

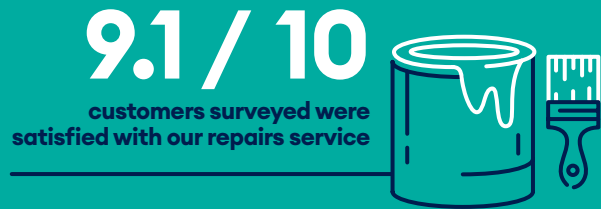
# investing in homes

During the 2019/20 year, we have:

## improved satisfaction with our repairs service

Customer satisfaction with repairs to homes reached **9 out of 10** in the second and third quarters of 2019/20, before falling slightly to **8.8 in the last quarter**.

This is a significant improvement on **7.8 in 2018/19** and beats the target we set of **8.6 out of 10**. We've been keeping a close eye on this area during the coronavirus pandemic as our repairs service reacted to government guidance.



## reduced the length of time taken to complete repairs

It takes **four days less** for the average repair to be completed than it did at the start of 2019/20. Introduction of new performance targets and measures for our repairs team means that the average number of days taken to complete a repair has **fallen from 14 to 10**. A new repairs policy, introduced in January 2020, played a large part in the improvement by streamlining appointment timescales.



## kept customers safe

We carry out annual safety checks to gas and solid fuel appliances in all properties so our customers can be confident of living in a safe home. We introduced new ways of working to ensure these vital checks could be completed throughout the coronavirus pandemic, in line with Health and Safety Executive guidance. At the end of this report period on Tuesday, 31 March our homes were **100% compliant with all legal requirements** of gas and solid fuel safety checks.



## improved the quality of our largest service for customers with a new repairs policy

The policy was launched in January 2020. The enhanced customer focus provides a service that is tailored to the individual needs of our tenants. Customers can report repairs through a variety of channels, including our app.

They can select a date and time that **best works for them** when making a repairs appointment. They can also let us know about any specific requirements they have.

## made changes to our home refurbishment programme

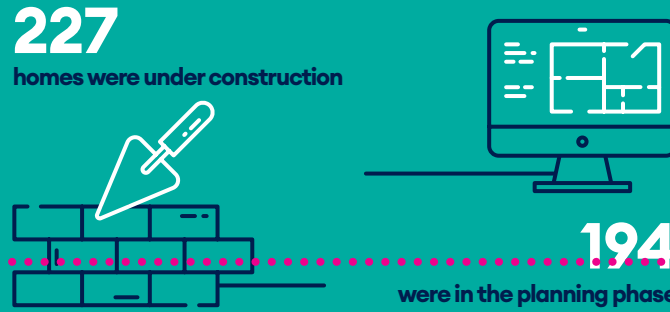
We spoke to a sample of **16% of customers** whose homes received improvements as part of our capital investment in existing properties. As a direct result we changed the type of thermostat we fit when upgrading heating systems. We also improved communication to customers on the work required at each home. And **we identified 14 specific 'quick fixes'** to make a speedy improvement to the service we provide.

**The wet room has made a 100 per cent difference. I've got limited movement in my shoulders. It's like I've been given a second chance, I'm very independent.**

customer after moving into a new-build bungalow

## completed 213 new homes

Our new-build construction programme has seen work completed on sites in Bowburn, Peterlee, Bishop Auckland and Seaham. The programme also won the prestigious Guardian Public Service Award for housing during this year.



We're committed to creating **700 new homes** in communities across the region by 2022. We **launched a total of 348 during the year**. A further **227 homes were under construction** and **194 more** were in the planning phase.

# this was a momentous year on our journey to deliver a life without barriers for our customers

On Monday, April 1 2019 we became believe housing after completing the process of bringing together Dale & Valley Homes, Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes.

The most visible change was our bright new branding replacing the County Durham Housing Group name, but that's only one small part of the story.

This annual report has been created to help everyone with an interest in believe housing learn more about our performance during the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Towards the very end of that period the nation was faced with the coronavirus pandemic. The initial parts of our response to the pandemic are included in this report.

## our year at a glance

We've broken down this document into five easy to follow sections to help take you through the facts and figures:

investing in homes

working to improve your community

supporting our customers

looking forward

our financial information

# working to improve your community

During the 2019/20 year, we have:

## generated more than £2m of social value through our community projects

We supported **18 projects** across our communities, which directly worked with **1,756 people**. The work has tackled hunger, provided new opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, and tackled social isolation. The total social value of the work was **£2,088,698**.



## we adapted quickly to help community groups through the coronavirus pandemic

We speedily adapted our processes so that within weeks we were able to provide funding that allowed projects to develop alternative ways to deliver their work during the pandemic.

## monitored and improved your neighbourhood

Over the year **203 estate inspections** took place identifying issues and cross working with partner agencies to resolve. The inspections have resulted in projects to create more parking spaces, action on untidy gardens and targeting antisocial behaviour.



## worked with customers to improve the environment in their neighbourhood

A customer-led project saw a funding bid to commission a sculptural artwork for St Oswald's Court in Durham city centre.

Designed by customers in conjunction with our neighbourhood teams and a local artist, St Oswald's Arch is a two-metre high artwork reflecting local history and geography.

# supporting our customers

During the 2019/20 year, we have:

## helped more customers make their new home a success

The number of starter tenancies that ended within the first 12-months has been reduced from **6.11% in 2018/19** to **4.55% during 2019/20**.



This means that only **57 of the new 1,252 tenants** who took a home with us moved on during this year.

The improvement has been achieved thanks to extra support for new customers.

## supported customers into work

Our dedicated employability team works with customers who are looking for work, or trying to find more sustainable work. It can help customers access training and even provide assistance with transport or clothes to take part in interviews.



**I'm already doing things I didn't think I would ever be able to do. That's the beauty of an apprenticeship; you're learning all the time.**

customer and apprentice, Leanne

## ensured customers have a key role in governance

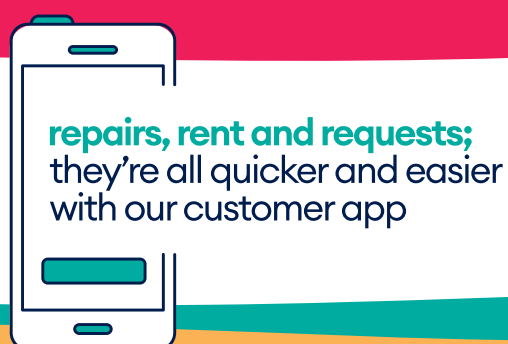
Our **Values Group** is mainly formed of long-standing customers and review areas such as health and safety of tenants, compliance with consumer standards and our approach to engagement. They also carry out scrutiny reviews on specific areas.

Their first review concentrated on complaints procedures, which created eight recommendations for improvement.

An action plan to tackle all eight areas was agreed by board and is now being implemented.

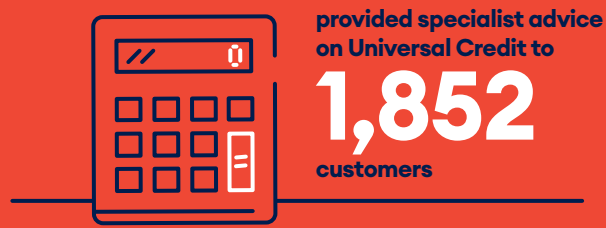
# looking forward

**we've adapted really quickly to the pandemic, continuing to adapt at a fast rate to the changing world around us**



## helped customers with welfare reform and the transition to Universal Credit

The number of tenants receiving Housing Benefit reduced from **9,133 to 8,302 during the year**.



At the same time the number of customers receiving Universal Credit has risen from **2,928 to 4,061**. Tenants receiving Universal Credit are responsible for paying rent directly.

## reduced rent arrears

We collected **98.81% of rent during 2019/20**, exceeding our target of **98.08%**.



At the end of the year the total outstanding rent arrears were **£1.853m**, this was down from **£2.014m** at the same point the previous year.

## reduced the number of evictions

Our intensive work with customers who have concerns about their finances has helped us reduce evictions for rent arrears from **60 during 2018/19 to 55 during 2019/20**.

**The help and support believe housing provided has been amazing.**

customer

We also paused all evictions, and made adjustments to our other work on rent arrears, during the coronavirus pandemic.

## cut the number of large rent arrears cases

The number of customers with large rent arrears, owing £1,000 or more, has been **cut from 541 to 384 during the year**.



The coronavirus pandemic that arrived towards the end of the period reviewed here created many new challenges.

We had to adapt quickly to the pandemic and move fast in many areas to keep our customers and staff safe. We're continuing to evolve what we do, and how we do it, at a much faster rate than ever before to take into account the rapidly changing world around us and developing government guidance.

Call: **0300 1311 999**

Email: **hello@believehousing.co.uk**

Visit: **www.believehousing.co.uk**

 believehousing  @believehousing  @believehousing

# our financial information

believe housing is a not for profit housing association, any surplus is reinvested in homes, communities and services for customers.

during 2019/20 our turnover was **£66.111m**

we disposed of fixed assets worth **£3.257m**

our operating expenditure was **£49.798m**

and our operating surplus was **£19.570m**

## how our expenditure is broken down

Our investment and expenditure over 2019/20 is best described by looking at the areas where we spent money:

