

Customer annual report 2019



**10 years of Great homes.
Great communities. Great people.**

Welcome to your 2019 Customer Annual Report. It is packed full of information that is useful, easy to understand and focused on what matters to you.

It's been a busy tenth anniversary year for Great Places and seeing some of the headlines of these past 12 months really emphasises how eventful 2019 has been.



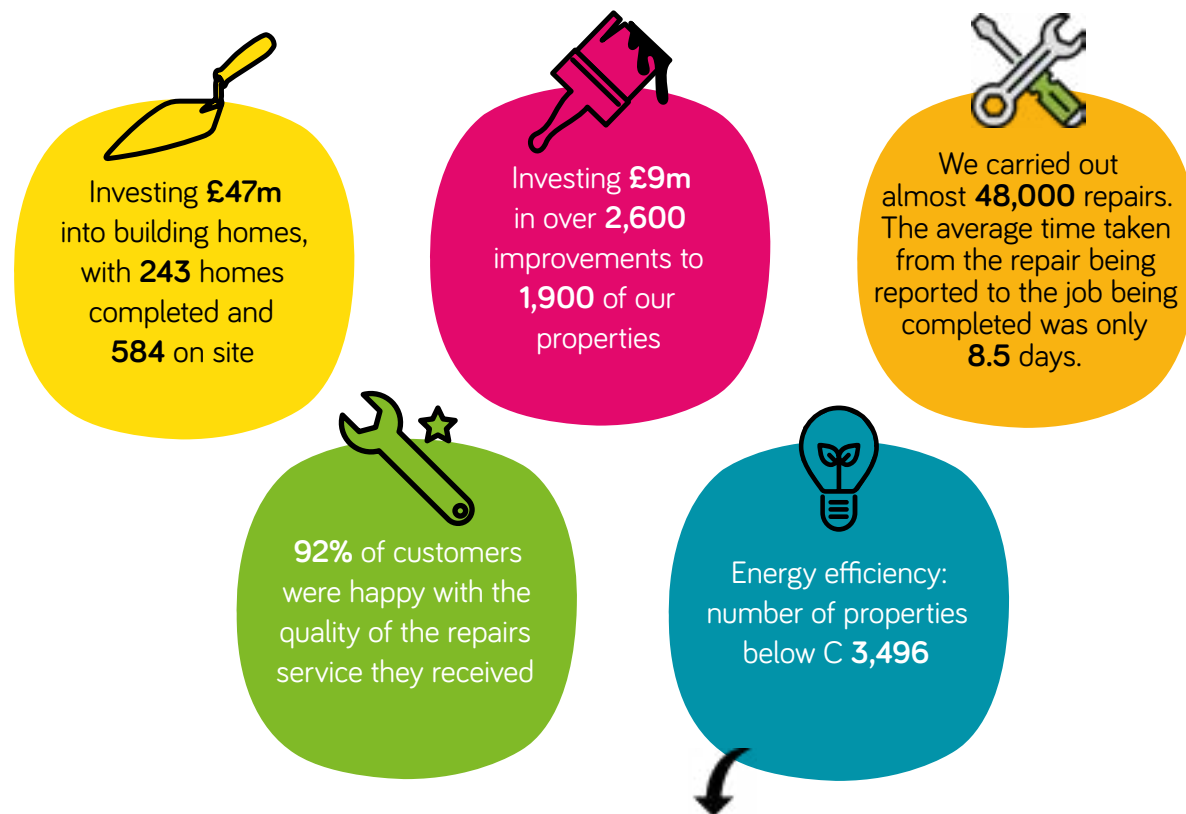
Building and maintaining Great Homes

We remain committed to doing our part to tackle the housing crisis by building as many as possible, and making sure that they are homes people want to live in and can afford.

We also maintain our homes to a high standard and use your feedback to make decisions on where we need to invest in our existing properties to make the best use of the money available.

By managing our assets proactively, we act in the best interests of the organisation and you, our customers.

Headlines from 2019 include:



Out of our 19,000 homes, only 3,496 properties now have an efficiency rating of C or less. We are continuing to work on improving the efficiency of your homes so that you use less energy and save money on your energy bills.

Charlotte's Story

Great Places makes home ownership dreams a reality for people by building new homes across the North West and Yorkshire, people like Charlotte who recently moved into one of our shared ownership properties in the Waterways in Macclesfield.

Read Charlotte's story [here](#)



Keeping your home safe!

Your safety is our number one priority. In the last year we achieved **100% compliance** returns across the following:



Water Safety



Gas Safety



Electrical Safety



Fire Safety

We also completed asbestos inspections in all communal areas and all our properties met the Government's Decent Homes Standard for public housing.



100% properties meeting Decent Homes Standard



100% asbestos inspections carried out in communal areas

We take building safety extremely seriously, and we are working to ensure 100% compliance is maintained. We are currently preparing for the impact of the findings of the Hackitt Review.

Mike's Story

Customer Mike Patra was able to build his confidence and communication skills through a work placement and volunteering opportunities at Great Places.

Mike said the experience was invaluable, commenting: "My placement didn't just allow me to help others; it really helped me, too."

Read more about his inspiring story [here](#)



Working with you to create and support Great Communities

Our vision is not just to build Great Homes but also to support thriving communities where people want to live. We believe that you have an important part in helping us to achieve this. That's why we look to give you a real say in decision-making. From mystery shopping to call audits to scrutiny reviews, we use your customer experiences to help us improve and deliver the best service we can.

In the past year over **6,000** customers have helped to shape our services through surveys and service reviews.

Over **300** instant mystery shopper surveys have been received in respect of our repairs service.

We achieved an overall customer satisfaction rating of **7.8/10** which is well above average for the housing sector.

Our customer HUB handles on average over **3,000 customer enquiries** each week via phone, email and webchat. In the past year in response to your feedback we have introduced specialist HUB advisors and technical training to enable our HUB team to resolve **91.5%** of customer queries at the first point of contact.



Your feedback has also helped us to make improvements in **10 key service areas** across the business, from the way we handle customer complaints to the services offered by our caretakers.

Your comments around repairs services, for example, have also led to improvements in the quality of service we offer and the development of new service standards.



INSIGHT

INSIGHT is a group of customers who volunteer their time to scrutinise our services. This involves collecting feedback from other customers, interviewing staff and assessing which areas could use improvement. The group offers customers the chance to learn new skills and play a vital role in keeping us 'fair, open and accountable' giving us a true picture of ways we can continue to improve. After each review INSIGHT members present their findings direct to Great Places' Management Board. In the last year INSIGHT has completed three scrutiny reviews with 25 recommendations from customers being implemented in:



Keeping customer data secure – compliance with GDPR resulted in **9 recommendations**



Energy efficiency – affordable warmth resulted in **10 recommendations**, including developing the website to host key energy efficiency information



Customers contacting Great Places/accessing services resulted in **6 recommendations**

Meet the CEO

Over **100** customers attended 4 sessions in Manchester, Oldham, Sheffield and Blackburn where they had the opportunity to meet our CEO Matt Harrison, find out more about how we work and ask any questions they had about Great Places.

They also had a chance to feed into National Federation of Housing's 'Together With Tenants' consultation that will recommend how Housing Associations can better work with their customers in the future.



Community Investment

Our Community Investment team continues to make a real difference to the lives of customers in our communities. In the last year:

Number of households supported into work or training:

800+

Number of people who took part in our community projects

1,400

Mackenzie/Parkin Alley Pals

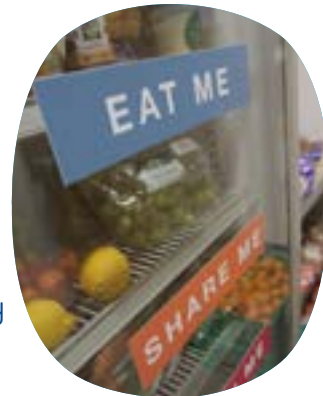
The Mackenzie Parkin Alley Pals is just one of our community success stories. This group of green-fingered residents was keen to improve the alley they share as neighbours in our Northmoor neighbourhood from a derelict and neglected space.

Our support, alongside Northmoor Together and Manchester City Council, has seen them transform this into an environmentally friendly and sociable hub for everyone who lives locally to enjoy.



Community Fridges

The Community Fridge project run from our Primrose Centre in Oldham won the coveted Community Project Award at our Community Stars customer awards this year. Opened in May 2018, the project is one of three centres that intercepts food that local supermarkets normally throw away which is available free of charge to local residents. Oldham has reported that the Primrose Community Fridge is the most successful one, **giving out almost 4 tonnes of food in the 10 months it's been opened.** As well as local residents benefitting from the community fridge, food is also distributed to several local community groups.



Katie's Story

Katie is just one of the customers our Community Investment Team has helped into employment in the past 12 months. When Katie first came to us she was staying at a Salvation Army shelter after becoming homeless in early 2018. A year on, she has made a giant leap to employment and is flourishing.

Read Katie's story [here](#)

Tenancy Support

Our Tenancy Support Services provide vital support to ensure that customers get the best advice and support possible to maintain their tenancy.

In the past year we have provided support to over **500** people.



Trevor's story

Trevor is just one of our customers to benefit from our Tenancy Support Services. Trevor was referred to Great Places' tenancy sustainment service when his neighbourhood services officer identified a change in his mental health and personal circumstances.

Read Trevor's story [here](#)

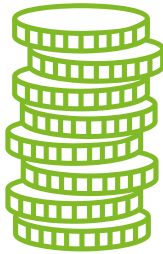


Helping our customers to shine

Residents' Fund

Our Residents' Fund is a pot of money we use to support employment opportunities and community projects.

Last year we approved **17** applications totalling **£18.6k**. These included helping residents set up their own businesses, a running club and a mobile farm event at one of our Independence and Wellbeing schemes.



Community Stars

Our annual customer awards recognise the stars within our communities who help the people and places around them shine! This year, we received over **123** nominations recognising customers who show compassion, selflessness and courage on a daily basis, including those who take part in our 'customer involvement' activities to help Great Places improve its services.

Jess and Claire's story

Jess and Claire received support from our Residents' Fund to set up their own cake-decorating business. They also scooped the coveted Community Champion Award for their work in their local community at this year's Community Stars customer awards.

Read their story [here](#)



Peter's Story

Great Places resident Peter Matthews' hard work in the garden at our Byrons development in Blackley has created a space enjoyed by the whole community and won Gold for the fifth year running at the RHS Britain in Bloom competition.

Read more [here](#)

Delivering Value for Money for our customers

Our regulator makes sure we look to provide the best Value for Money for our customers. This is measured through the Social Housing Unit Cost per property (a broad-brush measure which brings together management, service charges, maintenance, major repair and other social housing costs). Last year it was **£3087** per property (of which £1456 was spent on maintenance and major repairs). This was **significantly better than the national average** when compared with other Housing Associations. We are also looking at how our business can be more efficient to provide the best value for money possible.



Last year we achieved savings of **£5.8m** by operating more efficiently and providing great value for money.

Going the extra mile

Great People are key to ensuring we provide the best support possible and we are really proud of our staff, many of whom go out of their way to help our customers. People like Barry, the caretaker at Bowland House who came to the rescue of an elderly tenant when a pie he was cooking in his microwave began billowing smoke and activated the smoke alarms.

Read the full story [here](#)

