

Customer Annual Report
2021/2022



Introduction

Over the past year we've maintained our focus on providing high-quality homes and a great service to our customers.

We've continued to invest in your homes, replacing over 1,000 new bathrooms and kitchens, maintained 100% safety compliance and made improvements in local neighbourhoods to make sure they're places you want to live and stay.

You told us that you'd had issues with our repairs service and that it could be better, so we bought some of our contracts in-house and recruited new operatives at quite a difficult time. I'm very proud to say that satisfaction with our repairs service increased to a record 91% after these changes.

Together, we've taken huge steps towards making our homes more environmentally friendly and finding out what we need to do to reach government targets to reduce carbon emissions. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in our retrofit programme helping us to understand how new technology will work best for you in the future.



You've told us that accessibility is particularly important to you, so this year we've continued our investment in improving our digital channels, launching a new customer website and developing the app so that you can report repairs online.

During another very busy year, we've managed to maintain our 90% customer satisfaction score which recognises the pride that we take in making sure you have a great experience each time you receive a service from us.

It's really important to me that you continue to share your thoughts with us and I'd encourage everyone to find out more about how to get involved and shape your services.

Glenn Harris MBE
Chief Executive

97
years providing
social housing



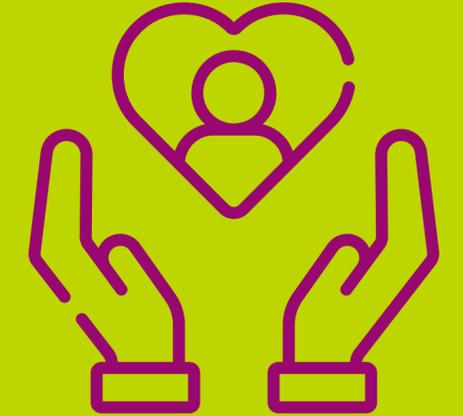
700
new homes built



Repairs
satisfaction
90.9%



1,892
homes rented

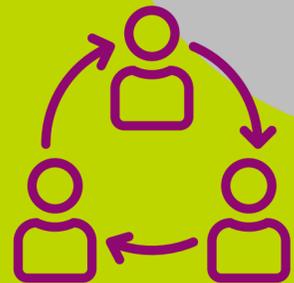


70,000
customers

1,112
employees



Overall
satisfaction
89.3%



2,497
money advice
referrals made

34,000
homes



My voice

There are lots of ways for you to share your feedback with us. Depending on how much time you can give, you could join our survey mailing list, come along to one of our customer meetings, or review one of our services in more detail.

We really appreciate all the feedback you share with us. You've challenged us to keep improving and make sure we're doing what we say we will.

17,401 Surveys completed

76 Customer meetings

118 Estate Champion inspections

You told us you get a lot out of being involved – like gaining new skills, the chance to meet new people, and make a difference to your community.

One of our involved customers, Michael, says:

“I was always told that if you aren't happy with something, you can either put up with it, or change it.

I am grateful to Midland Heart for the home that I have. It's not perfect and nor is Midland Heart, but as an involved customer I have the privilege of helping to make improvements.”



Involved customer Michael.

You also told us that you weren't sure how you could get your voice heard and that you wanted new ways to join in. So, we re-launched our MyVoice service and created some new customer groups.

Energy group – get advice on saving energy and reducing your bills, and share your tips and tricks with other customers

LGBT+ group – discuss how we can make sure LGBT+ customers feel safe and welcome, and help us learn from instances where people haven't felt able to be themselves in their homes



Are you interested in giving us feedback and helping to shape our services for the future?

Start by telling us what you think of this report

Contacting us

Our customer hub is your first point of contact if you have any questions or concerns.

Once again, we saw record levels of contact over the last year and our teams have worked hard to deliver vital services.

How we can improve

We're reviewing our telephone service to make it easier for you when you contact us. Changes will include making sure you have access to the right people to manage your query and we will also:

Give you the option to hang up, while you take your place in the queue so you're not stuck waiting on hold. When your call reaches the front of the queue, we'll call you back and connect you with a hub officer.

Ensure our Customer Hub officers have access to your information more quickly when you call us so you need to be on the phone for less time.



178,679
69.05%



171
0.07%



97
0.04%



67,532
26.10%



2,719
1.05%



43
0.02%

Total
258,756
100.00%



WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN

“

It's important to us that you've got a clear route to raise your concerns and get them resolved quickly. Your feedback helps us to keep improving our service to you.

”

Total complaints 560

Total complaints upheld 429

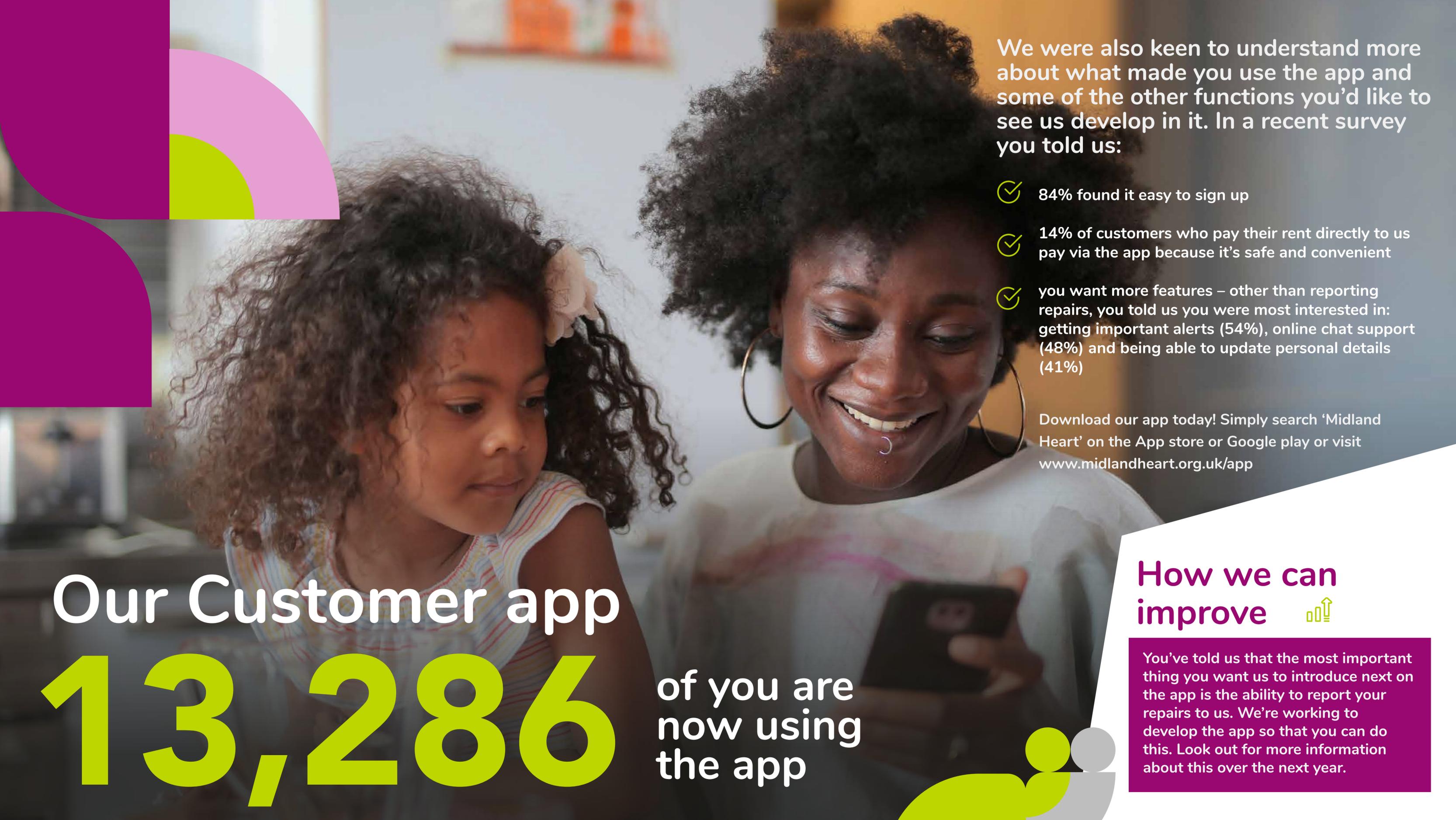
Complaints per 1000 properties 16

You told us the top three reasons for your complaints were:

-  Because of the way we'd communicated with you (20%)
-  Repairs had been delayed or not completed (17%)
-  You were unhappy with an action we'd taken (17%)

How we can improve

We've had a look at the things you contact us about most often and we're changing the way we communicate with you at each stage of our process. We're doing this to make sure each of our communications are clear, sent using a platform that suits your needs i.e., letter/email/text so you have the information you need to hand and to make sure you always feel informed and know what to expect from our services.



We were also keen to understand more about what made you use the app and some of the other functions you'd like to see us develop in it. In a recent survey you told us:

- ✔ 84% found it easy to sign up
- ✔ 14% of customers who pay their rent directly to us pay via the app because it's safe and convenient
- ✔ you want more features – other than reporting repairs, you told us you were most interested in: getting important alerts (54%), online chat support (48%) and being able to update personal details (41%)

Download our app today! Simply search 'Midland Heart' on the App store or Google play or visit www.midlandheart.org.uk/app

Our Customer app

13,286

of you are now using the app

How we can improve

You've told us that the most important thing you want us to introduce next on the app is the ability to report your repairs to us. We're working to develop the app so that you can do this. Look out for more information about this over the next year.

Great customer service



In January we completed the second year of assessment for the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. This is an independent review to get feedback on how we can improve our customer service and is done by an independent assessor to make sure we're providing a good level of customer service. We submitted **78** new pieces of evidence and achieved **100% compliance**.



We were judged to be performing exceptionally in **12** areas



We were praised for our teamwork and commitment to customers

How we can improve

Our assessor did tell us we could do more to tell you about the level of customer service you can expect from us and to explain when things go wrong and what we're doing to fix it. We're in the process of reviewing our Service Standards and will make sure we also include this in our new standards.



Keeping you safe in your home

Your safety is our number one priority, so we regularly ask for your feedback to make sure we're getting it right.

You told us you wanted more information about fire and other building safety checks so we've worked hard to improve the way we communicate with you. We put together a new building safety action plan that sets out some of the things we'll be doing in the future, including:

- ✓ Updating building safety information given to customers when they sign up
- ✓ Share a range of building safety campaigns across in different ways
- ✓ Provide you with more information during safety checks
- ✓ Do more to let you know when our teams will be in your area

Last year we sent out new fire safety posters, letters and leaflets to everyone living in a building with communal areas which were much more relevant to your own building and the actions we're taking to keep you safe.

We also created a new Building Safety section of our website so you know what you can expect from us as well as what you can do to keep your home safe, you can find it at www.midlandheart.org.uk/homesafe.



Fire safety

Safety checks to keep you safe

Last year we made sure every customer had their **gas boiler serviced** and that our **hot water systems were safe** and working properly so you're not scolded when running hot water. All our **lifts have been serviced** to make sure they're safe and working correctly.

We do **regular risk assessments** to see if we need to make any changes to make your building safer. Last year we completed all fire risk assessments and made sure any **asbestos is safely contained**.

- We review the **electrical safety** of all homes every 5 years. Last year there were only 137 homes (out of 29259) that we couldn't get into to do an electrical safety check. **It is very important to give us access to undertake safety checks to keep you and your family safe.**

In all our visits we're reminding you how important it is to allow us access to your homes for safety checks. These visits may save a life!

An extra line of defence against fire

Although our buildings met the required safety standards, we found that some of our services would benefit from the additional protection offered by having a sprinkler system fitted.

In the first year of the programme (2021-22), we fitted eight blocks of flats with sprinklers. The sprinklers will activate in the event of very high temperatures, limiting the damage to the building and ensuring nobody is hurt.



8 buildings fitted with sprinklers in 2021-22 with more planned for next year



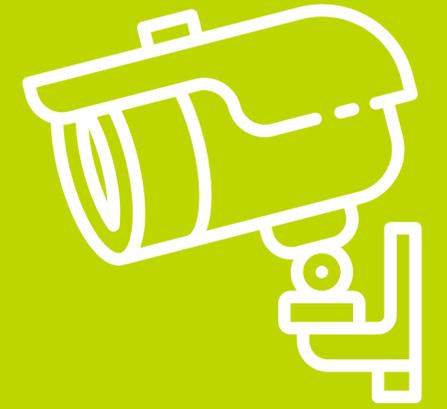
93% customers said they feel safer having this extra line of protection against fire



94% satisfaction with the installation works

“ I have been here for 13 and a half years, and always felt safe. However, these sprinkler systems have made a big difference. I would really recommend them to everybody. ”

Keeping our technology up to date



Last year, we began a survey to find out what customers in 4,000 of our homes thought about the CCTV system that they have installed in their area through door knocking, telephone surveys and focus groups.

Once we have this information, we'll be starting a review of our current CCTV systems to make sure that they work properly, need upgrading or if they're still needed at all. The review will help us make a business case for better coverage of our buildings and better-quality images. We will also be considering some live monitoring of our CCTV so we can act more quickly if we see a problem.

Looking to the future

The government have issued new guidance to all Housing Associations about making high rise buildings even safer. We have 5 buildings that meet the government's criteria for a high-rise building, these are:

- Crocodile Court, Birmingham
- Princes Chambers, Birmingham
- Midland House, Leicester
- Andrews House, Lichfield
- Midland Court, Birmingham

If you live in one of these buildings, you'll be hearing more from us over the next year. We'll be asking for your feedback on how we communicate with you about the safety of your building.

Investing In Your Homes

The team have continued to do repairs and planned work to your homes safely, even though we had periods of covid restrictions and it being very difficult to recruit new team members during last year.

- 90.9% Repairs satisfaction
- 48% Repairs completed by our in-house team were completed in 14-days
- 82% Repairs completed first time
- £24.6m invested in our homes

Upgrades



353 Bathrooms



865 Kitchens



473 Windows



96 Roofs

We regularly get feedback about our homes and communities from our residents, staff and sometimes other organisations. We use this to help us make the right improvements to where you live and make it somewhere that you want to stay.

These improvements often involve redecorating communal areas and tackling issues in the local community to make sure everyone feels safe and settled in their homes.

Case study: Priory Court in Wolverhampton

Before work began, customers living at Priory Court told us they were worried about anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping and felt unsafe in the area near their scheme.

We worked closely with other agencies like the local policing team and the homelessness outreach team to tackle issues in the area. We also held a community day and visited customers in their homes to talk about their tenancy agreements and check they had the support they needed.

Since gaining your feedback we've improved the lighting, upgraded the CCTV, and installed new doors to the main entrance. We've created a new bin store to reduce littering and fly-tipping and in some cases, new kitchens, bathrooms and windows were installed to refresh homes.

The changes have made a big difference and had a really positive impact on the Priory Court community and people are now pleased to live there:

- 89% of customers happy with the look and appearance of Priory Court (40% before)
- 78% said they would recommend the scheme to others (60% before)
- 88% said they were happy with safety and security
- 90% said they felt confident reporting ASB to us

'Midland Heart were welcoming and keen to address the issues raised, they clearly wanted to improve the property and to take the lead in doing so, I found this very refreshing to hear.' Police sergeant from the local policing team.

Delivering a Brilliant Repairs Service

You'd told us that some of our repairs contractors weren't always delivering the service you expected. So, in August 2021, we brought all our day-to-day maintenance in-house, which means our own team now complete most of your day-to-day repairs.

To make sure our repairs teams are delivering a brilliant service to you, we've delivered some new training to all of our repairs operatives. The training was designed to make sure our teams treat you with fairness and respect and do all they can to make sure you we resolve your repairs as quickly as possible.

BUILD

Believe what you're telling them

Understand the issue you're facing

Investigate and take the correct action

Liaise with you and other colleagues so everyone's updated

Deliver the repair you need

Aids and adaptations

Total spend:

£109k

adaptations

79

We keep working with local authorities to access Disability Facilities Grant to help you get grab rails, handrails, over bath showers and low and level access shower cubicles to make a real difference to day to day living in your home.

How we can
improve 

In the next year, we'll be doing more to show you how your feedback shapes our repairs service by sharing performance information on our website. We'll also have a repairs reporting tool on our app and have a new plan to help us manage our properties for the next 10 years.

TACKLING DAMP AND MOULD

The brilliant news is we've seen a 30% reduction in complaints about damp and mould compared to last year.

[Click here to find out more useful tips about tackling damp and mould on our website](#)

There are lots of reasons why you might get damp and mould in your home, and it can sometimes be difficult to identify and remove the root cause. We know how upsetting this can be, so we're always looking for ways to improve our damp and mould process.

Last year, we created a new role, so you have a dedicated point of contact if you have a recurring problem with damp and mould. Our Customer Liaison Manager, Mo, has already been able to offer lots of support and advice in his short time in the role.

Mo says: 'My job is to listen to you and identify any issues which may have been missed. I'll remain impartial and do what's right for you so that we can find the best way to deal with the damp and mould for good.'

We've also been trialling new technology including damp and mould sensors, which help us to track patterns in condensation so we can understand what's causing the problems.



Homes to rent

Our dedicated website to find a home, **Midland Heart Homes** has continued to help us successfully match applicants with new homes.

Over the past year we've rented lots of different types of property including houses, flats, bedsits and bungalows.

Last year we built 700 new homes across the East and West Midlands. There is very high demand for affordable family housing and that is what we're focusing on when building new homes. We helped 173 people to buy their own home through shared ownership properties and we built 56 new retirement living homes.

How we can improve

We're working to make important documents about your tenancy accessible to all customers in different languages, large print and braille.

As a non-profit social housing provider we work with our development partners to build much needed homes in the Midlands. We committed to build 4,000 new homes between 2019 & 2025 and 2,270 new homes we have already completed or are on site.

Last year we introduced a new way for you to swap your homes with others, House Exchange. The service makes it easy to find a match and 172 customers successfully exchanged their homes last year. If you're interested in swapping your home with someone else, you can find out more about how to do this through House Exchange www.houseexchange.org.uk/

39,000
people have searched for a new home with Midland Heart

1,892
homes rented

91.4%
satisfaction with our lettings process

This year we've created a new role to give specialist advice to anyone who contacts us with questions about lettings. In 2021-22, the new advisor dealt with 6,829 enquiries.

Our money advice service

As well as supporting with debt and benefit claims, the team have secured over £56,000 of support payments from charities and funds, issued fuel and food vouchers, and helped customers to purchase essential items like beds, fridges and cookers.

Over the past year, the cost of living has risen, and many of our customers have had money worries.

Our Money Advice team not only do their best to make sure customers can afford to heat their homes and pay their bills. They also help to reduce the stress and anxiety caused by money worries. They've continued to offer free, confidential advice to anyone who needs it:

2,497 referrals received

Of the customers seen, **99.9%** sustained their tenancy

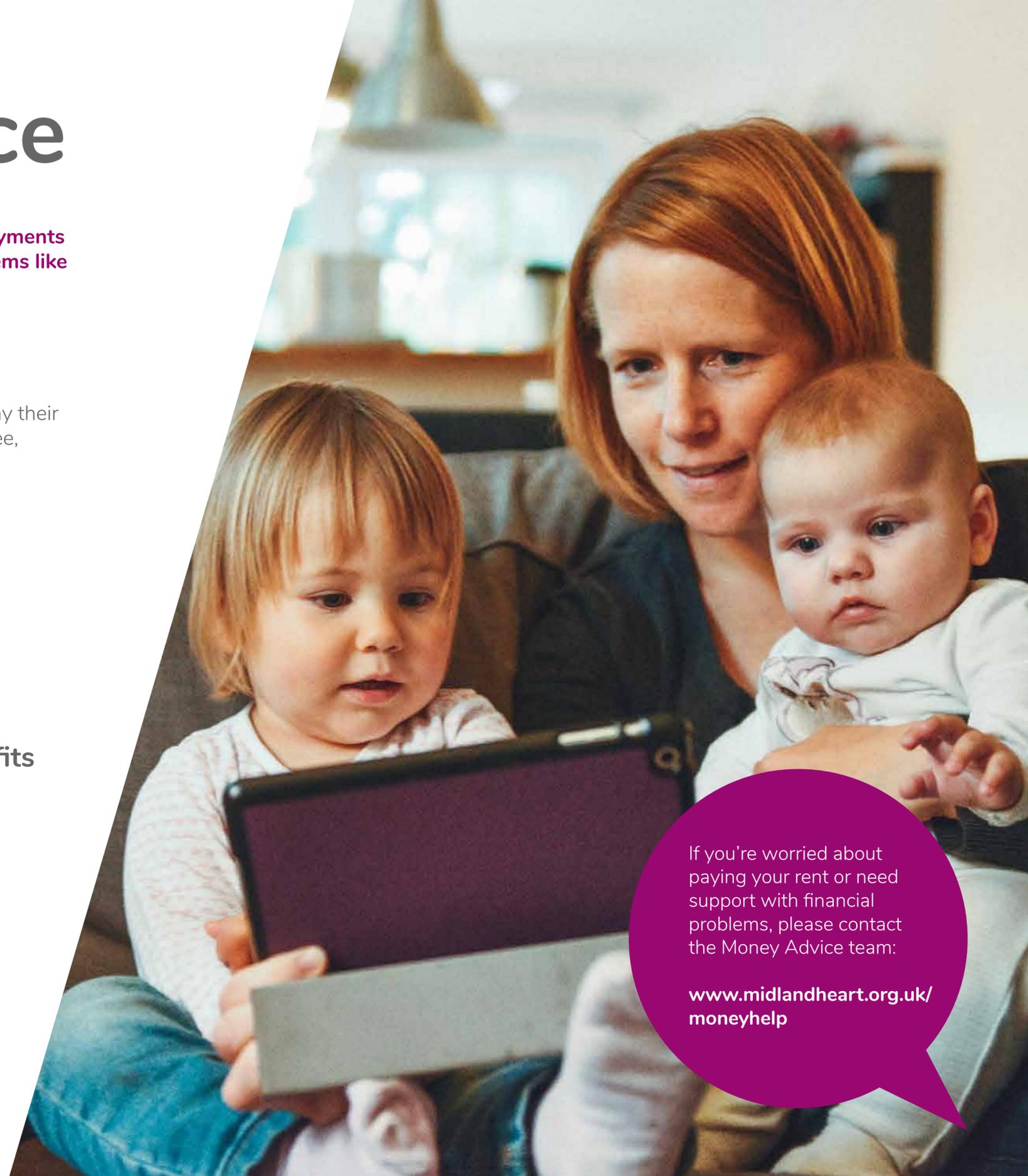
£2.5m extra money for customers – this means helping you claim benefits you're entitled to, and reducing your debts. Those who had support got an average of an extra £60 per week with the teams help.

Claimed Universal Credit awards of **£505,918.15**

£608,928.48 claimed in Housing Benefit

If you're worried about paying your rent or need support with financial problems, please contact the Money Advice team:

www.midlandheart.org.uk/moneyhelp



One of the biggest challenges we're facing as an organisation is making sure we're doing our bit to reduce our carbon footprint and slow the impact of climate change. To do this we carry out an Energy Performance check of our homes to see if there are things we can take do to make our homes more energy efficient. These measures help make sure you're able to heat your home, and that you have to use less energy to do this. This is even more important as the cost of gas and electricity goes up.

DOING OUR BIT TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

“ It makes me feel better as I do not need to put the heating on as much ”

Some of the measures we've introduced to make our homes more energy efficient include:



additional insulation (in lofts and to the outside of homes)



upgrading heating systems,

fitting solar panels to generate free electricity



As a result of the work we have done this year, 2,710 additional homes had a registered EPC at band C or higher. Want to know more about energy performance certificates? Visit our website www.midlandheart.org.uk/epc

Our Carbon Reduction Action Plan

We've set ourselves ambitious targets to reduce our impact on the environment, and we're committed to becoming a carbon-neutral landlord by 2050. You can find out more on our [website](#).

Some of our staff have completed Energy Awareness qualifications so that they're able to give energy advice to customers and colleagues to help them reduce how much gas and electric they need to use and manage bills better.

We're also looking at making our homes warmer and cheaper to run by continuing to put in more insulation, solar panels and better heating systems, we plan to spend £100m between now and 2030. Where we can we're making use of grant funding to maximise the work we can do and we have a new team who are making this work a priority.

How we can improve



We'll be launching a new customer group and offering 'green' awareness sessions for all customers – register your interest here

Your neighbourhood

Tackling anti-social behaviour

You told us that we could improve our anti-social behaviour (ASB) process, so we've updated our ASB policy, improved the information available on our website, and introduced specific ASB training for new colleagues in the Customer Hub.

We've already seen some great results, with 81% of customers who've reported ASB agreeing that they have confidence that we'll act on and respond to any future ASB reports. (up 27.7% on last year)

Overall satisfaction with our ASB service was 65.1% in 2021-22, which is an increase of almost 10% since the previous year.

We know there's still lots we can do, and we're continuing to gather feedback from customers who have been struggling with ASB and are reviewing the way that we communicate with customers throughout this process.

How we can improve

Our team keep building relationships with other agencies like local community police teams and local authorities to make sure that you can access the support you need in your community.

Pests and vermin

You've told us that the way we tackle issues with rats, mice and pests wasn't working as well as it could. We've introduced a new way to record these issues so that we can closely monitor your case, and work closely with you and our contractors to make sure we get to the bottom of any problems as quickly as possible.

We're already seeing a positive impact. In the first six months of the new programme (September 2021 to March 2022):

- **118 cases involving pests and vermin were resolved**
- **Customers who were reluctant to let us into their homes are now working closely with us, allowing us to provide more support where needed.**
- **49% reduction in complaints about pests and vermin**

If you're interested in looking out for the building you live in and improving your local area, become an **Estate Champion**. You'll report any issues directly to us through a monthly form so our Estates team can deal with these promptly.

Retirement Living

We get regular feedback on our retirement living offer to make sure residents have everything they need to live a happy, independent life.

You told us:

Our retirement services are an inclusive place to live (98.9%)

You want us to continue to improve external communal areas and your repairs service

This year, we continued to make improvements to our retirement schemes, improved our guest rooms, commissioned mobility scooter stores, and redesigned our noticeboards to make sure you can easily access all the information you need.

Case study: Going cashless

After a successful trial which included regular feedback from customers, all our retirement living plus schemes are now taking card payments. This has helped to make sure paying for things is safe and convenient.



83.4%

overall satisfaction in retirement living



We have residents committees at some of our schemes for customers to get involved in improvements and social activities where they live. We're now offering some training and support for committee members. If you're committee would like us to support you with training, please speak to your scheme manager who can help you arrange this.

Last year, following your feedback, we also successfully introduced a retirement living forum for our Coventry customers. This involved bringing people from the four larger retirement properties in Coventry together to discuss how they feel about the services they receive, such as catering, lifestyle activities, repairs and events. It's been a great chance to meet new people, raise any concerns, and influence changes.

How we can improve

We're hoping to roll out forums along with new involved customer groups in other areas in the future.

Independent Living

In the last year we've supported 343 customers to move on to live independently. You also told us that:

- 86.6% overall satisfaction with our service
- You felt our buildings were kept clean and tidy (97.7%)
- Your scheme is an inclusive place to live irrespective of customers backgrounds (97.7%)
- You rated the facilities as good (96.9%)
- You feel safe from harm or abuse from staff/ customers (96.2%)

“

The best thing that has happened to me was to move into my lovely flat. I'm really happy here. Thank you Midland Heart – your staff have made me very happy.

Customer at Chatham Place,
Northfield, Birmingham

”

Staff are kind and understanding and willing to help – this approach makes an enormous difference to the elderly and frail among us.

Customer at James Beattie House, Wolverhampton.

GETTING YOU TALKING

If you'd like to know more about the Retirement satisfaction surveys, or about our forums, get in touch with us by emailing customerscrutiny@midlandheart.org.uk

Being transparent



Whenever we're thinking about making a change to a service, we consult with anyone who might be affected to make sure your views are heard.

For example, this year we've consulted on:



Refurbishments to our buildings and services



Rent increases and how we can support with them



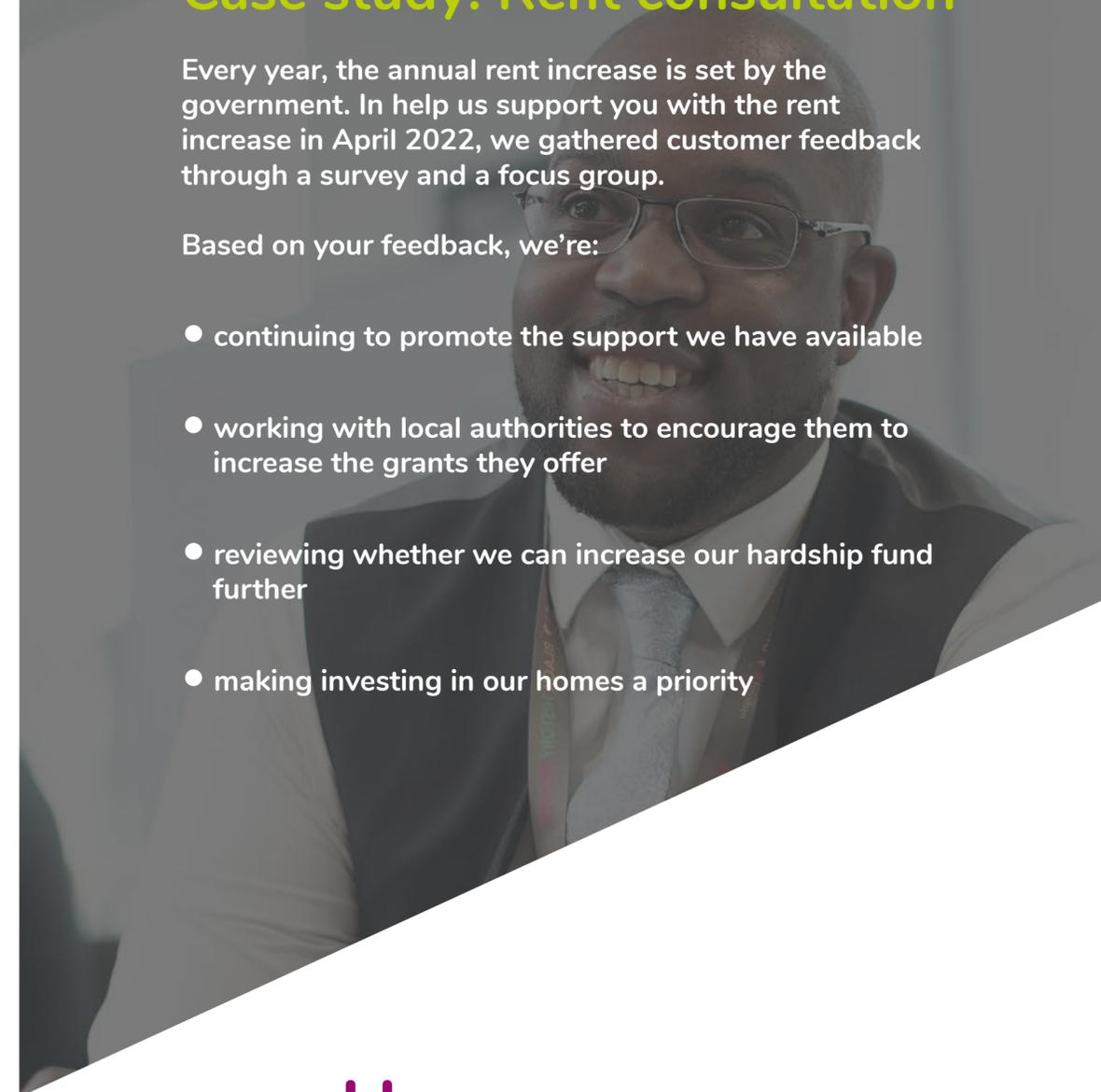
Additional safety features like sprinklers and CCTV

Case study: Rent consultation

Every year, the annual rent increase is set by the government. In help us support you with the rent increase in April 2022, we gathered customer feedback through a survey and a focus group.

Based on your feedback, we're:

- continuing to promote the support we have available
- working with local authorities to encourage them to increase the grants they offer
- reviewing whether we can increase our hardship fund further
- making investing in our homes a priority



How we can improve

We'll regularly share performance data on our website so you can keep an eye on how we're doing and know what you can expect from our services.

Improving our digital services

We've been working hard to improve our digital services for both customers and colleagues. In January 2022, we launched our new website, using your feedback to:

- Make it easier to find important information
- Improve search function
- Improve the layout and focus on pages you use the most



Reinvesting in your services

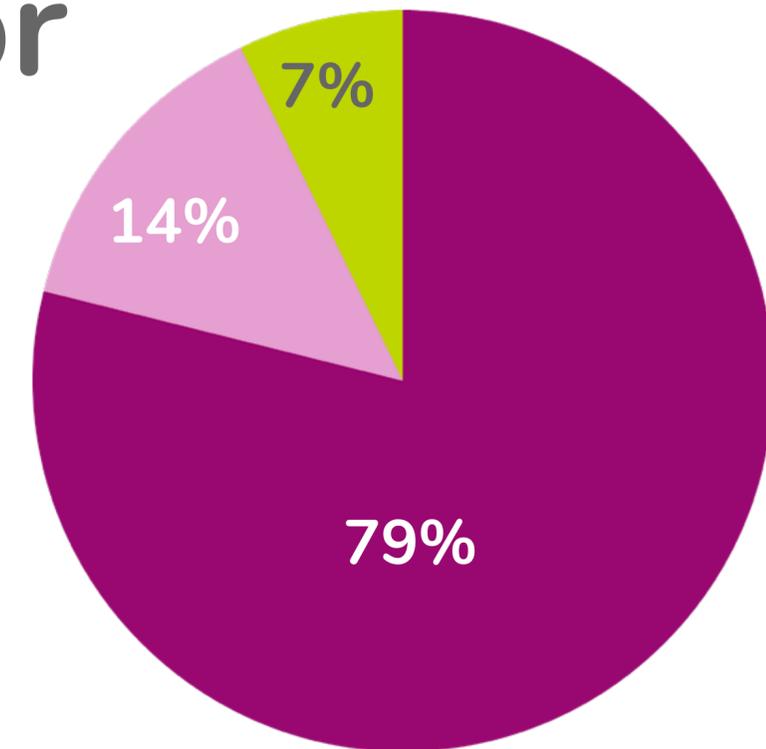
In 2021-22, we had a turnover of £207 million.

We retained our G1/V1 rating, which is the highest score possible from The Regulator of Social Housing. This means we're a strong and stable organisation, and we're in a good position to be a good landlord and make sure your homes are safe, secure and well maintained.

Value for Money

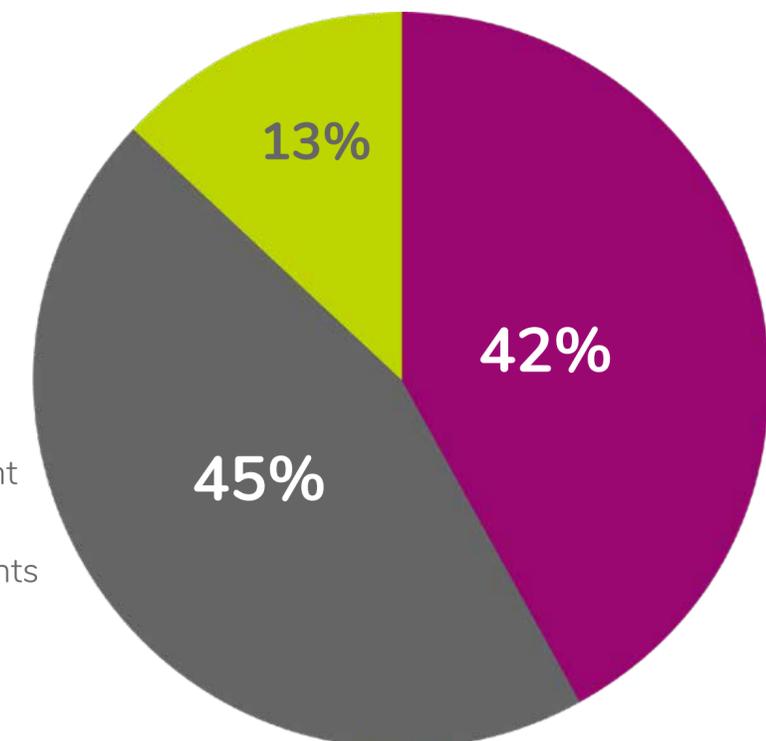
Income

- Rent
- Service charge
- Supporting people



Costs

- Managing your homes and neighbourhood
- Repairs and planned investment
- Loan costs for new developments



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