



Annual Review 2020



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Gold
Until 2021

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES



STRENGTH

The past year has reminded us how strength comes from community.

It is when people come together that we are at our best and can achieve the extraordinary.

COMMUNITY

FORWARD

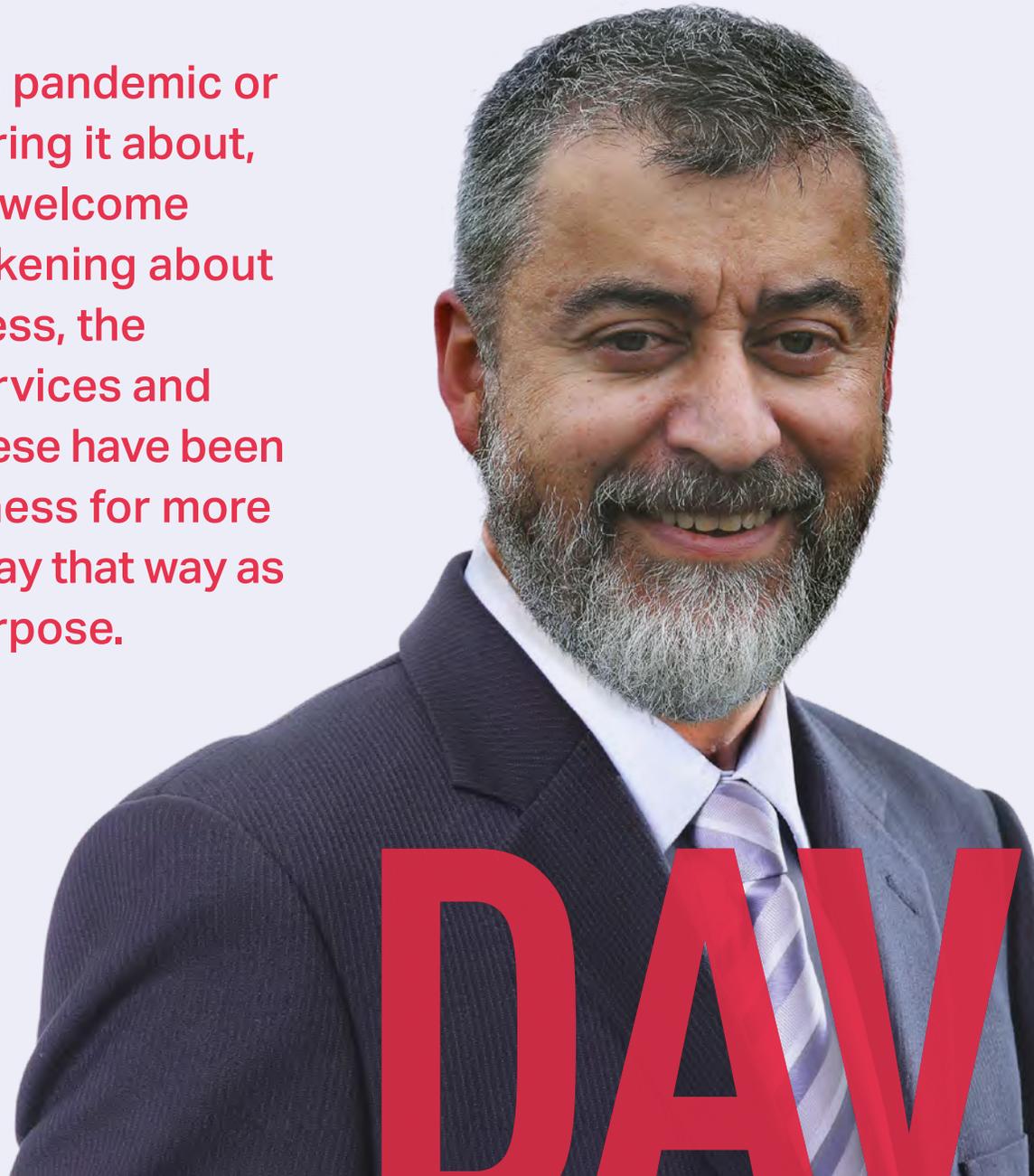
This review contains the first-hand accounts of our staff, board, customers and partners to showcase the diverse ways in which we do this.

TOGETHER

WELCOME

It shouldn't have taken a pandemic or worldwide protests to bring it about, but this year has seen a welcome public and political awakening about the crisis of homelessness, the importance of public services and the value of diversity. These have been at the heart of our business for more than 70 years, and will stay that way as the axis of our social purpose.

David Russell
emh group Chair



DAVID

We've had a record-breaking year in terms of financial performance and building new homes, completing almost 500 properties of all sorts through our strategic partnership with Homes England. The certainty that this arrangement brings us will be critical as we continue to adapt to the difficult economic circumstances, which seem certain to lie ahead.

I'm immensely proud of the agility and resilience that we've demonstrated through such a testing period, and deeply grateful to all of our customers, staff, partners and suppliers for their efforts and cooperation in maintaining our services. As a group board, we received twice-weekly updates during the peak of the lockdown period, and put special delegated authority in place for urgent decisions.

Looking ahead, the government's proposed changes to planning laws offers the prospect of increased and faster rates of housebuilding, but with potential risks to the provision of affordable homes, rural developments and the quality of construction. We're determined to do all we can to avoid these downsides.

Next year will see the 75th anniversary of our founding, and the parallels between a society emerging from the trauma of the Second World War and the challenges we face now from Coronavirus are all too obvious. I'm confident that our combination of strong community roots, sound finances and ambitious people committed to making the world a better place will prevail.



I've long believed that making change is about winning people's hearts and minds – and the past year has evidenced this like never before. The emergency measures to accommodate people sleeping rough as COVID-19 took hold, and the extraordinary response of our country's health and care services have demonstrated that it's the will to do things differently that really counts.

CHAN



Chan Kataria OBE
emh group Chief Executive

This idea is at the core of our group's vision and resolve to be a leader: regionally, nationally and in our sector – an organisation that stands up and stands out. I'm encouraged by the recognition from central government that housing associations have a vital role to play in social and economic recovery, and we enjoy the unwavering support and creativity of the many local authorities with whom we work in close partnership.

Strength and leadership come from inside too – our approach to staff talent management and connections with our customers through the National Housing Federation's *Together With Tenants* initiative continue to pay dividends in greater understanding, flexibility and performance.

The group's sustained investment in information technology has also proved its worth in the speed with which we were able to mobilise most staff to work from home, and the pace of change towards digital and online services that are efficient, reliable and easy to use.

We've made excellent progress against almost all of our 2018-23 business plan targets, including important commitments like helping a thousand households into home ownership, creating 250 traineeships and apprenticeships, and training all our leaders as coaches.

The extraordinary reaction to *Black Lives Matter*, *MeToo*, *Extinction Rebellion* and other campaigns for global change remind us that for all the talk of recent decades, there is still much to achieve. In the East Midlands and far beyond, the beliefs and values that drive our work in housing, care and support are at the forefront of positive progress.



Welcome

Homes and
neighbourhoods

Care & support

Building
communities

Diversity and
inclusion

Resilient
business

Transforming
the group

Raising
performance

HOMES AND NEIGHBOUR- HOODS

It's been a year to pull together, focus on what really matters, act on our conscience and learn quickly. Offering support to those who need it most; making sure people live in homes where they're safe and happy; and building a sense of community feel more important now than ever.



“This has been an exceptional year for our borough, which has tested the resilience of our working partnership with emh group.

I’ve been proud to witness the way we’ve worked together, to immediately support residents, ensure they are accommodated, and help them move forwards to meet their future housing needs.

I congratulate the staff of both organisations for their tireless devotion to duty and thank them on behalf of the Councillors and residents of Erewash for their hard work.”

Councillor Mrs Valerie Clare

Lead Member for Community Engagement
Erewash Borough Council

www.erewash.gov.uk



86% of customers rated our housing customer services as ‘good’ to ‘excellent’.



**FINALIST
2019 TPAS AWARDS,
Large Landlord
Outstanding Tenant
Engagement.**



Our services to individuals, households and communities provide the ultimate test of the working principles we’ve adopted across the group. These include empowering and enabling our staff to do the right things, working efficiently with the maximum use of digital technology and making sure we know and understand our customers and their lives.

The health and financial effects of the Coronavirus have disproportionately impacted on people on low incomes and ethnic minority groups. In response, we’ve turned up our levels of help for customers affected by homelessness, financial difficulties and poor physical or mental health. We’ve been proactive in reaching out to residents to check on their wellbeing, including phone calls in different community languages and emergency housing support for local authority partners.

WORKING



“We are really proud of our relationship with emh group. It is successful partnership working at every level of the organisation, working together to find and deliver creative housing solutions for the residents of Blaby District.”

Jane Toman / Chief Executive / Blaby District Council



TOGETHER



“We’re committed to preventing homelessness. In partnership with the Canaan Trust and Hope Centre, our team took part in sponsored sleep-outs in Erewash and Northampton. We also hosted a ‘Homes for Cathy’ event to raise awareness of the problems faced by people at risk of becoming homeless.”

Laura Morgan, Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, emh homes

5 emh group housing schemes for older people won regional prizes in the 2019 Elderly Accommodation Counsel awards.



For a family in Erewash whose home had been made uninhabitable due to a flood at the height of the lockdown, our team went above and beyond to secure a suitable home that was ready for them to move into and recover from their ordeal.

It’s clear that many of the homeless people who were able to benefit from the ‘get everyone in’ emergency accommodation earlier in the year need significant personal support, to help them secure more permanent homes and independence. Through our partnership contract with Leicester City Council, we’re able to provide this joined-up assistance in one of the country’s most diverse hotspots for wellbeing.

Our priority for the year ahead is to make this investment felt deep within the communities we serve, through further upgrades to keep homes up to modern standards and by investing in social fabric and relationships that are the glue of successful neighbourhoods.

CARE & SUPPORT

The past year has seen our care and support service blend better and add more value than ever before to the emh group as a whole. We've particularly demonstrated this through increased support for homeless people, delivering specialist, contracted care to residents of other housing providers and by making the needs of vulnerable groups more of a priority in our progressive plans for new homebuilding.





“Last year, we asked all our supported living customers in Derbyshire for their feedback about the condition of their homes.

We’ve used their feedback to develop the property improvement programme for 2020/21, which I hope will make a real difference to people’s lives.”

Andrew Humberstone, Head of Specialist Housing, emh care & support

Transforming a three-bedroom house in Vaughan Street, Coalville previously occupied by adults with learning disabilities into safe, high-quality homes for people who were previously homeless typifies this success. We were able to offer the existing residents much more suitable accommodation for independent living, while providing



the extra support the new occupiers needed to rebuild their lives and sustain their tenancies. This project is also an example of our determination to only take on services where we’re confident we can make a positive difference to people’s lives. We’re not prepared to support models and schemes that simply perpetuate problems.

“We’re very happy with our new home – we’d wanted a smaller house for a while, and now it’s finally happened. Our bills are cheaper, and we’ve decorated almost the whole house – just waiting to do the kitchen now. It’s good that we have still got support as well.”

Denise Ridgway, Former resident at Vaughan Street, Coalville



ACTIVELY

“emh group has been fully behind the Leicester Homeless Charter, with staff from across their organisation being actively involved. I greatly value their commitment and support in addressing homelessness in the city.”

Mark Grant, Chief Executive, Action Homeless

ACTION
HOMELESS
The chance for change

INVOLVED

When the Coronavirus pandemic hit the UK early in 2020, we responded quickly and decisively to protect both staff and service users. On top of the food parcel deliveries and befriending scheme offered to people shielding in conjunction with other parts of the group, we also switched around 70 staff from day services to providing extra support direct to clients in their homes.

In Northamptonshire, we've diversified and grown our business so that we now provide 2,000 hours of care every week to people living in properties owned by other providers, including the St Crispin retirement village in Upton. Wright's Court and Park Court in Kettering is a new development of 45 homes for older people and those of working age with learning and physical disabilities, with 24-hour on-site support provided through individual care packages.



Next year will see completion of Springfields, our latest extra-care scheme in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, at which the keep-fit, art, craft and other wellbeing activities will be supported by volunteers and open to the whole local community. This sort of approach breaks down barriers and builds homes and services that are fit for the future.

We are now a top-20 UK provider of care and support, with a culture and reputation that was recognised by a very strong Silver Investors in People award. We've started to use Psychologically Informed Environments to help people who've experienced trauma, and we continue to promote careers in our sector as an attractive choice that offers unique rewards and job satisfaction.



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BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Our strategic partnership with Homes England has made a big difference to the way we deliver new homes. By reducing the time spent on bidding and approving individual schemes, we're able to focus and get on with the important business of securing land and building good quality homes we're proud of.



Longer-term security of funding and the freedom to swap between tenures mean that we're better placed to respond to market changes and compete for sites. Our programme is now evenly split between new acquisition of land, design and build contracts and more traditional Section 106 deals for affordable housing. Whether it's a complex development or straightforward new build, local authority partners know that we offer great added value and do what we say we'll do.



“My highlights of the year include the regeneration scheme at Romorantin Place in Long Eaton, where we were able to build 16 new affordable homes while improving the existing flats and local environment. And I'm excited about the opportunities for modular building with ilke Homes.”

Purnima Wilkinson, Director of New Business – Partnerships, emh group



As a values-based developer, we're equally willing and able to take on small schemes of just a few homes in a village setting or much bigger, 200-plus homes in the region's cities. Whatever we build, it's the positive community impact that really matters. The 74 homes on a former industrial site at Henson in Blaby and the 65 new, mixed-tenure extra-care apartments at Springfields in Ashby-de-la-Zouch (due to complete in 2021) are typical of the innovation and diversity we can achieve. We're also currently negotiating with a modular builder to provide our first, fully factory-built homes, which will also set new standards of energy efficiency for low-carbon living.

RURAL

“As more people move out to live in the countryside, it’s increasingly hard for people with close ties to rural communities to afford somewhere to live close to their families or jobs. So building and managing affordable rural homes is more crucial than ever to support thriving villages.”

Richard Mugglestone
Managing Director,
Midlands Rural Housing



HOMES



“The layout of my house and size of the rooms are perfect.”

Kelly Brooks, Northampton

The market for sales and shared ownership remains buoyant – underpinned by strong valuations and our energetic marketing approach, which offers purchasers a convenient experience with the minimum of hassle. We were already offering virtual reality viewings and video calls before the pandemic, and these tools have been invaluable in keeping transactions moving this year.

The devil will be in the detail of the Government’s proposed changes to planning law and the levy to pay for community infrastructure. We’ll maintain our commitment to quality and keep up the pressure to provide affordable homes.



“A lovely and friendly viewing experience at the open day.”

Lisa Newell, Leicester



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Respect, equality, fairness and opportunity have long been core parts of our values and behaviours at emh. While some businesses and sectors have been caught off guard by rapid changes in public attitudes, for us these have been a welcome vindication of what we stand for and how we work.



We're proud to be a listening and learning organisation, that makes clear plans based on evidence, supported by a culture that celebrates diversity in all its forms. We've set and reported on clear targets to make our board and workforce representative of the communities in which we work, and for the first time this year we'll publish pay-gap information for both gender and ethnicity.

110 apprenticeships created against our business plan target of 250 by 2023.



Guest speakers at our International Women's Day 2020 event, Christine Ashton, emh Executive Director of Housing and Jane Toman, Chief Executive of Blaby District Council.

Talk about diversity is plentiful, and numbers are easy to come by – but what matters is how responsible businesses act on their pledges and performance, by making intelligent use of the data they collect. Actions speak louder than words.

We've adopted the 'Rooney Rule' for all senior and executive posts, which guarantees that whenever applications allow, recruitment shortlists will include at least one candidate from an ethnic minority who meets the required specification. We're also reviewing our wider recruitment and selection policy and processes to maximise equality, diversity and inclusion. Online equality and diversity training (with a special emphasis on tackling unconscious bias) is mandatory for all staff.

EFFECTIVE



“Effective employees don’t just turn up for work; they bring their whole selves to their jobs, and with this comes greater creativity and energy. The Barrett Values help us understand what people want and value, so we know how to lead and can create a culture of engagement and trust.”

Jill Bamford, Human Resources Director, emh group

EMPLOYEES





“Our new learning management system, ‘emh learn’, provides all of our people with a flexible way to develop their skills, greater access to a wide range of support and a place to record their goals and achievements. It helps us to create a workplace where people feel engaged, supported and can thrive.”

Lynne Swinson, Learning and Development Manager, emh group

Whether someone applies to emh group for a home, a job or the chance to develop their skills, they must feel included and have equal access to opportunities. Our vocal board champion, Patricia McCabe, and insightful input from residents help us to embed fairness into all the group’s policies and activities.



We welcome the extra government funding for apprentices and trainees, and we play an active local role in promoting housing and care as an attractive career choice for young people. The Barrett Values model helps us to identify the personal values and motivations of our staff and match these to what we’re about as an employer and service provider. In the wake of the Coronavirus outbreak, we’re asking both colleagues and customers to tell us what’s changed and how this should affect the way we think and work in the future.



“My top priority is to continue developing our new delivery model, focusing on what works well for customers and delivering our business plan targets to ensure we continue to develop new homes, maintain great services and support communities through these difficult times.”

Nikki Chawda, Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods, emh homes

RESILIENT BUSINESS

The year ending 31 March 2020 saw our strongest ever financial performance, with a gross operating surplus of £41.3 million, stable costs and big investment in IT to transform the way we do business.



The two biggest factors behind this were the sharply increased income from first-tranche sales of shared ownership homes (which more than tripled to £10.5 million), plus around £9 million from property disposals, including those sold through the **Voluntary Right to Buy**. By reinvesting these gains in the coming years, we'll be able to replace the assets sold and put more into maintaining and upgrading existing homes.



To support our new homebuilding, we've drawn down an extra £100 million of capital from the Pension Insurance Corporation and agreed a new £75 million revolving facility with NatWest Bank. With so much instability and uncertainty in other markets, investors continue to see strongly rated registered housing providers like us as a safe and socially-valuable place to put their money. Being a Homes England strategic partner also improves the group's cash flow, since we can claim grant for land and construction as soon as it's spent.



“Reducing the number of evictions we carried out last year by over 20 per cent saved around £93,000 in management costs.”

Gwyn Gascoigne, Head of Income and Home Ownership, emh homes

COMMUNICATION



“Strong communication and collaboration across the business saw improved budgetary control and significantly improved financial performance. We need to build on this, as we all adjust to new ways of working and their potential impacts.”

Beth Philips, Head of Finance, emh group

& COLLABORATION



“With the onset of the Coronavirus, we thoroughly stress-tested our business plan – taking a cautious, worst-case view about the likely depth and duration of the pandemic’s economic effects. So far, the key risks to sales and rental debts have not materialised, and the extra costs of temporary staff and infection control in our care and support business have been cushioned by increased local authority funding and selected use of the government’s furlough scheme.”

Andrew Kilby, Executive Director of Finance, emh group



COVID-19 has produced some unforeseen savings through greatly reduced travel, fewer events and much greater use of remote and agile working. While our office-based systems will continue to be important for some essential functions like processing invoices, it’s clear that flexible working is here to stay and suits many people. We’re committed to putting the lower office costs and improved productivity that flow from this to positive use by investing even more in homes and our future transformation.



“Following significant changes to how services are delivered, our Internal Maintenance Service returned a positive trading position for the first time in 2019/20. All planned works programmes were delivered on time and within budget.”

Adrian Cheetham, Director of Property Services, emh homes

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TRANSFORMING THE GROUP

At the end of 2019, we created a new executive role to put extra momentum behind the group's plans to transform the way it operates, through people-driven change. Accounting directly to the Chief Executive, this role helps us challenge outdated or inefficient practices, pinpoint blockages, unfreeze habits and instigate new approaches that deliver better value and outcomes.



The four critical parts of making this happen are a positive culture, modern processes, strong information systems, plus a willingness and freedom to experiment. Trying different things to build up the knowledge and confidence about what works best is the most reliable way to improve.



The sudden and enforced shifts in working arrangements required by the Coronavirus controls provided a good benchmark of our readiness and ability to change. They also unlocked new possibilities for more flexible working and creative uses of our office spaces.

There's been strong engagement from staff in imagining a different future, and great enthusiasm from customers in response to the wellbeing and befriending calls, which a pool of 24 staff volunteered to carry out. These included questions about how we can offer simpler, easier services and support, which customers have been eager to answer.



“It made life a lot better for me during lockdown and made me laugh. I would have been miserable if it weren't for Amanda.”

Emma, resident

BEFRIENDING



We made **2,130** befriending and wellbeing calls between March and July 2020.

80% of people we called said it had made lockdown easier.

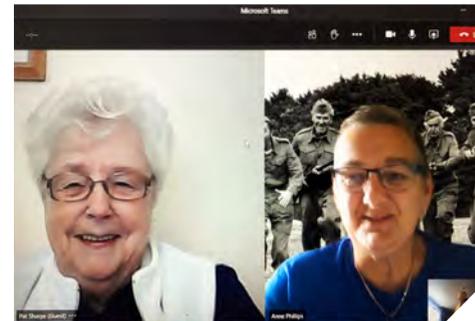
& WELLBEING

Within two weeks of the government's lockdown in March 2020, we were able to get more than 300 staff fully up and running from home, with complete, real-time access to all the data they needed to do their jobs. And since then we've discovered a host of savings and benefits from this 'new normal', including greater productivity and much-reduced paperwork and travel. At a time like this, our values have truly come to life.



“New communication software has brought teammates near and far closer together. The days when people weren't comfortable with technology are long gone.”

Dal Grewal, Director of ICT, emh group



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RAISING PERFORMANCE

Here are some key figures charting our growth and achievements in the year ending 31 March 2020.



COMPLIANCE AND STANDARDS

All housing associations have to meet a series of regulatory and legal standards. We take these obligations seriously and work hard to comply with all of the Regulator of Social Housing's economic and consumer standards, and the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance.

All emh homes meet the government Decent Homes Standard, and where applicable have up-to-date assessments and certificates for fire, Legionella, asbestos and lift safety. The regulator has acknowledged the sector-wide impact of households shielding from COVID-19 and how it has affected compliance with gas servicing.



We have ten registered care schemes, which are independently monitored and regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). All seven of these which have so far been inspected are rated as 'good'. The remaining three services have not yet been rated by CQC.

Through the independent company HouseMark, we track and compare key elements of our annual costs and performance against a peer group of similar housing providers.



"We're using a new Quality Framework tool, which focuses on a more rounded approach to audits taking in to account both compliance and customer satisfaction. We've also our stock control and distribution of personal protective equipment to support our service during the ongoing pandemic."

Laura Holmes, Head of Compliance and Quality, emh care & support



We're proud to be early adopters of the National Housing Federation's Together With Tenants Charter. During the year, a group of residents assessed and rated how we currently perform against the Charter's six commitments:

Relationships	Requires improvement/Good
Communication	Requires improvement
Voice and influence	Good
Accountability	Good
Quality	Good
When things go wrong	Good



“The panel reviewed a substantial amount of evidence, posed searching questions and asked for extra information to cement understanding. This demonstrates a robust process and shows that residents are fully committed to working with us to improve services, relationships and communication.”

Kathryn Eyre, Head of Quality and Standards, emh group



HOMES

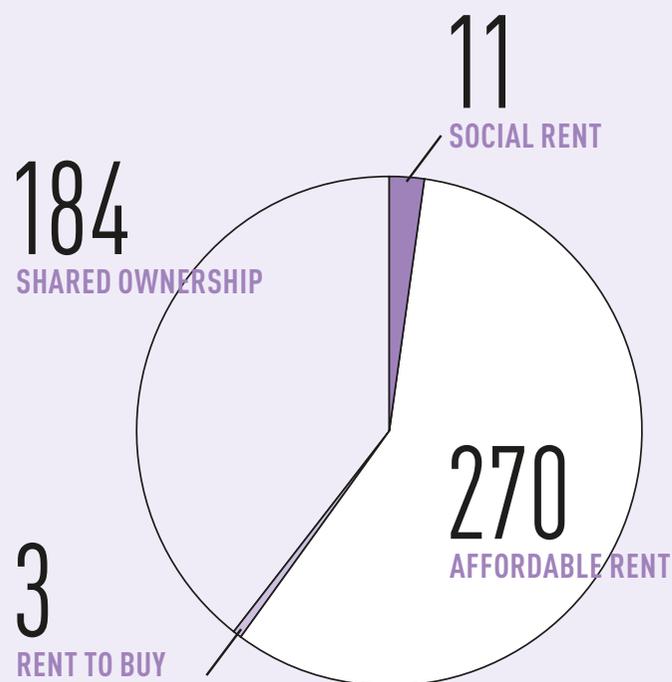


20,820

PROPERTIES OWNED AND MANAGED

468

NEW HOMES BUILT AND ACQUIRED (BREAKDOWN BELOW)



3
RENT TO BUY

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019-20

15TH

24HOUSING TOP 50
SOCIAL LANDLORDS

35TH

INSIDE HOUSING
TOP 50 BUILDERS



24HOUSING AWARDS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF
THE YEAR



49TH

IN LEICESTERSHIRE'S
TOP 200 COMPANIES

90.93%

RESIDENTS SATISFIED WITH
OUR HOMES AND SERVICES

KEY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2020

	2019-20
TURNOVER	£111M
OPERATING SURPLUS (and operating margin)	£41.3M (37.2%)
NET SURPLUS	£21.7M
VALUE OF NET ASSETS	£827M



£8.3 MILLION

INVESTMENT IN EXISTING
PROPERTIES