



Heart  
of Medway



**Safe and**

**secure homes**

**The difference we've made to**  
**our customers and communities**

**2019-2020 Annual Report**



**Roy Kennedy**

# A note from our chair

**I am delighted to be able to present to you this annual review in my first few months as the new chair of Heart of Medway Housing Association. I have been so impressed with everyone I have met and their passion for providing quality housing and services to customers. I look forward to working with the team and our customers over the next year to build on the great work we're already doing.**

Andrea Baker who has stepped down as chair and left the board deserves our thanks for the excellent work she did over many years with Heart of Medway. She has moved the organisation forward and as we face the challenges ahead we do so on the firm and positive legacy she has left us.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, and this is

particularly evident in the important work carried out through our foyer services, which help young people prepare for independent adulthood. This year we were delighted to receive planning consent for a third foyer, which will create another, much-needed, safe place for local young people to live and learn.

In 2019-20 customer safety was paramount; the year saw significant time and money invested in our fire safety programme, and our team mobilising to tackle the challenges created by the COVID-19 crisis.

Safety, and responding to the needs of our customers, remains high on our agenda for the year ahead.

These are challenging times for us all, but I am pleased to say that, as we approach our 10th anniversary, Heart of Medway finishes the year in a strong position to continue our important work helping put an end to the housing crisis in north Kent.

**Roy Kennedy**

Chair of the Heart of Medway Board

**We're part of the mhs homes group and provide:**

**841 homes**



**for 1,820 people**







# About this report

**We designed this report based on feedback from our customers. You told us:**

- + You're interested to know how we're performing as your landlord, and would like to receive updates from us throughout the year
- + You'd prefer a report that presents data that's easy to read and highlights information relevant to you

**The following report sets out how we've performed against three of our strategic priorities:**

- 1. Be a great landlord**
- 2. Meet the housing crisis locally**
- 3. Be fit for the future - financially strong and lean**

We put our customers at the heart of everything we do. This report shows the impact we've had on our customers during 2019-20, what we're doing well, and where we need to improve.

## Priority one

# To be a great landlord

## During 2019-20

**It's important to us that customers have successful tenancies.**



**We know we need to help more customers reduce their arrears and next year we'll prioritise helping even more customers.**

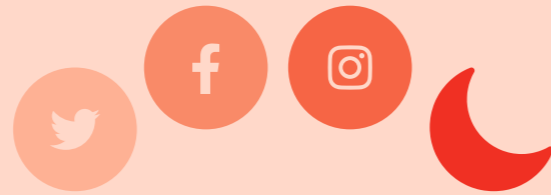
Unfortunately, the overall arrears amount has continued to increase throughout the year. More work is now being focused on customer support so that we can reduce the amount of rent arrears.



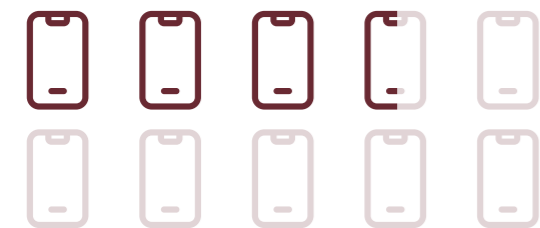
**We helped 18 households** manage tenancy issues with successful outcomes

## We launched our social media out of hours service

Giving us another way to support customers with emergencies in the evenings and weekends



## Resolved over 24 anti-social behaviour reports



## 37% - The percentage of calls abandoned by our customers

We know this isn't good enough. It's extremely important that our customers are able to speak to us quickly so improving this is a priority.



## 9 mins - The average time to speak to one of our team

## At the end of the year, 69% of young people in our foyers were in employment, education or training



## Repairs

### We invested:



**£117,000**

on maintaining and improving our estates for our customers and the community



**£420,000**

in improving our existing homes, to make sure they're safe and secure for the future

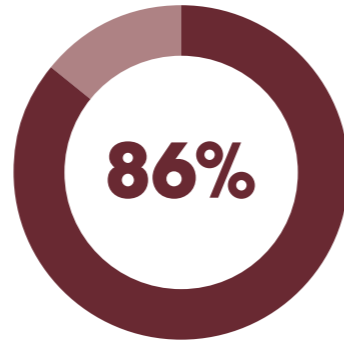


## We carried out over 1,000 repairs on our properties, taking an average of 10 calendar days



**We made adaptations to nine homes for people with disabilities**

so they can live safely in a home suitable for their needs



**86% of responsive repairs were completed on the first visit**

**Fire safety**

**Customer safety is our main priority.**

**We spent £96,338 on fire safety works, including:**



**Fire remedial work**



**Fire doors**



**Completing fire risk assessments**



**Testing fire appliances**

**We're planning to spend another £215,000 on fire safety in 2020/21**

**Connecting with customers through technology**



**68% of customers signed up to My Account**

where they can manage their tenancy online 24/7

**We've improved My Account so customers can now:**



End their tenancy (general needs)



Add and edit their contact details



Make a complaint, track the progress and upload information online



Add, edit and remove household members



**We launched our new website built around what our customers need**



**We gave our colleagues the technology to work remotely in our communities**

# Customer satisfaction



**63.2%**

**The average customer satisfaction level of our customers**



**Completed 106 customer specific surveys to help improve our services**

**We worked with our Customer Scrutiny Panel to review and improve:**



**Our Foyer service**



**Communal repairs**



**The way we maintain our supported living housing**

# You said, we did

## You said:



**We weren't clear with the progress of a complaint.**



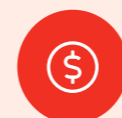
**Our complaints process was complicated and took too long.**



**We were taking too long to alert people when they went into rent arrears.**



**Adding household members to your tenancy took too long.**



**You wanted service charges to be more transparent.**

## We did:

Upgraded My Account so customers can view and track the progress of their complaint online.

Simplified our complaints process to include only two stages - investigation and appeal.

Introduced text message alerts for general needs customers when they miss a payment.

Upgraded My Account so customers can add, edit and remove household members from their tenancy at a time that suits them.

We've begun using a system which records the work we've done on your estate so we're able to charge you for the exact cost for the hours we spend caretaking, cleaning and maintaining the grounds. This means you won't pay any more than you should.



**We're trialling a new approach to working with customers to help improve our communities, and plan to grow this into an Estate Champions scheme that covers all locations where we have homes.**

## Feedback and complaints

We investigated customers' complaints and want to improve the amount of time it takes us to resolve a complaint, so we have:



### Used themes and trends to target and improve specific service areas

particularly around new-build Heart of Medway properties, starting as a new customer, and responsiveness of our services

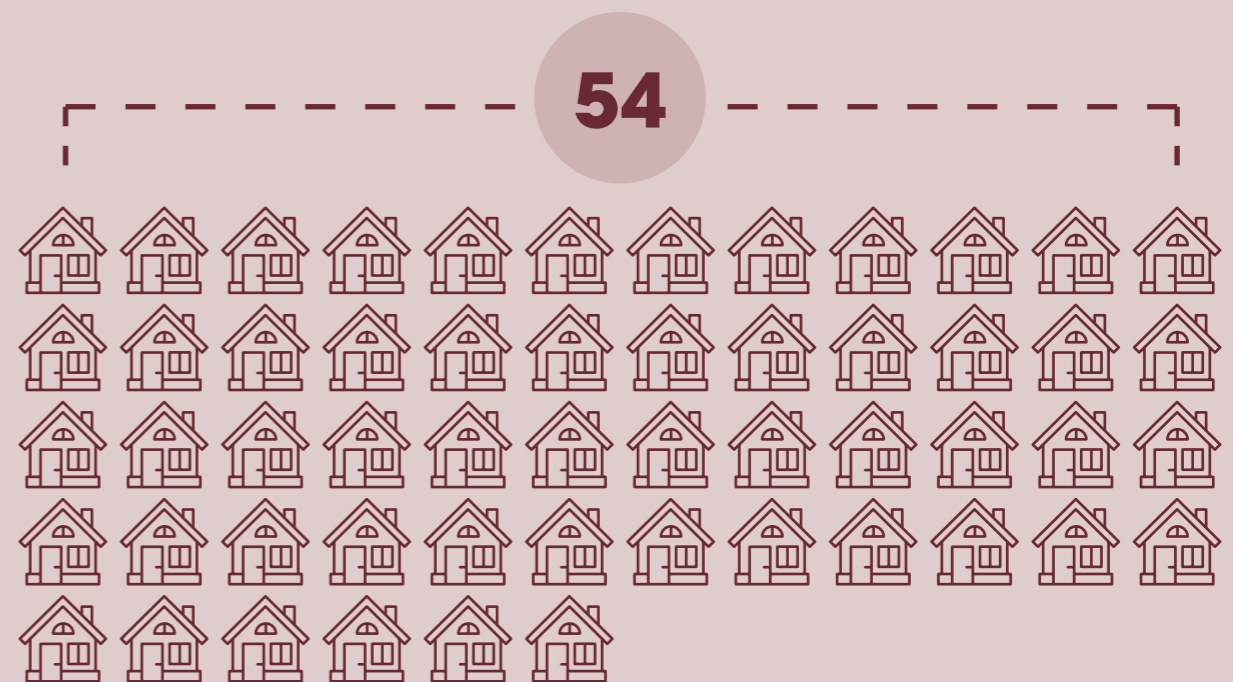
### Enabled customers to log, track and manage their repairs through My Account

## Priority two

# To meet the housing crisis locally

## During 2019-20

We started on site to build a development of 54 new affordable homes



### We're investing:

# £10.2million



in building these 54 new homes





Priority three

# Be financially strong and lean

As an organisation, we're financially strong. Last year we had an annual turnover of £5,450,000.

Average turnaround time for empty properties:

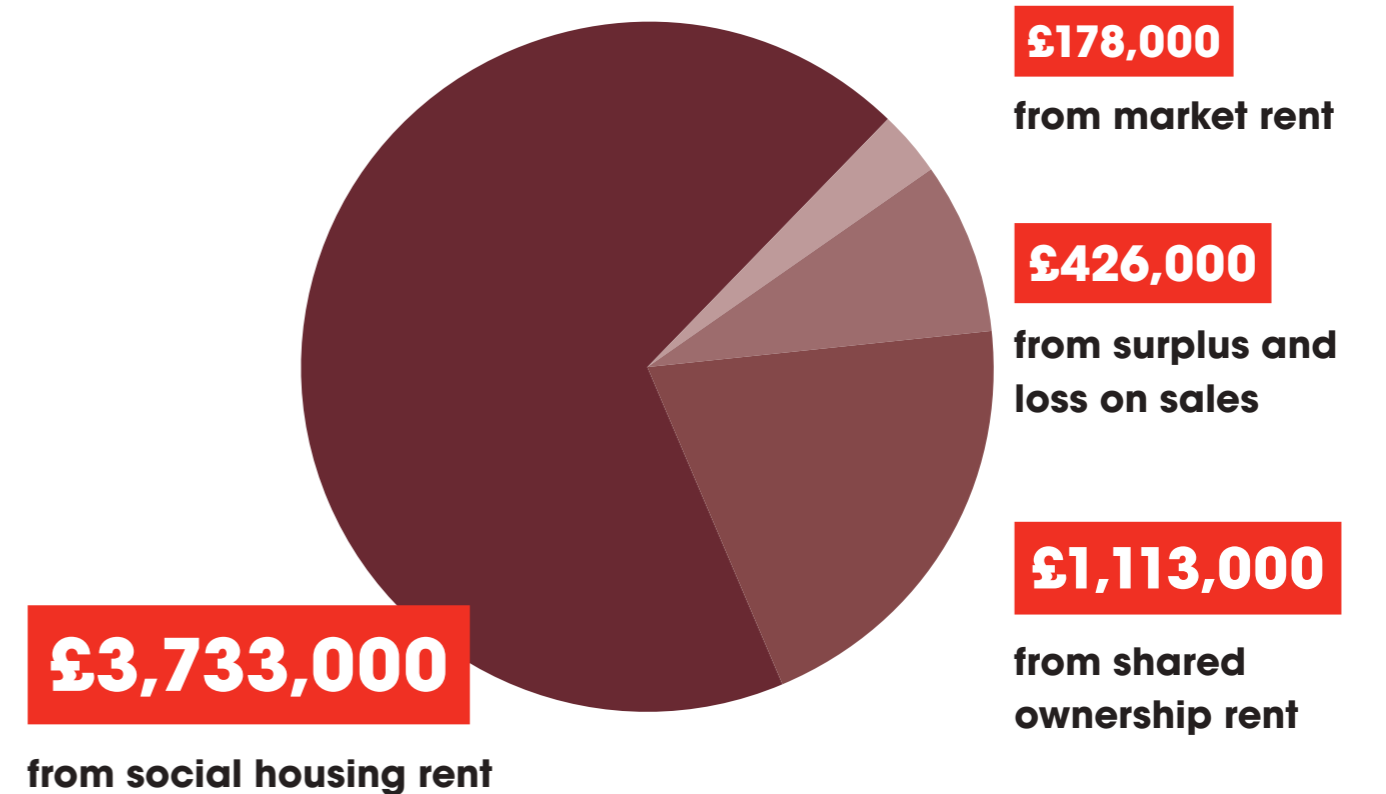
**28 days**

Target 20 days 

We want to make sure empty properties are ready for customers as quickly as possible and in a good condition.

Although we've seen some improvements in our turnaround time, we know we have more work to do. This is a priority so we can ensure more homes are available to those waiting for them.

Where our income came from during 2019-20:





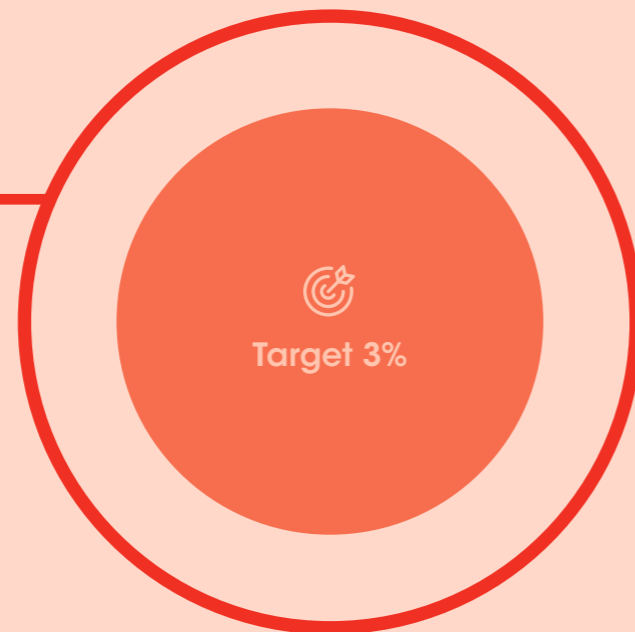
**For every £1 of our turnover:**



**Average rent arrears**

**4.6%\***

Our team is focused on improving customer support, including better communications about arrears, so that we can reduce overall rent arrears.



\*Based on our internal data over a 13 week average as of 31 March 2020

# How we compare to other housing providers

We've used data provided by HouseMark to compare how we're performing in key areas with other housing associations across England. We're looking to improve our performance to offer better services to our customers. Each year, we'll publish this comparative data so you can see how we're doing.

<b>Heart of Medway</b>	<b>Peer group</b> All English Housing Associations Excluding London - Stock size 0 to 1500				
<b>Date period</b> 2019/20	<b>Lower quartile</b>	<b>Median quartile</b>	<b>Upper quartile</b>	<b>Our performance</b>	<b>Our performance compared to others</b>
Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit*	3.44	2.94	2.24	4.92%	Lower quartile
Average number of calendar days taken to complete repairs	10.8	9.22	7	10.3	Median to lower quartile
Percentage of responsive repairs completed at the first visit	85.28	88.9	94.11	85.8%	Median to Lower quartile
Average re-let time in days (all re-lets, including time spent in works)**	32	17.91	13.84	27.3	Median to Lower quartile

\*\*This re-let figure is based on general needs and older customers only. Other re-let figures in this document is based on all customers so are different

\*This figure is based on gross arrears for general needs and older customers only. Other rent arrears data in this document is based a 13 week average for all customers

Looking ahead

# Our plans for the future

As we enter the last year of our  
Strategic Plan, we'll be:



Investing **£590,000** in our existing homes



Creating at least **54** new affordable homes  
for people in north Kent

## Celebrating 10 years

of providing safe, secure, affordable homes



To find out more about our performance  
and plans read:

- 1** Heart of Medway Strategic Plan 2018-21
- 2** Heart of Medway Financial Statement
- 3** Customer dashboard

Visit our website:

[mhs.org.uk](https://mhs.org.uk)

Follow us on:



We hope that you've found this report useful.  
We'd really value your feedback on it –  
please take a few minutes to tell us what you  
think about this report and what you'd like to  
see in the future.

You can email your comments to  
[communications@mhs.org.uk](mailto:communications@mhs.org.uk)

Sign up to

**My Account**

to manage your tenancy online



[mhs.org.uk](https://mhs.org.uk)