



# ANNUAL REPORT 2016



# WELCOME

ORLA GALLAGHER CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Central to our core purpose is to deliver more homes and a quality housing service to our customers. This year we spent £28.5 million building 241 new affordable homes, that's more than the previous two years and 35% more than our original target of 187. Our development performance makes us the top performing organisation in our peer group, for the number of homes delivered relative to our size.

We invested £500,000 on a regeneration scheme in Cox Green which turned unused space into 65 allotment plots for local residents, which have been put to good use this summer. And our £10 million regeneration of a town centre estate in Maidenhead has substantially improved the estate for those living there.

Achieving excellent customer service is very important to everyone working at Housing Solutions. We have set ourselves an ambitious target of achieving 91% overall customer satisfaction. This year you've told us that we are getting better but we still have a lot to do to reach 91% satisfaction. Our Customer Survey results in September told us that 84% of our customers are happy with our overall service. We are performing very well, but we need to get better at responding to what our customers are telling us about the service.

We aim to offer better value for money. This year we made a concerted effort to reduce transfer waiting times down from 10 years to 8 years. Part of our approach is to help people move to more suitable accommodation for their household. We helped 36 residents move to smaller, more manageable accommodation, freeing up 36 unused bedrooms. In total we paid residents £65,500 of downsizing payments as an incentive to move.

We made improvements to our repairs priorities, becoming more proactive in our recharge processes. This in turn has reduced our jobs per property and repeat visit targets. We also reviewed our resident scrutiny panel and have agreed an exciting new Customer Involvement plan, that you will hear more about in the coming months. For now turn to page 7 to find out how you can get involved.

The changes to welfare, announced in the budget and the roll out of Universal Credit means our customers are facing significant financial difficulties. Our Financial Inclusion Team has seen a sharp increase in the number of people turning to them for financial help. We helped 916 customers this year and obtained additional benefits for residents of £217,000. This is an increase of 51% on the previous year. Our positive approach to financial inclusion has helped reduce rent arrears down to 1.98% - this is the best we have been for 21 years.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our customers for their valuable input. I hope you find this report useful. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Orla".

# HOW ARE WE PERFORMING?

## Average re-let time

2015/16 - 9.7 DAYS

2014/15 - 10.03 DAYS



## New homes built

2015/16 - 241

2014/15 - 229



## Repairs jobs completed

2015/16 - 21,399

2014/15 - 19,018



## Repairs fixed on first visit

2015/16 - 95%

2014/15 - 93%



## Calls taken by Call Centre

2015/16 - 62,843

2014/15 - 58,188



## Calls dealt with at 1st point of contact

2015/16 - 77%

2014/15 - 77%



# REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

It's our aim to provide quality affordable homes for our tenants. During the last year we have continued to maintain and improve our properties.

We also turned unused wasteland in Northumbria Road into 65 well equipped allotment areas that are now run by the residents and used to grow fruit and vegetables.



21,399

Repair jobs completed



78%

Customers satisfied with repairs Service



99

New Kitchens



86

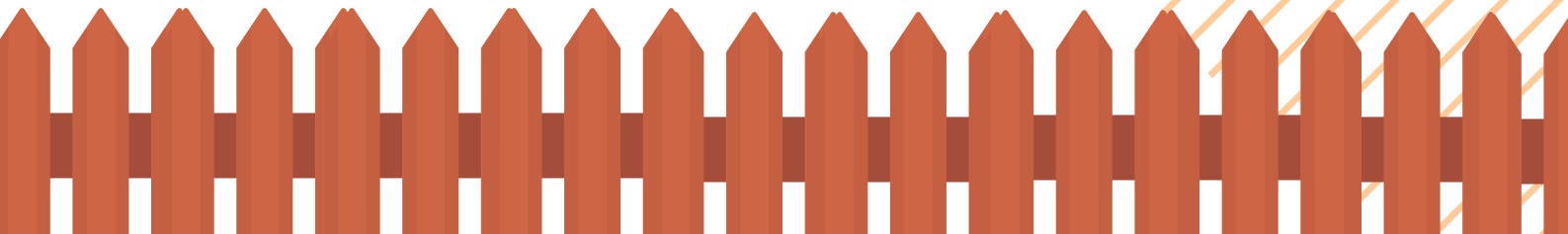
New Bathrooms



65

New Allotments

1400 Linear metres of fencing



# MEETING HOUSING NEED



We are committed to maximising the number of new homes we build within our capacity to help tackle the local affordable housing shortage.

Since 2014 we have developed and secured 1044 new homes across Berkshire and Buckinghamshire and we built 241 new homes in 2015/16 this includes our largest portfolio of shared ownership properties with 67 homes being sold to local people looking to get onto the property ladder. A further 11 properties were bought under the Do-It-Yourself Shared Ownership Scheme allowing local people to buy a property off the open market.

We have also made real progress in reducing our transfer waiting list over the year. We focused our efforts on downsizing and freeing up unused bedrooms. Throughout the year 36 customers downsized, freeing up an extra 36 bedrooms and as a result our transfer waiting list has fallen by two whole years from an average of 10 years down to 8 years.

1044

New homes secured

36

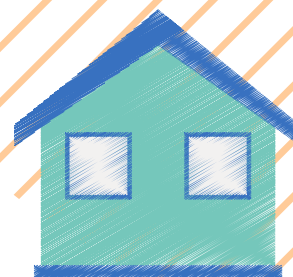
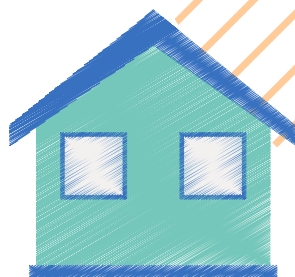
Tenants Downsized

67

Shared Ownership  
Properties Sold

2 YEARS

Transfer waiting list  
reduced



# FINANCIAL INCLUSION



We have been investing time and resources into helping hundreds of our tenants and leaseholders with their financial difficulties to ensure they're able to sustain their tenancies and remain in their homes.

Over 915 tenants came to us for financial help over the year, this is an ever increasing number. The amount of additional income from benefits we were able to generate for them was £217,000 an increase of nearly 51% on the previous year.

We have continued to strengthen our links with local credit unions, poverty groups and food banks to ensure our customers are getting the help and support they need.

IF YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR FINANCES, PLEASE CONTACT OUR FINANCIAL INCLUSION TEAM AT:  
[FINANCIALINCLUSIONTEAM@HOUSINGSOLUTIONS.CO.UK](mailto:FINANCIALINCLUSIONTEAM@HOUSINGSOLUTIONS.CO.UK)  
OR CALL 0800 876 6060.

915  
Tenants given  
Financial help

£217,000  
Generated in  
additional benefits

"WE HAVE PROVIDED FOODSHARE MAIDENHEAD WITH A RENT FREE HOME FOR TWO YEARS ALLOWING THEM TO INVEST MORE MONEY INTO FOOD FOR LOCAL PEOPLE IN NEED."

# VOLUNTEER WITH US



Do you want to help make a difference to the services you receive from us and have your say on how things are done in the future? If so then why not get involved and volunteer with us? There are plenty of opportunities and we provide all of the training and support required.

We have a number of ways to get involved:

- [Service Improvement Team](#)
- [Mystery Shoppers](#)
- [Focus groups](#)
- [Action groups](#)
- [Neighbourhood representatives](#)
- [E-Panel](#)

[Join Housing Solutions New E-Panel. All you need is an email address to join.](#)

- You will receive 4 or 5 online surveys per year that ask you to give feedback and your opinion about Housing Solutions services;
- Surveys will last between 5 and 10 minutes;
- Each time you complete a survey you will be entered into a prize draw-you could win up to £100 in vouchers;
- Personal email invites will be sent to individuals on the E-Panel with a direct link to the survey;
- You will get to see the results of the survey in an anonymous way so that other people are not able to see your individual responses.

If you join our E-panel between 24th January 2017 - 27th February 2017 you will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 Love2Shop Voucher.

To find out more about how you can get involved, contact our Community Engagement Team: [community.engagement@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:community.engagement@housingsolutions.co.uk) or call 01628 543123.

# INVESTING IN DIGITAL SERVICES



Over the last year we have been focusing our efforts on improving our digital offering to our tenants and leaseholders.

We launched our new My Housing Solutions App earlier this year which allows you to report repairs, view your rent account and report ASB direct from your mobile 24 hours a day 7 days a week. So far over 1,100 of you have downloaded the app and use it on a regular basis.

We have focused a lot on improving our website and have been working with Website design agency Prodo Digital and a number of involved customers on a new website which is due to go live in Spring 2017. The new and improved website which was designed with the help of customers will make it easy for you to report and book routine repair appointments, pay your rent and set up reoccurring rent payments, view tenancy documents and recent letters and chat to our customer service advisors on our live web chat.

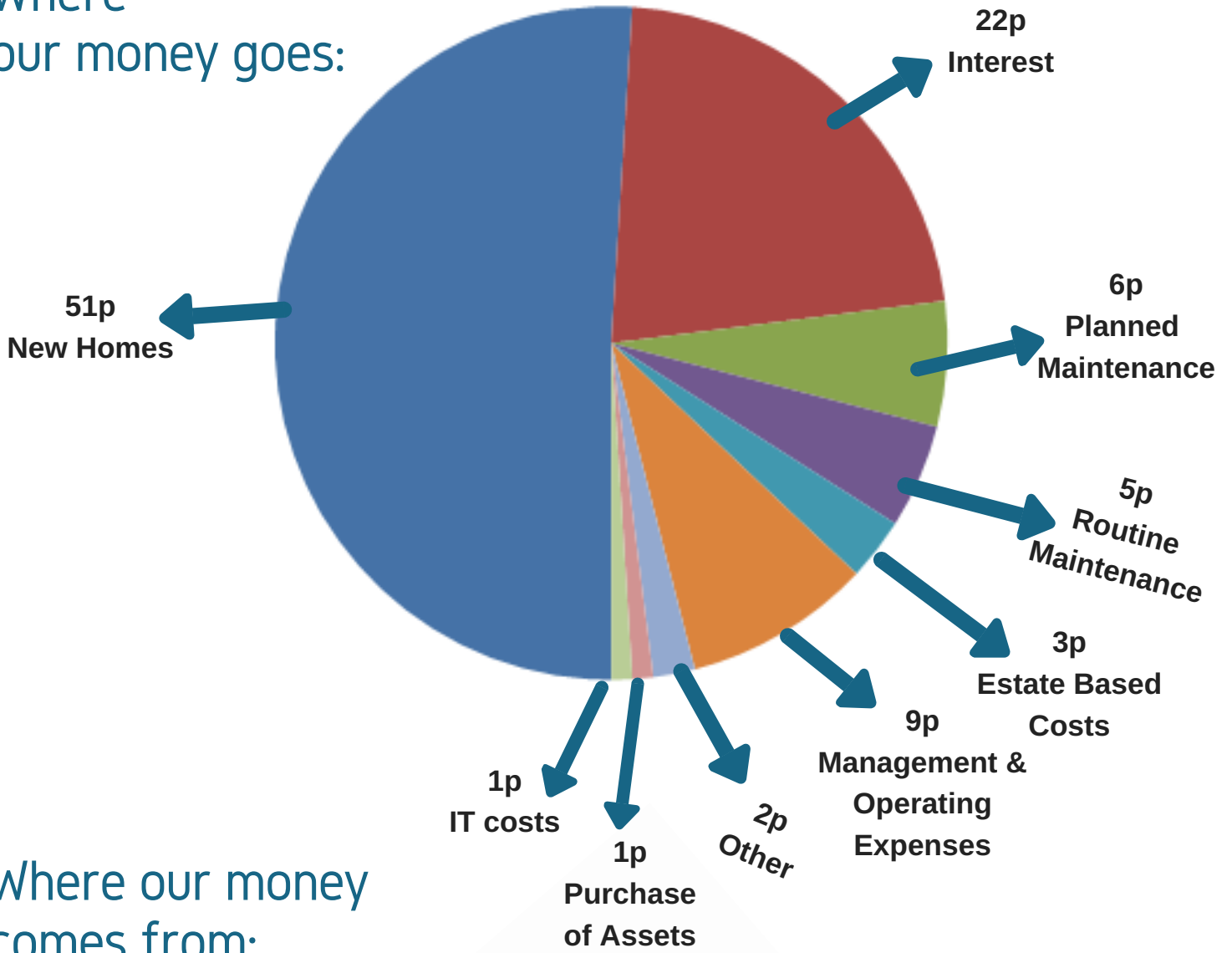
The fresh new site will hold a whole host of new and relevant information, so keep a look out on our Facebook Page for details on the launch and how you can be the first to test the new customer friendly portal.

**”OVER 1,100 RESIDENTS HAVE NOW  
DOWNLOADED OUR MY HOUSING  
SOLUTIONS APP”**

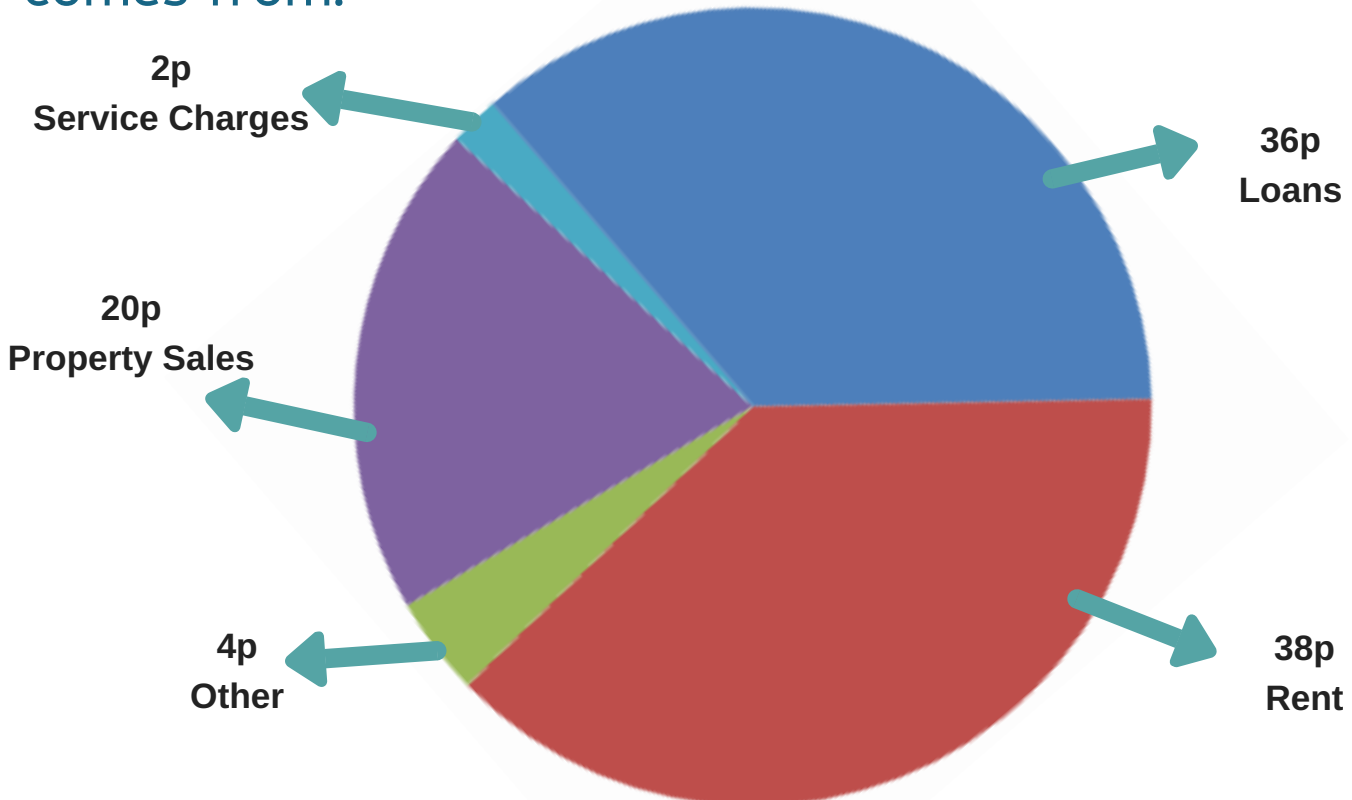


# OUR MONEY

Where our money goes:



Where our money comes from:



# CONTACT US

You can contact us in a number of ways:

## **In person at our offices at:**

Crown Square, Waldeck Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire,  
SL6 8BY

## **By telephone to our Customer Contact Centre:**

Freephone - 0800 876 6060 Please use this number for any out of hours emergencies.

## **By Email:**

[contact@housingsolutions.co.uk](mailto:contact@housingsolutions.co.uk)

## **Via our Facebook page:**

[www.facebook.com/Housing.Solutions.co.uk](https://www.facebook.com/Housing.Solutions.co.uk)

## **Via our website:**

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

## **Our opening hours:**

Monday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Tuesday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Wednesday 8.45am - 5.15pm (call centre opens at 10am)

Thursday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Friday 8.45am - 4.45pm

Our offices are closed on weekends and bank holidays.

