

Rating	Homes with certificate ¹
A (92+)	121
B (81-91)	10,235
C (69-80)	14,534
D (55-68)	8,902
E (39-54)	2,106
F (21-38)	119
G (1-20)	11
	36,028

¹A further 3,943 homes were without an EPC at March 2022.

Securing grant funding

By working with our local authority partners, we have secured grant funding from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

This will help us to retrofit nearly 1,100 existing homes to make them more energy efficient for customers.

The fund was set up by the Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to improve the energy efficiency of social housing homes.

Funding Wave	Grant secured	Homes to be retrofit
Wave 1	£1.2 million	100
Wave 2	£12.1 million	995



11,138

of our homes have an energy rating of D or below.



We plan to invest approx
£65 million
to upgrade these homes over the next 5-7 years



During the year we built

962

new homes which have all been designed to achieve an **Energy Performance Rating of B or above.**



Platform colleagues are pictured with our partners Lightfoot in front of two of our new electrical vehicles.

Our new Green Fleet

Looking after 48,000 homes means that we've got a large fleet of vehicles travelling across our neighbourhoods, every day, supporting customers.

This fleet incurs high running costs and omits significant CO2 emissions, something we are committed to reducing.

This year, to help us with this, we have:

- Invested in **40 new green fleet electric vehicles**, which will be out and about in your neighbourhoods very soon.
- Partnered with Lightfoot to implement a **new vehicle management system** across our Property Care team, that allows us to maximise the efficiency of our vehicles and supports the reduction of CO2 emissions.
- **Saved £29,000** since January 2023 by partnering with Lightfoot, through fuel economy and **reduced our CO2 emissions by 62 tonnes.**

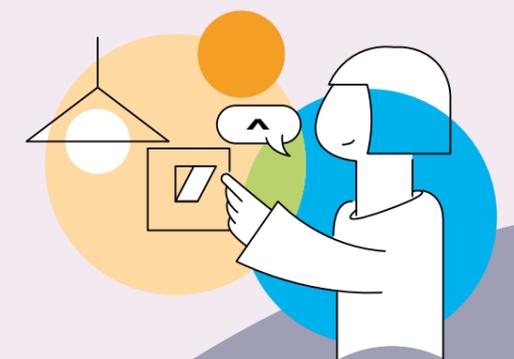
Smart thermostats

We are taking part in the IoT technology pilot of Switchee Smart Thermostats. Switchee is a smart thermostat for heating and hot water which doesn't rely on being connected to a Wi-Fi network to work.

Last year, we started installing Switchee devices in our homes, which are already helping some of our customer optimise energy use, lowering bills and reducing energy consumption.

The Switchee thermostats will help us:

- Monitor the energy efficiency of a home prior to it being retrofit and afterwards.
- Monitor the risk of damp and condensation mould within homes.





Tell us what you think

Share your feedback on our annual report to be in with a chance of winning a £50 shopping voucher.

Your feedback will help us to shape and improve the way we share our performance in next year's report.

Simply click on the QR code to complete our online survey by **Thursday 30 November 2023**.

