

PEOPLE PLACES PARTNERSHIPS





“Housing associations need to say and demonstrate – loud and clear – that we retain our social purpose.”

“

Housing associations began in the philanthropic era, and it's vital that we keep that focus. The questions facing us are clear – especially the urgent challenge to halt homelessness and people having to sleep rough. It's up to us and all our partners to come up with the right answers.

CHAN KATARIA - OBE
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

”

AMBITION TO DELIVER

£101.5m
TURNOVER

Two of the big highlights from the past year are our new **Strategic Partnership with Homes England**, and our first experience of an in-depth assessment by the **Regulator of Social Housing**. The first sees us as one of only eight housing providers so far granted this status, while the second confirmed our **top-level G1/V1 ratings** for governance and viability.

Together, these show that emh group is among the strongest and very best housing providers. It also demonstrates how we're upping our game to help meet the government's target of building 300,000 new homes each year, while staying firmly in touch with our customers, community roots and social purpose. We're a *UK Top 50 Biggest Builder, Top 50 Landlord* and in the *Top 200 of Leicestershire's largest companies* by turnover.



20,000+
HOMES

WE CARE

2018 also saw us play an active part in the **PlaceShapers We Care** campaign – following on from the previous *We Build* and *We Work* projects to promote the wider role housing associations play through skills, employment, enterprise, health and wellbeing. The campaign showed that we care in the widest sense about the customers and communities we serve, and are serious about listening.



1000+
STAFF

The same goes for our staff, whose 2018 conference at Leicester City Football Club was a big, buzzy event, brimming with energy and ideas about how we can rise to the big challenges of very different times.

We also have a vital role to play in continuing to make the case for who we are and what we do.



This is an organisation that lives and breathes its values and takes corporate social responsibility really seriously. It's a place where people are on their game and see doing more than expected as the norm. You can feel all this when you walk in the door.



PROFESSOR DAVID RUSSELL
GROUP BOARD CHAIR



CHALLENGES

There's no shortage of change in our working environment. Three Housing Ministers in the first half of 2018 and the recent Green Paper on social housing show just how much things are shifting. We have more homes affected by plans for the *HS2* rail line than any other provider, and expect to lose up to a hundred rented homes through the *Voluntary Right to Buy* in the coming year. New long-term funding arrangements for supported housing will enable us to invest in support services. It's also important that future policies are 'rural proofed' to make sure they don't have an adverse effect on the countryside economy and environment.

In times like these, it's important to be among influential friends, so we're closely involved in the *East Midlands CBI Regional Council*, and the National Housing Federation's *Creating Our Future* project.





Continuing to work closely with local residents and listening to what they want has helped us to make more of a difference.

CHRIS ASHTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – HOUSING

SAFE, THRIVING COMMUNITIES



29 DAYS
AVERAGE TIME TO RELET
EMPTY HOMES IN 2017/18
(2016/17: 33 DAYS)



In the past year, we've run lots of estate action days and joint inspections to spend time with our customers and hear exactly how they want us to support them and their neighbourhoods. Issues like Universal Credit, landscaping and fly-tipping have come to the fore.

The newly-opened *Support + Information Centre* in the middle of Ilkeston means that customers in Erewash drop in and see us whenever they're in town. The emh homes Facebook page is also proving a popular way for people to contact us, share their views and get a quick response.

The *Resident Involvement Board* representing customers of the four associations served by Midlands Rural Housing is also working on ways to harness digital technology to consult and keep people connected.



WORKING TOGETHER

Our housing officers no longer need to work from a desk in an office – they're out and about meeting residents. Mobile and online systems mean we can take efficient and effective services straight to customers' homes.

We've reorganised our Property Services team to bring the whole service together, with a more commercial focus, improved mobile working and a new information system that automatically notifies and reminds customers about repairs appointments.



“We have a really strong level of engagement with residents.”

ADRIAN CHEETHAM
DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY SERVICES



Last year’s tragedy at Grenfell Tower and the subsequent Hackitt Review have rightly put building standards and fire protection centre stage. We’ve brought together property experts Savills, Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Authority and customers from emh group’s Scrutiny Panel to pinpoint practical steps to minimise risk and keep people safe.



Focusing hard on financial inclusion (with extra, joint-funded staff to help people manage the switch to Universal Credit) has helped customers to gain over £3.2 million in extra income over the last four years. This has also helped to keep rent arrears below 3% and lead to fewer households being evicted for non-payment. We are pleased to have retained top quartile performance in this area.

Our *Trusted Partner* relationship with Department of Work & Pensions has played a big part in this success, and is typical of the strong partnerships that support all of our work. *The Lightbulb Project* in Blaby helps to keep people with mental health problems out of hospital and in suitable homes with support. While close working with the Police and Social Services means we can respond to crime or anti-social behaviour in a firm and speedy way.

Our staff also take part in community initiatives as volunteers. For the *Feeding Leicester* project, colleagues helped local charity *Action Homeless* and Leicester City Council to deliver packed lunches to play schemes and adventure playgrounds to make sure children got a decent meal during the summer holidays.

WE HAVE HELPED CUSTOMERS GAIN OVER £3.2M IN EXTRA INCOME OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS.



DRIVING CHANGE

The homes at Romorantin Place in Long Eaton demonstrate our commitment to investing in and regenerating existing neighbourhoods. We’ve upgraded the flats with new kitchens, bathrooms and heating, and created on-the-spot resident involvement and caretaking staff to help look after the area, with input from the local Civic Society.

With the numbers of local people aged over 75 set to increase by between 50 and 70 per cent over the next 15 years, we’re looking afresh at the homes we provide for older residents and how healthcare and wellbeing services work alongside. The increasing proportion of people living with Dementia also presents an urgent challenge to the way we cater for needs in later life, which we’re addressing through a wide-ranging new strategy.





ENTERPRISE AND ENGAGEMENT

emh sharpes garden services social enterprise now provides landscape maintenance for every emh homes property, and we're looking at its potential to provide planting for the group's new-build schemes.

“There’s a really good feeling about getting out there and working in our communities – and making a difference every day.”

NIKKI CHAWDA
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING
AND NEIGHBOURHOODS



Our TPAS-accredited customer Scrutiny Panel has real teeth – holding us to account through robust reviews that lead to real changes in the way we provide services. During the year, the Panel helped with our review of fire safety along with improvements to the emh homes website.

ACTION NOW!

The number of people sleeping rough and begging on our streets is a sad and distressing symptom of deep-rooted failures in Britain's housing market, and cuts to public services. We want to lead the way in tackling this problem, so in Leicester we're working with a multi-agency partnership to tackle this problem, and helped charity Action Homeless to raise funds and audit the local level of street homelessness.

At our 2018 staff conference, we also asked emh group colleagues for fresh ideas and inspiration about how we can do more. Our Human Resources Director, Jill Bamford, is now part of the National Housing Federation's *Greenhouse Project* to develop new responses to halt homelessness.



“Homelessness is an issue for everybody – it’s up to all of us to come up with practical solutions.”

CHRIS ASHTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – HOUSING

£7.8m
SPENT ON:

- 240 heating systems
- 248 boilers
- 510 kitchens
- 12 bathrooms
- 228 homes with new doors
- 167 homes with new windows
- 187 roofs
- 640 aids and adaptations
- 51,000 responsive repairs
- 2,585 homes decorated outside
- 316 fire risk assessments

PLUS...
new lifts, communal lighting and door entry systems



Home is a place where people can be themselves. At emh group, we develop schemes we're really proud of.

CHRIS JONES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING FUTURES

APPROXIMATELY **600**
NEW HOMES TO BE BUILT IN 2018/19

We've geared up to almost double the number of new homes we build – from around 300-320 per year in the past, to approximately 600. We have built up a very strong pipeline of sites and permissions to help drive our future growth.

The quality and sustainability of new homes is just as important. And achieving such a step change in production demands imagination, innovation and being prepared to take carefully-calculated risks.



190%
TAKE-UP OF HOMES ENGLAND GRANT IN 2017/18



Homes England



AWARDS AND APPROACH

Recently-completed schemes have won a string of industry awards. The ultra-energy-efficient Saffron Lane Passivhaus development in Leicester has received four prizes on its own, including the Housing Excellence Award for *Best New Affordable Housing Scheme*. These prizes recognise the attention to detail and painstaking work to put together partnerships with local authorities, community groups, landowners and others to make developments possible.

We're excited to be among the first wave of housing providers to secure *Strategic Partnership* status with the government's homebuilding agency **Homes England**. This unlocks and guarantees more than £30 million in grant to help pay for nearly 750 homes over the next four years. This relationship is much more than a funding programme – it's about thinking and working differently.

As Strategic Partners, we'll be able to continue our successful programme of direct or joint land buying, invest in more *quick-build* modular construction pilots and manage sales risks more effectively. The arrangement injects much greater certainty into the development process, improves the group's liquidity and sends a clear message to the market that we're serious and reliable players across the whole East Midlands.

316
NEW HOMES COMPLETED 2017/18

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Leading the Quantum Development Consortium (with Futures Housing Group, Wellingborough Homes and Advance Housing) is another vital part of our approach to building more homes. It allows us to share experiences, learn lessons and collaborate to secure better deals.

Working with established developers and contractors of all sizes is also important to us. They offer the responsiveness and expertise we need, and we couldn't deliver our ambitious programme without them. In turn, our investment contributes to the local economy and supports the industry through apprenticeships.



“Building a handful of homes in a village may not make much difference to national housing targets, but it has an enormous impact on local families and the rural economy. We’re going to carry on striving to support rural areas by providing homes for local people.”

RICHARD MUGGLESTONE
MANAGING DIRECTOR – MIDLANDS RURAL HOUSING



HOMES FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Midlands Rural Housing is a unique organisation that combines the presence and strength of four local housing associations across the counties of central England. 2017/18 saw the associations deliver their business plan targets and achieve exceptional levels of management performance, with rent arrears for all four below one per cent.

Building homes in rural areas helps to make and keep villages sustainable, by supporting local schools, shops, pubs and other businesses. It also strengthens the group by creating opportunities to pilot new approaches, including low-carbon and modular building technologies.

The 14 new homes built for rent and shared ownership at Wootton Waven by Warwickshire Rural Housing Association typify this innovation and commitment to partnership working. The Midlands’ first rural Passivhaus development will mean residents benefit from long-term savings in heating and energy bills which are expected to be 70 per cent lower than standard homes.

200+
NEW RURAL HOMES
BEING BUILT BY 2023

Craig Felts retired this year after 14 years as Midlands Rural Housing’s managing director and 40 years dedicated to building countryside communities. He has been a busy and vocal national champion through his work with the Rural Housing Alliance, Rural Services Network, Countryside Landowners Association, Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and a host of other lobbying groups. He’ll be much missed, but the rural business is safe in the experienced hands of his successor, Richard Mugglestone.



ACTION NOW!

We want to be the champions for affordable housing development across the East Midlands. Whether new homes are built by ourselves or others, we’re keen to bang the drum for greater investment in the wide variety of properties that our region needs.

“The more homes that get built, the happier we are!”

CHRIS JONES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - DEVELOPMENT





We're turning attitudes towards people who need care and careers in this sector upside down. Every person counts.

JOANNA GRAINGER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CARE AND SUPPORT

CARE AND SUPPORT

Tight control of costs and risks means that emh care & support has had its best ever year for financial outturn and performance in 2017/18. We've amalgamated services, updated working practices and hired dedicated, smart new people to make sure our work is safe, consistent and compliant. This transformation lays the foundation for us to deliver our new care and support strategy to invest in better quality of life as a vital part of the group's business plan.



11/13
REGISTERED CARE SERVICES
RATED AS **GOOD** BY THE CARE
QUALITY COMMISSION



89%
OF EMH CARE & SUPPORT
SERVICE USERS WOULD
RECOMMEND US



LED BY SERVICE USERS

The Service User Forum's work involves people with learning disabilities auditing the quality of services we provide and talking direct to other customers about their needs and preferences. The pressure on individual social and leisure activities because of cuts to social care budgets means that we're now encouraging projects that create opportunities for people to use their skills in the community.

The *Community Kitchen* at the Speedwell Rooms in Staveley is a great example. Its volunteers cook meals and provide food packages for up to 60 people each week. They also offer other wellbeing services including woodland walks. The Community Kitchen was shortlisted for a National Learning Disability and Autism Award.

NATIONAL LEADERS

We've been busy as members of the National Housing Federation and National Care Forum on work to secure the future long-term finance deal for supported housing, and initiatives to tackle homelessness and domestic abuse. The National Care Forum's *Rising Stars* skill transfer programme has seen one of our Assistant Managers, Jay Smith, receiving mentoring from a Director at another care provider, Making Space, and we have mentored one of their managers in return.

Team members have been shortlisted for a number of regional and national awards this year. We've also joined the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) to play our part in planning to meet the needs of the UK's rapidly ageing population.

ACTION NOW!

We need to make more people consider working in care and support as an attractive and positive career choice – in the same way that nursing is. This means designing and nurturing the skills that we need to cope with current and future needs, and developing leaders who can make the difference between successful and failing services.

Society needs to stop viewing people who need care and support as a drain on resources. As individuals and groups, our service users have extraordinary talents that they're keen to contribute to local communities. If we change our thinking and unlock this amazing resource, everyone will benefit.



We really want to push the boundaries on promoting diversity, engaging with residents and developing leaders.

JOANNE TILLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CORPORATE SERVICES



94%
OF EMH GROUP STAFF SAY THEIR BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS THE ORGANISATION'S VALUES



INNOVATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Our 2018-23 business plan *Improving Opportunities for People* sets out the group's plans across five strategic goals, spanning growth, homes, services, financial resilience and organisational development. None of this would be possible without investing in our people to empower them and unlock their potential.



The emh group Academy sits at the heart of this – attracting people from diverse backgrounds to address skill shortages and help meet the government's target of having one in five young people in apprenticeships by 2020.

By expanding apprenticeships right across the group, we aim to treble our number of 'earn and learn' apprenticeships to more than 60 by the end of 2018. We also plan to ring-fence half of our future Academy places to support people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

REACHING OUT AND IN

The same commitment shapes the way we reach out to customers and communities and work with local partner organisations to promote careers in housing and care. Residents involved in the Special Interest Groups and Coordinating Committee have gone from strength to strength in their work on the business plan, sheltered housing, *Voluntary Right to Buy*, rent increases, the website and much else. This September sees us hold a *Let's Engage* day to connect with more customers than ever.

Input from customers bolsters the innovation that comes from employees. At this year's staff conference, we ran *Ideas Labs*, which generated more than 50 practical suggestions to improve our business. These are now being taken forward by task and finish groups focused on areas like homelessness, housing and care integration, and tackling the stigma associated with social housing.

250
APPRENTICESHIPS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



“We want an empowered, skilled and motivated workforce that doesn’t wait to be told what to do.”

LYNNE SWINSON
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER



ACTION NOW!

The group has started work on developing a new, outcome-focused diversity strategy which is to include a whole set of new measures, including access to training, recruitment and secondment. We want these to test how well we’re delivering true equality and fairness as an employer and in our services.



DEVELOPING LEADERS

We want and need all our managers and leaders to be great coaches, and coaching development now forms part of the induction and training for leaders at every level, including peer to peer coaching.

We are also using the apprenticeship levy to develop our managers and we have eight recently promoted managers taking part in a development programme which will see them all achieve an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualification and set the bar for new managers of the future.

WAYS TO LEARN

In an era when if you want to know something most people just ‘Google or YouTube it’, we recognise that traditional, face-to-face learning is not always the right or best choice for many. We are working on introducing a new learning management system so that we can offer easy access to learning and more variety in ways to learn which will better suit our diverse workforce.

These will include e-learning and other resources like TED Talks, through which staff can get tips from world-class experts direct to their desks or phones.

SILVER TO GOLD

The group has recently been awarded the Gold Investors in People (IiP) standard. This demonstrates how thoroughly our vision is embedded in everyone’s jobs, and how we support and empower people to achieve their goals. In confirming our upgrade from Silver, the IiP assessor commented on how staff came across as open, trustworthy, chatty and likeable people who clearly live and breathe our values.



DIVERSITY AT WORK

This year has seen unprecedented and long overdue attention on equality in the workplace. Our overall gender pay gap is close to the national average, but varies significantly between different parts of the group, so there’s still work to do. To reflect the diverse nature of our workforce and customers, we will also analyse and report on pay gap by ethnicity from 2018/19.

When we received so few applications from women for the role of Board Chair, we decided to run a Women on Boards initiative. This reached out to six women of varying ages who we felt would make good, future non-executives with a three-part programme to boost their confidence and skills. The workshops included mentoring from award-winning Chief Executive and Chair, Helen Jagger, and expert advice on CVs and interview techniques.

“We want to be an employer of choice that boosts the skills and standards for our sector.”
JOANNE TILLEY



We've maintained turnover, increased our surplus and kept on delivering efficiencies, despite the one per cent rent reductions.

ANDREW KILBY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – FINANCE



ASSETS OF
£780m



FIT FOR PURPOSE

2017/18 was an excellent year for emh group. We achieved our highest ever net surplus (£15.4 million), while still being able to invest £43 million in new and existing homes. Our four-year efficiency programme has now reduced costs by a total of £3.6 million, with more than a million pounds of further, identified savings to come by 2019/20. Measured as part of the Sector Scorecard pilot scheme, the group's average management cost per home has also fallen.

This financial strength means we've been able to commit significant sums to updating our information systems, including the new self-service customer portal and enhanced maintenance systems, which provide much improved information about our assets and performance. The group has also retained its **A+ credit rating** with Standard & Poor's, which safeguards our future ability to borrow at competitive rates.



WHERE WE SIT

Housing associations occupy a unique position between the public sector and the purely commercial world. As such, we have a special responsibility to be cost effective and to keep up the pressure on value for money. We also have a duty to be ambitious and take considered risks, but in a way that never compromises our accountability to customers and commitment to quality.

BUILDING FUTURES

We were pleased to complete 316 new homes last year and are now busy raising the extra finance to support our ambitious development plans and to capitalise on our new status as a Strategic Partner for Homes England. We're a founding member of MORHomes plc – the special purpose vehicle set up to help 56 housing associations gain quicker, cheaper and more efficient access to the financial markets to support housebuilding.

ACTION NOW!

Rising to the challenge of increasing housing supply relies on us being able to secure the money to acquire land, build and contribute to local infrastructure. Becoming a Strategic Partner opens up the potential for more grant income, and we'll be going back to the capital markets in 2019 to raise substantial extra funds.

3.5%
INCREASE IN OPERATING
SURPLUS IN 2017/18





“We moved in to our new home in Yarwell at the end of May, and we honestly couldn’t be happier. We were living in a neighbouring village with our two children. We really needed a bigger house and we also wanted to be closer to my parents. My grandmother has also moved into a bungalow on the new development, so it’s brought four generations together! We are just so grateful that we’re all lucky enough to be able to live here.”

KAYLEY LOVETT, NORTHAMPTON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION CUSTOMER, YARWELL



“emh homes are a fantastic partner to have around the table. Their innovative, flexible approach at both strategic and operational level is exemplary. We are proud and privileged to include them as part of our partnership team.”

QUIN QUINNEY, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES GROUP MANAGER, BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL

“The evidence shows that emh group performs at ADVANCED in terms of operating in line with values, adopting the values and at living the values.”



“Erewash Borough Council have always worked well with emh homes. A great example of this was the joint creation of a Money Management Advisor that has had a significant positive impact on the lives of tenants and residents.”



PHILIP SUDLOW, HEAD OF REVENUES, BENEFITS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES, EREWASH BOROUGH COUNCIL



“emh care & support is the best. We like the activity variety, and the staff and people are just brilliant.”

EMH CARE & SUPPORT SERVICE USER FORUM, HUTHWAITE

WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT US



“If it wasn’t for Linzi I would have lost my home. Linzi has been more than helpful and has gone above and beyond.”

MRS M, EMH HOMES RESIDENT

“United Living has worked alongside emh group for many years – seeing it grow and develop in a difficult and demanding market. The group really understands the true meaning of partnership, so we enjoy a collaborative relationship approach, which we look forward to continuing.”

RICHARD BAKER, MIDLANDS REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UNITED LIVING

“Everything emh group do on learning and development is second to none. They have a highly professional approach and well-deserved reputation for the success of their apprenticeships.

Equality and diversity come through in every aspect of how they serve their residents and support employment in the region.”

LYDIA WRIGHT, APPRENTICE ADVISOR – CONSTRUCTION, STEPHENSON COLLEGE, COALVILLE, LEICESTERSHIRE



“Where many housing associations are reducing resident engagement to save on costs, the involved residents at emh homes are very pleased that our landlord is talking loudly about the value of having residents engaged and will continue to do so.”

ROY SWANN, CHAIR, EMH HOMES CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

“The competitive advantage of emh homes can be summed up in one word: People. Scrutiny at emh homes is successful because the people on the panel work in partnership with staff to improve services to all residents.”

GILL LEVERTON-TAYLOR, CHAIR, EMH HOMES SCRUTINY PANEL



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