



Heart  
of Medway

**2021 - 2024**

# Strategic Plan

**Because everyone should have a decent home**

# Foreword

## **I'm delighted to introduce this new Strategic Plan as Heart of Medway Housing Association celebrates its 10th birthday.**

Over the last 10 years, Heart of Medway has grown from a fledgling housing association that built its first home in 2011, to a well-respected affordable housing provider with a strong delivery record. The support of key partners such as Homes England and local councils has been critical to our growth and success.

I became the Chair of the Heart of Medway Board in July 2020 and I'm very proud to be involved with the organisation. We're not a big housing association, but we make a big impact in our local area. Our size means we can connect with communities at a very local level.

We're actively tackling the housing crisis by providing safe and sustainable homes. We plan to build 275 new affordable homes by 2024 and are delighted that these plans include building our first specially designed scheme for older people.

This Plan kickstarts our nine year Green Homes Plan to significantly improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes. Our Green Homes Plan will allow a phased approach to maximise current investment, external funding and flexibility as retrofit technology improves. The safety and wellbeing of our customers is foremost in our priorities and we'll make sure our investment in our existing homes achieves the highest standards of building safety.

Going forward, I'm very keen that we explore how the 'voice of the customer' can more effectively be heard and used to shape our services. I'm also mindful that as the Heart of Medway grows in size, we stand ready to positively embrace the more incisive regulation that this growth brings.

This Plan sets out the Board's ambitions, priorities and goals. We look forward to the next three years with excitement, focus and great ambition.

### **Lord Roy Kennedy**

Chair of the Heart of Medway  
Housing Association Board



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# Who we are

**The Heart of Medway Housing Association is a subsidiary of the mhs homes group and is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (registration number: 4634).**

We were one of the first registered providers to be set up under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, which enabled the mhs homes group to create Heart of Medway as a crucial arm to build and manage new affordable homes.

We're an ambitious and growing housing association making a big impact in our local area.

We're located on the south side of the **Thames Estuary in north Kent** - a vibrant area of opportunity and growth.

**We built our first home in 2011 and now own over**

**800 homes**



We don't directly employ any colleagues. We buy our housing management and maintenance services from the mhs homes group.

**We have an annual turnover of £5 million**

and will invest **£50 million** in new and existing homes over the next three years.





# Our purpose

**Our overarching ambition, purpose and values are the same as those of the mhs homes group.**

Our ultimate ambition is to:

**"Help end the housing crisis in north Kent by providing safe and sustainable homes"**

Our ultimate ambition is underpinned by our belief that decent housing should be a basic human right.

**We do what we do because "everyone should have a decent home"**

# Our strategic priorities

**We have four interlinked strategic priorities. These are to:**



**Provide safe and sustainable homes**



**Be a caring and visible landlord**



**Focus on the customer's voice and community leadership**



**Have organisational resilience and agility**

# Our values

## Our CREATES values underpin how we behave and operate

C

### Community

We're **community-focused** and are driven by clear social purpose.

R

### Respect

We respect the **diversity of our customers** and one another; we know this diversity brings creative advantage and innovation; we won't tolerate any type of discrimination.

E

### Excellence

With a '**can do**' **attitude**, we strive for excellence and to be the best in all we do.

A

### Agility

We're agile and light on our feet; our success depends on the **ability to respond quickly and effectively** to new challenges and opportunities.

T

### Teamwork

We succeed together as **one team**; we all take personal responsibility for contributing to #teammhs.

E

### Enjoyment

We **enjoy what we do**, we enjoy helping our customers; while we have a serious job to do, we don't take ourselves too seriously!

S

### Sustainability

We make sure that what we do has a **positive impact** on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

# Our core business

Our ultimate ambition is to:  
**help end the housing crisis in north Kent by providing safe, sustainable homes.**

This Plan is therefore focused on meeting housing need and tackling homelessness by providing safe and sustainable homes.

To achieve this, we're committed to doing what we're best placed to do and where we can add most value.

## Our core business is:



Affordable rented homes

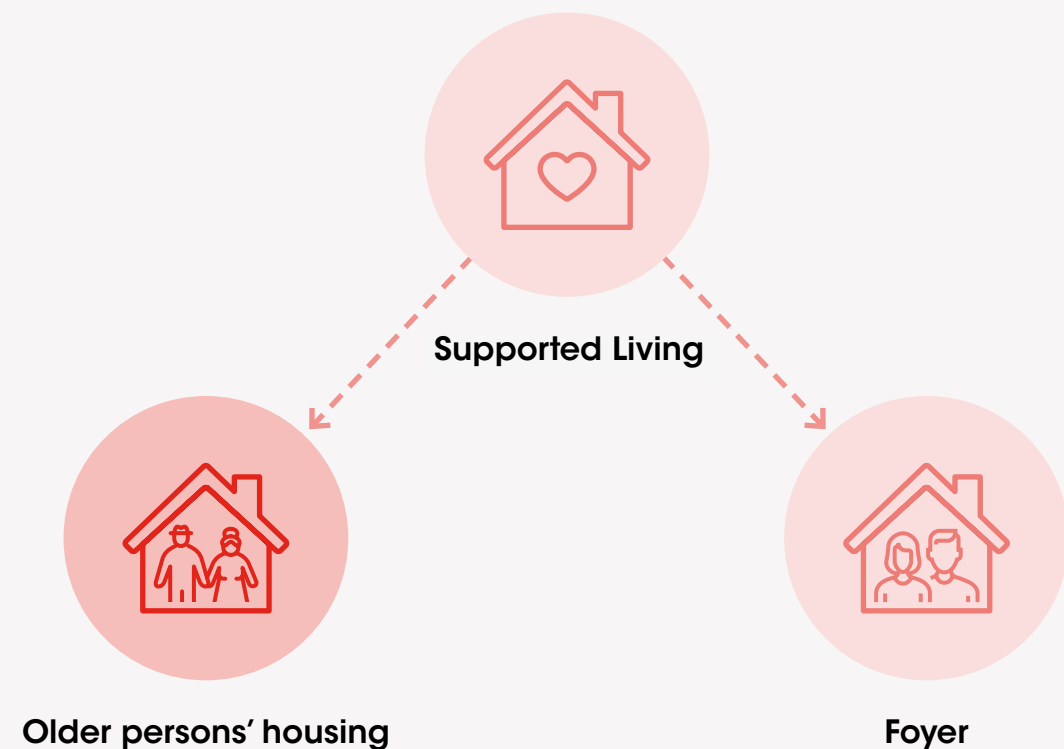


Shared ownership homes



Supported Living

## **Within this new Plan, we'll be expanding our activity to include older persons' housing**



We'll open our first landmark scheme of 54 new homes for older people in summer 2021 at Yeoman House.

This will be a new area of activity for us and we'll draw on the expertise and management services of mhs homes group to deliver excellent support services.

We also have a small market rent portfolio.



Our core business

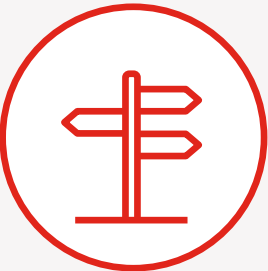
Partnership working



We’re always open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. However, we know what we’re good at and when we need to work in partnership with others to draw on their expertise and experience.



We often complement the role of mhs homes group on new developments by accessing grants to deliver much needed affordable rented homes.



We’re open for business and constantly looking for growth through new opportunities. We’ll proactively seek opportunities for stock transfer from other registered providers with housing in north Kent.

If you have an opportunity you’d like to talk to us about, please contact us.



# Our areas of operation

To maximise our impact and provide excellent services to our customers, we operate in the focused geographic area of north Kent.

This is an area of considerable growth and opportunity, but also very high housing stress with **an acute need for affordable housing.**

As of April 2021 we provide:



36 supported living  
(Foyer) homes

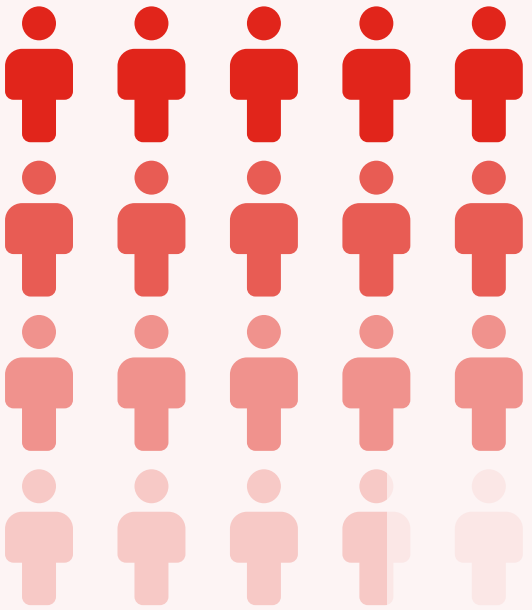


522 affordable rent  
homes



264 shared owner /  
leaseholder homes

We also provide 17 homes in our market rent portfolio



**Between 2011 and 2031,**  
**the population of north**  
**Kent will have increased by**  
**187,000 people.**



Strategic priority one:

Provide safe and sustainable homes

By 2024 we will:

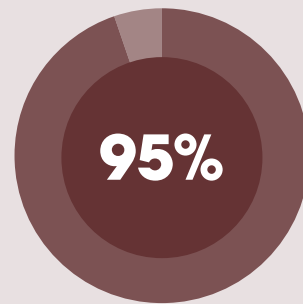
Build 275 new affordable rent homes



Deliver our Green Homes Plan so that:



All new homes commissioned from April 2021 will be built to EPC band 'B' and where possible, zero carbon ready



95% of our homes are at least EPC band 'C'



**By 2024 we will:**

**Tackle homelessness by:**



**And working collaboratively with others to deliver Housing First projects.**



Embed a new 'Clean, Green and Safe' Environmental Standard for all our estates

Prioritise our Building Safety Programme and strive to be an exemplar by achieving Building a Safer Future Charter Champion status in all areas of building and fire safety



Invest £2.5 million and proactively manage our assets so all our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard now and in the future

**Strategic priority two:**

# Be a caring and visible landlord

Deliver year on year **performance improvements** on:



**Repairs**



**Rent arrears**



**Service charge collection**



**Empty homes**



**Customer satisfaction**



**Contact and complaints**



Annually review and negotiate improved service and performance standards that are delivered by mhs homes group through the management agreement



Successfully introduce a new independent living model for older people's housing at Yeoman House and other planned schemes for older persons



Establish new effective arrangements for the management of our **leasehold and home ownership services**.



Achieve the **Social Housing Equality Framework** (SHEF) 'Excellent' level to make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our service provision.



Launch and embed a new **Tenancy Support Programme** to provide better outcomes for customers through more effective **multi-agency interventions** on domestic abuse, mental health, safeguarding, crime on our estates, anti-social behaviour and hate crime



**Develop our Service Deal Offer for customers as a sector leading standard for service excellence by:**



**Caring services**

Delivering **caring and visible services** focused on helping those most in need.



**Customer service**

Providing customer **service excellence** – right services, right first time, consistently.



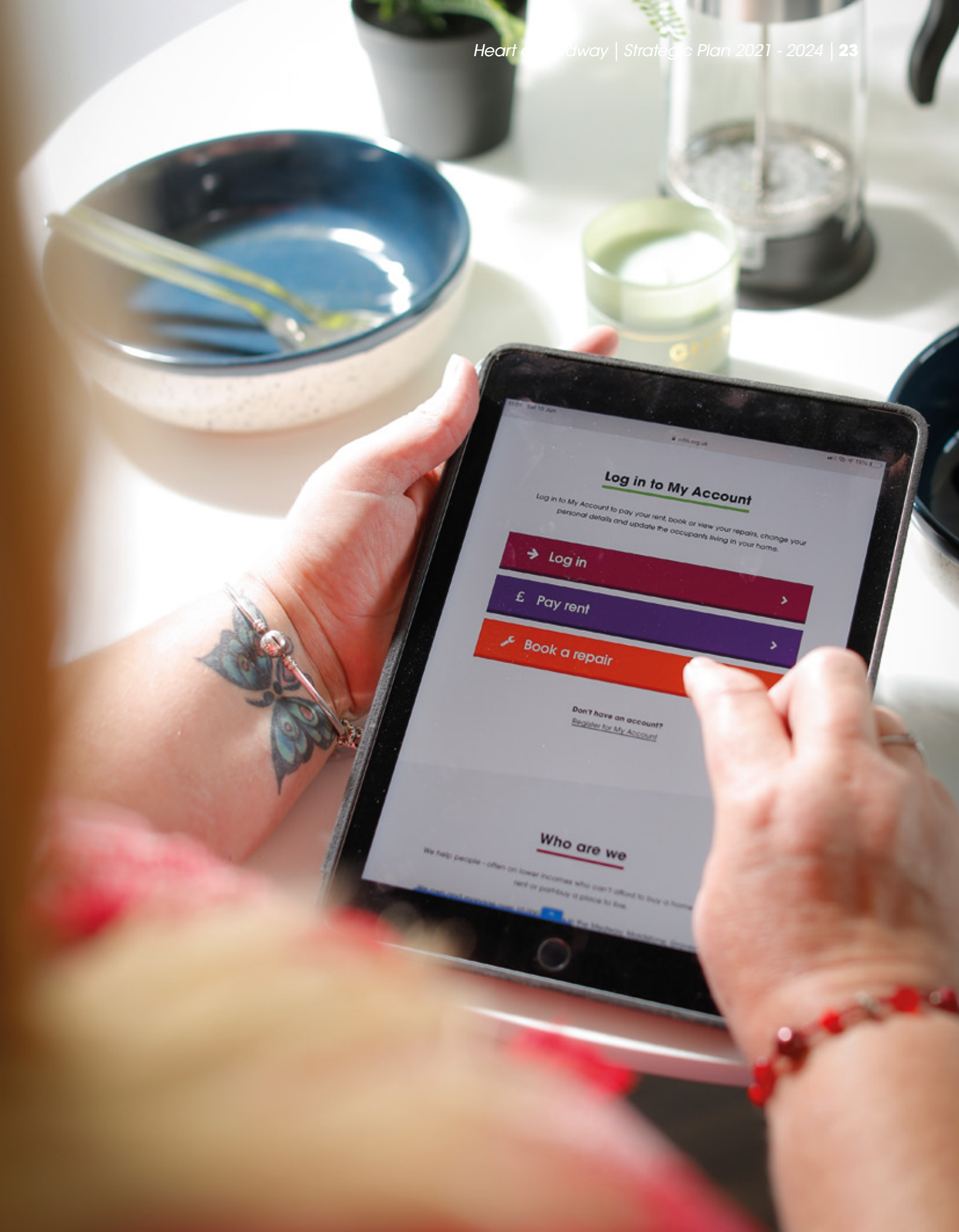
**Digital services**

Offering **great digital services** that are well used by our customers, including **65%** of customers regularly using **My Account**.



**Customer engagement**

Engaging with what is most important to our customers and communities through opportunities like **Home Plan Visits** and our **Estate Champions Scheme**.



Strategic priority three:

# Focus on the customer's voice and community leadership

By 2024 we will:

- ↔ Have a fully embedded **Customer Engagement and Empowerment Programme**, including customer representation at Board level
- ♥ Deliver our **Building Safety Programme** around our customers so that they feel safe and informed
- 🏆 Create a comprehensive **Estate Champions** and Walkabouts Scheme in partnership with local communities and Partners
- 🔥 Have in place a **Fuel Poverty Action Plan** to assist customers who are fuel poor
- 🔗 Make sure all new contracts, in excess of £100,000 contain agreed social value outputs that **directly benefit our local communities**

Strategic priority four:

# Have organisational resilience and agility

By 2024 we will:

- 🏋️ Have come successfully out of the COVID-19 pandemic a **stronger and more resilient** organisation
- 📱 Review management and service delivery arrangements with mhs homes group to make sure our customers **benefit from agile and digitally enabled systems** and methods of service delivery
- 🌿 Have in place comprehensive **Environment, Social and Governance impact reporting**
- 🐷 **Secure** new borrowings to **deliver** our development programme
- ✊ Conduct a governance review and adopt the **RACE Equality Code 2020**

# Value for money

**For every £70,000 we can save or generate in additional income – we can provide an additional affordable home.**



**All major investment decisions will be linked to a business case to evidence costs and benefits.**

## **Driving improved value for money will be critical to our success over the next three years.**

**The better we use the resources available to us, the more we can invest back into social housing.**

Our delivery model draws on the services of the mhs homes group and allows us to achieve economies of scale that other organisations of our size can't. Consequently, our operating costs and management cost per property per year are lower than many other providers, large and small.

Value for money is a key priority and links directly to our ambition to maximise the number of new homes we can build. In conjunction with the mhs homes group, we'll achieve this through innovation, better use of technology and improved efficiency and productivity.

## **Over the next three years our value for money targets will include:**



Social housing cost per unit per annum being **£1700 (2023/24)**



Achieving an operating margin of **60%**



Making **£100,000** cost and efficiency savings



Making **5% procurement savings** and an increased social value impact



# Get in touch

**Thank you for reading our Strategic Plan for 2021-24**

**If you'd like to talk to us about anything  
in this Plan, please get in touch:**



**[contactus@mhs.org.uk](mailto:contactus@mhs.org.uk)**



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