



**Annual Report**

**2023/24**





**Cover:**

**Alliance Homes customer, Patrycja Sobczak-Migala with her daughter Magdalena**

**This page:**

**Local child enjoying a Nature Tots session at our Coleridge Road Community Garden**

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# Welcome

## Introduction from our Chair and Chief Executive

**We want to begin by expressing our heartfelt thanks to all our customers and colleagues for their support in what has been a successful year for Alliance Homes. Our focus on listening to our customers has been more important than ever, making sure that their voices guide our decisions and help shape our services.**

Our commitment to providing a great service to our customers, improving the quality of our homes, and supporting communities has been at the heart of everything we do.

This year, we launched our online customer portal, Connect, which enables those who choose to do so to access our services and self-serve at their convenience. Developed and tested with the valuable input and support of many customers, we are grateful for their time and insights.

We've also intensified our efforts to address the demand for day-to-day repairs by reducing the backlog and the time it takes to complete them. Customer feedback tells us we are doing better, and we're committed to keeping this momentum in the coming year, making sure that every repair request is consistently met with timely, high-quality service.

We continued our focus on providing safe homes that meet customer needs and this year we invested £9.5million in major works projects to improve our homes and neighbourhoods. We're planning to do even more next year, with the objective of increasing our spend to £12million.

Despite a challenging operating environment, we continued to deliver much-needed new affordable homes. We completed 174 homes for rent and Shared Ownership, making great progress towards achieving our ambition of delivering 2,000 new homes by 2033. We also welcomed the first Rent to Buy customers to our flagship development, Marina Gardens, in Portishead.

It continues to be a tough financial environment for many of our customers. In 2023/24, our Money Advisors have supported customers to unlock more than £2.4million by accessing additional income and reducing money-related pressures, an increase of over £1million from the previous year. Through our Springboard Fund, we were able to distribute £90,000 to support 300 customers facing financial difficulties, while 1,300 NHS patients were assisted through our expanded Home from Hospital service.

2023/24 marked five years of Our Neighbourhood Network (ONN), our community support programme in Weston-super-Mare. Our local hubs brought together more than 12,000 people, helping to tackle loneliness and isolation and improve mental wellbeing through art, gardening and other activities. Through our Communities Together grants, we awarded a total of £27,500 to ten local projects and organisations, supporting initiatives such as adult literacy and refugee engagement in schools.

People are our greatest strength and we're proud to have been recognised again as a Great Place to Work, based on our colleagues' feedback. This year we continued to build on our recognition programme, designed to acknowledge and reward colleagues for their hard work, achievements, and contributions to the organisation; we've also supported colleagues in developing their professional skills and launched new initiatives to promote wellbeing at work.

As we look ahead, our priorities remain clear: we will continue to invest in our homes, our people and processes, and in the wider community. We are committed to making Alliance Homes a place where every customer and colleague feels valued, supported, and heard.



**Andy Willis**  
Chair of the Board

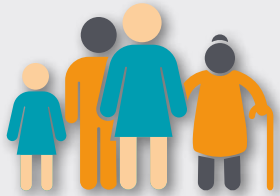


**Louise Swain**  
Chief Executive



# Alliance Homes at a glance

9,781



Number of customers

6,998



Number of homes owned

3,44%



Average rent arrears

4,962



Number of people supported

73%



Customers who believe rent provides value for money

20%



Operating margins

G1/V1



Governance/Viability rating (Regulator of Social Housing)

A2



Moody's rating

390



Number of colleagues

## Our operational area





# Delivering a great customer experience

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures 2023/2024

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced by the Regulator for Social Housing in April 2023. These measures offer customers a transparent view of our performance. The purpose of TSMs is to improve standards for people living in social housing by helping landlords to better understand what they do well and where they need to make changes. We piloted the TSMs in 2022/23 and this is our first full year of results.

There are 22 TSMs: 12 are gathered by asking customers their opinions on our performance, while the other ten are collected from our own management information. The 22 measures are grouped into categories. We've placed these categories in the relevant sections of our annual report, alongside case studies of some of the work that's taken place over the year, and our customers' voices.

The full TSM results can be found on our website [www.alliancehomes.org.uk/TSMs](http://www.alliancehomes.org.uk/TSMs).





## Listening to customers

In addition to TSMs, we actively engage with our customers through various channels, including HIVE, our online community platform. We also carry out transactional surveys to capture customer experiences at key touchpoints, such as after repairs or major works, when moving into an Alliance Homes property, and after receiving support services. The results of some of these surveys are highlighted throughout our annual report, alongside the TSMs.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures

#### Respectful and helpful engagement



Hive active member numbers grew this year by 22% to 629

## HIVE: your voice matters

We're always looking to improve our services, and customer feedback provides valuable insights that guide our decisions and shape how we work.

HIVE, our online community platform, continues to be a vital space for customer engagement. Through HIVE, customers have shaped our services to suit them better.

### Policies are more accessible

Feedback from the HIVE customer panel has helped our Community Safety Team

to improve our new Anti-Social Behaviour policy with simpler wording, clearer explanations and less technical and legal language. The result is a policy that's more accessible and useful for our customers.

### Videos are easier to understand

As we prepared for the soft launch of our new customer portal, Connect, HIVE feedback helped us refine the videos and marketing materials that were produced to explain how to sign up and use the platform. The changes

included making the content simpler, improving sound quality and increasing the size of the graphics for better visibility.

Being a member of HIVE keeps me informed and allows me to express my hopes and opinions over where I live

Ron  
Hive member

## Our Customer Feedback Panel

The Customer Feedback Panel ensures our services meet the needs of our customers. The panel meets regularly, with members joining our Board of Non-executive Directors and Strategic Leadership Team quarterly to provide feedback on a range of things, including policies and procedures.

The panel's work has included reviewing our updated pet policy, anti-social behaviour procedure, how we manage reports of damp and mould and how our new homes meet the needs of customers.

The Panel took on an in-depth review of how our Home Repairs Service communicates with customers. They found that delays in communication between the repairs team and office colleagues meant it took longer to respond to repairs, particularly when additional work was needed. As a result, we're exploring ways to improve efficiency between teams.



Customer Feedback Panel meeting

## “Being on the Panel is about making a difference”


Lee’s an IT specialist who lives in Weston-super-Mare with his wife and children. He joined the Customer Feedback Panel with the ambition of challenging stereotypes about people living in affordable rented housing and to highlight the positive role they play in the community.

“Being on the Panel is about making a difference and making sure that people living in a social rented home can thrive and succeed.

“Our communities are made up of all sorts of people, including working professionals like me. It’s important the Panel represents this diversity, and I want to make sure that any changes have considered people like me and others in my community.”

Lee Smith

Customer Feedback Panel member



It’s important that we don’t put our personal agendas before the customers we’re here to represent. We’re here to review and positively change policies, procedures, and practices. One of the biggest contributions we make is helping to remove jargon, making sure Alliance Home’s communication is clear and accessible.



Rachel Johnson

Alliance Homes Customer Engagement Coordinator



## Customer engagement

We engage with customers in their own neighbourhoods, to understand the issues that are closer to their homes and help us build stronger communities.

### Empowering independence in our sheltered schemes

To tackle social isolation and build stronger communities, we've set up resident committees in two of our sheltered schemes - The Maltings in Worle and Lawnside in Backwell. We're supporting them with financial advice and wellbeing sessions. We've also helped the committees plan community events, like the coronation parties for King Charles III.

### New home, new neighbours, new community

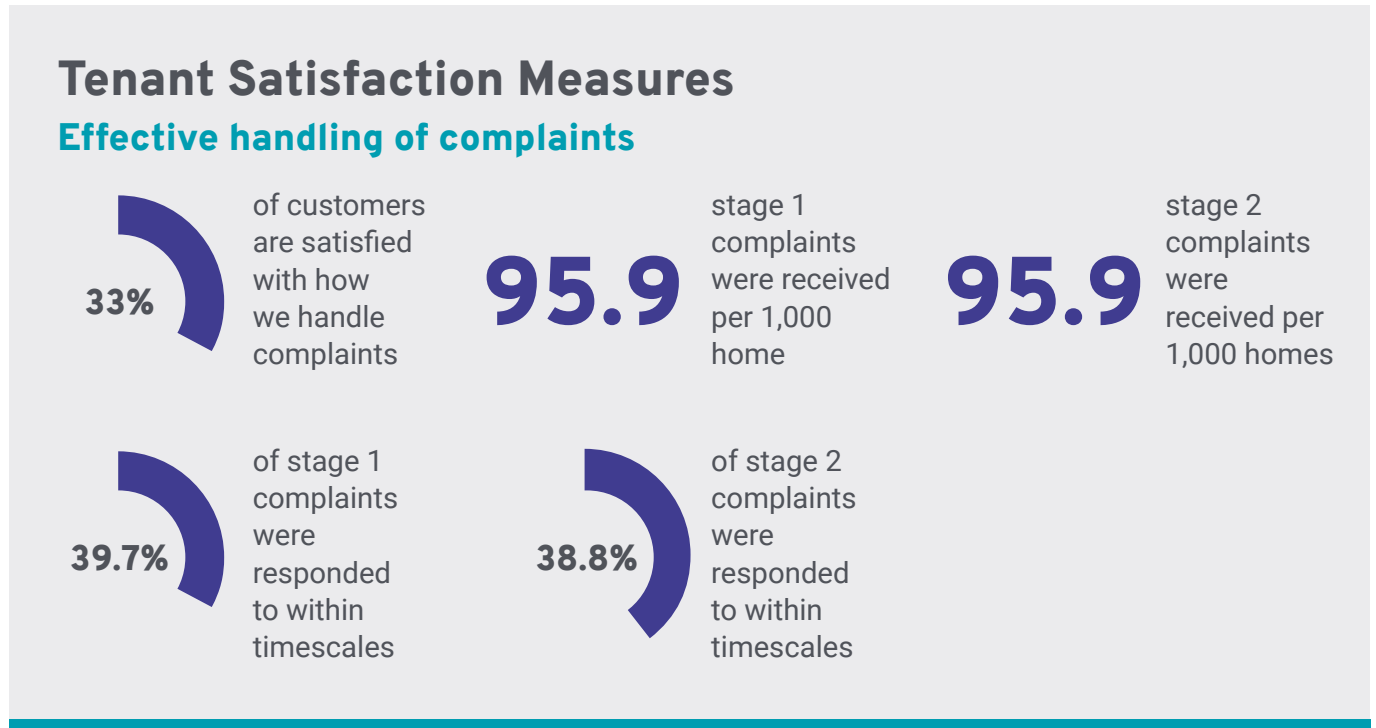
Our flagship development in Portishead, Marina Gardens, is home to more than 100 customers across three tenure types: social rent, rent-to-buy and shared ownership. Since they moved in, we've been helping to create a sense of community and friendship by hosting social events like pizza evenings, Christmas socials and 'meet your neighbours' get-togethers, building stronger community connections.



Christmas party  
Marina Gardens

# Customer feedback

We're committed to delivering a great customer service but recognise that we don't always get things right. When things go wrong, the way we manage, resolve, and learn from our mistakes is key to improving our services.



## Lessons learnt

We received 1,050 complaints in 2023/24, which is a 5% increase on last year. Our complaints took an average of 40 days to resolve, which is higher than we'd like. That's why, after each investigation, we've started holding 'lessons learnt' sessions to ensure we do better next time. Here are the key changes we've made as a result:

### Capturing all the details

We've put a new process in place to make sure all elements of a customer's complaint are documented, and that we keep to the Housing Ombudsman's timeframes. We now respond to and resolve complaints more quickly, and communication with customers is clearer.

### A larger, more centralised team

We've welcomed new colleagues to the Feedback Team and centralised our complaints. This means the team now handles all communication with customers, from acknowledging the complaint to finding a resolution.

### Training

To catch potential issues early, we've trained our Contact Team to recognise complaints even when customers don't use the word "complaint".

This training has helped the team to recognise when customers are dissatisfied with the service they've received and to resolve queries more efficiently.



## Putting things right: key improvements

### Quality of contractor works

We've introduced a new process with clear guidance for contractors looking after communal gardens so that they're fully aware of where and what they're responsible for cleaning.

### Improving our communication

We have a new process in place to let customers know when scaffolding needs to be installed in communal areas. This means all customers affected are informed and prepared to deal with the temporary disruption.

### Leaving a positive impression

We want to make sure Alliance always leaves a positive impression in your community, which is why we're working with our Home Repairs Service to monitor how our operatives drive and park so we can respond to concerns promptly.

## Customer compliments

When customers take the time to compliment our services, we make sure that the team members involved receive the recognition they deserve. This year, we received 283 compliments from customers celebrating our colleagues' hard work and dedication.

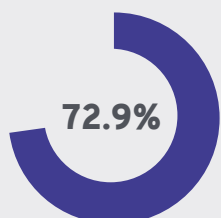
**283**   
**Customer Compliments**



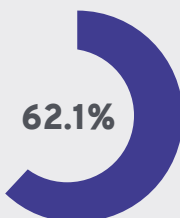
# Home Repairs Service

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

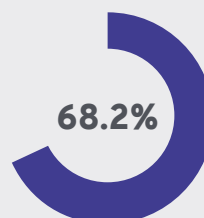
### Keeping properties in good repair



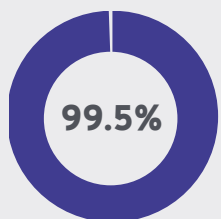
of customers are satisfied with repairs



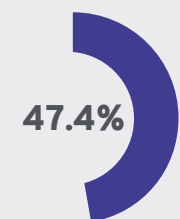
of customers are satisfied with the time taken to finish repairs



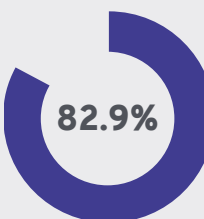
of customers are satisfied that their home is well maintained



of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard



of non-emergency repairs are finished within the target time



of emergency repairs are finished within the target time

## Case study

We have many ways for customers to tell us what they think of our service. We listen to this feedback and use it to improve our services.

Our Home Repairs colleagues enter customers' homes every day to fix and improve things, which is why it's essential that they have the right attitude and always treat customers with respect. Sometimes, it's the little things that make

the biggest difference, as our customer, Layla Dymock, explains:

*"I'm disabled, and I suffer really badly with anxiety, so my home is my sanctuary.*

*"This year I contacted Alliance Homes about a number of issues.*

*"Because of my disabilities, I can't keep my home as neat as I want, but the team never*

*make me feel embarrassed. Every time they visit the team are kind and funny, they're not biased or judgemental.*

*"Considering I don't like people in my house, they always make an effort to speak to me and have good conversation.*

*"They're a treasure and asset to your team. Well done, Alliance!"*

It's been an exciting and challenging year in the Home Repairs Service. Having completed such a high number of repairs, we're pleased that customer satisfaction with the quality of repairs remains high. Our transactional surveys show that 85% of our customers were satisfied with their repair in 2023/24. This score is different from our TSMs results because transactional surveys measure customer satisfaction after a repair is completed, as opposed to tenant perception. However, our focus continues to be on delivering service improvements for customers and reducing the waiting times for repairs.

During the year we've worked hard to significantly reduce the number of outstanding repairs. We've achieved this through improvements in our own team's productivity as well as by working with support contractors.

We want to ensure that our customers experience the same level of service and quality of repairs from contractors that they get from our own HRS Team. To achieve this, we've set the contractors a more challenging set of performance measures that are closely monitored.

We've listened to our customers and adjusted our service. We've employed an additional roofer so that we

can carry out more repairs with our in-house team rather than contractors. This gives us more control over the service quality for our customers. We've also improved communications with customers by updating our text notifications to include the trade of the required repair.

Over the next 18 months we're planning to deliver more improvements to our service. We will continue using support contractors to further reduce the backlog of repairs, simplify the way we purchase materials, and improve our IT systems. With these changes, we're aiming to make our service more efficient and increase the number of repairs that are fixed on the first visit.





## Tackling damp and mould with a new Complex Works Team

This year we created a new Complex Works Team dedicated to investigating homes with reports of damp and mould.

The team works closely with customers to identify and fix the causes of damp and mould in their home. As well as being able to provide a more tailored response to

customers, our new Complex Work colleagues have worked with the Alliance Contact Team to manage damp and mould cases from the start. This has included simplifying the reporting process for damp and mould and specialist damp and mould training. The Contact Team can now ask customers more

in-depth questions about their damp and mould issues, improving the quality of data provided to the Complex Works Team. They can also identify and prioritise the most serious cases, helping us to respond more quickly and provide the appropriate support.





Jenny Palmer,

Alliance Homes Customer

Experience Advisor

The telephone operator Jenny was amazing. I have spoken to her three times in less than 24 hours. She is friendly, polite, curious, very patient and a pleasure to speak to. Her telephone manner is brilliant. Thank you Jenny for all your help.

Home Repairs Service Customer

## Letting homes

We're here to create great places to live that our customers are proud to call home. The housing sector has faced significant challenges and pressures, with a particular focus on the quality of homes and requirements for colleagues to have professional qualifications and specific skills and knowledge. Here's how we've responded to these challenges:

- We've reviewed and improved policies and procedures, in collaboration with the Customer Feedback Panel, to make sure that the customer voice is included.
- In response to feedback, we've made changes to our team to better meet customer needs.
- We've built databases to monitor and manage key statistics. We now work more effectively with colleagues in repairs, complex works and development.
- All our Tenancy Team managers are now qualified in Housing Management to degree level or equivalent, and all our tenancy officers have obtained or are working towards similar qualifications.

525



New lettings

81%



New tenants satisfaction  
(Transactional surveys)

## Making temporary moves better for customers

Moving customers to another home temporarily is sometimes necessary –for example, to carry out repairs or refurbishment works that would cause too much disruption for those living in the property. In those situations, we want our customers to feel confident and safe about the move. Last year, we developed a new approach to make sure our customers' needs are carefully assessed and they are more closely supported throughout the process.

## Much-needed respite

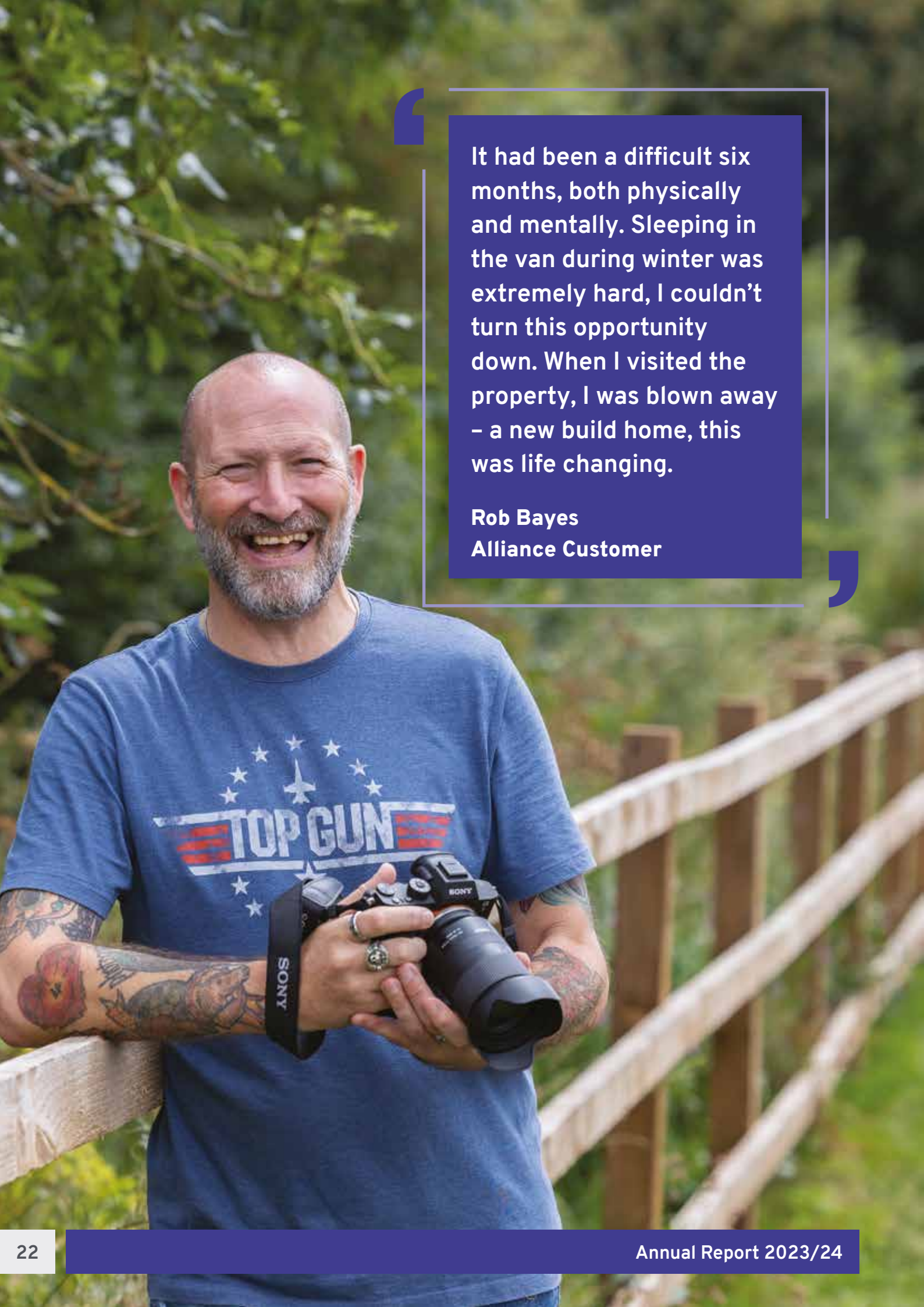
Last year, in partnership with North Somerset Council, we opened our first respite flat for adults with learning difficulties. This space provides well-deserved respite for those with caring responsibilities and offers those with caring needs access to 24-hour support and the opportunity to learn new skills and experience more independence. We're pleased to say that the respite flat is fully booked up until 2025 and we're currently in the process of looking to secure our second respite space.





Homes at our Charlton Gate development in Brentry





It had been a difficult six months, both physically and mentally. Sleeping in the van during winter was extremely hard, I couldn't turn this opportunity down. When I visited the property, I was blown away – a new build home, this was life changing.

**Rob Bayes**  
**Alliance Customer**

## From homelessness to thriving in a new home

After separating from his partner, Rob, a self-employed photographer, found himself with nowhere to live and priced out of the private rental market in Somerset.

*“The cost of renting a one-bed apartment was astronomical, I looked everywhere from Portishead to Bridgwater – I couldn’t afford it, and the competition was high, the fact I’m self-employed put a lot of landlords off. I really had nowhere to turn.”*

Rob spent the next six months living in his campervan in a lay-by, relying on the support of friends and professional colleagues for necessities like showering and internet connection for his work.

With help from the local authority and their homelessness outreach program, he began applying for affordable housing options through Homefinder Somerset. He

applied dozens of times unsuccessfully, until December 2023, when he received a call from Jemma Haslett, Tenancy Officer at Alliance Homes. Rob describes the call as life changing:

*“It couldn’t have been a better Christmas present, I really couldn’t believe it. Jemma explained that my application for a home in Cheddar had been successful and asked if I wanted to view it. I was brought to tears.*

*“It had been a difficult six months, both physically and mentally. Sleeping in the van during winter was extremely hard, I couldn’t turn this opportunity down. When I visited the property, I was blown away – a new build home, this was life changing.*

*“Jemma has been incredible throughout all of this. She’s been so supportive, transparent and responsive. I can’t thank her enough”.*

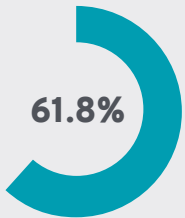




# Looking after our neighbourhoods

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

### Responsible neighbourhood management



of customers are satisfied we keep communal areas clean and well maintained



of customers are satisfied that we make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood



of customers are satisfied with our approach to anti-social behaviour



cases of anti-social behaviour per 1,000 homes



cases of anti-social behaviour involving hate crime per 1,000 homes

## Keeping our communities safe

Our Community Safety Team (previously Anti-social Behaviour Team) have renamed themselves to better reflect the range of services they provide, and have welcomed a new manager and community safety advisor. Procedures have been reviewed and updated to align with changing legislation, incident trends, and customer needs.

In the past year, the team saw a 5% decrease in cases from the previous year. However, they continue to face challenges due to poor social care access and social inequality, leading to safety concerns and the need for ongoing support. Additionally, new technologies have introduced challenges, with an increase in cases involving cybercrime and digital threats.

To address these issues, the team has been working closely with community partner agencies, including Avon and Somerset Police, North Somerset Council's Community Safety Team, mental health teams, domestic abuse teams and local schools.

802



Reports of anti-social behaviour

## Tackling flytipping

We want all our customers to feel safe and proud of where they live, which is why we've taken steps to reduce fly tipping in our communities. We've worked closely with customers, helping them understand how best to dispose of unwanted items. We've also been proactively investigating those who are using our neighbourhoods to illegally dispose of materials.

## Revamped communal garden brings joy to customers

Customers living in the Coronation neighbourhood in Weston-super-Mare told us that they wanted to improve their communal garden space, to create an enjoyable outdoor area. Our Community Environmental Team helped to make this a reality by clearing more than 15 tonnes of rubbish, laying down new turf, putting up new fencing and building a planter.



## Digital transformation

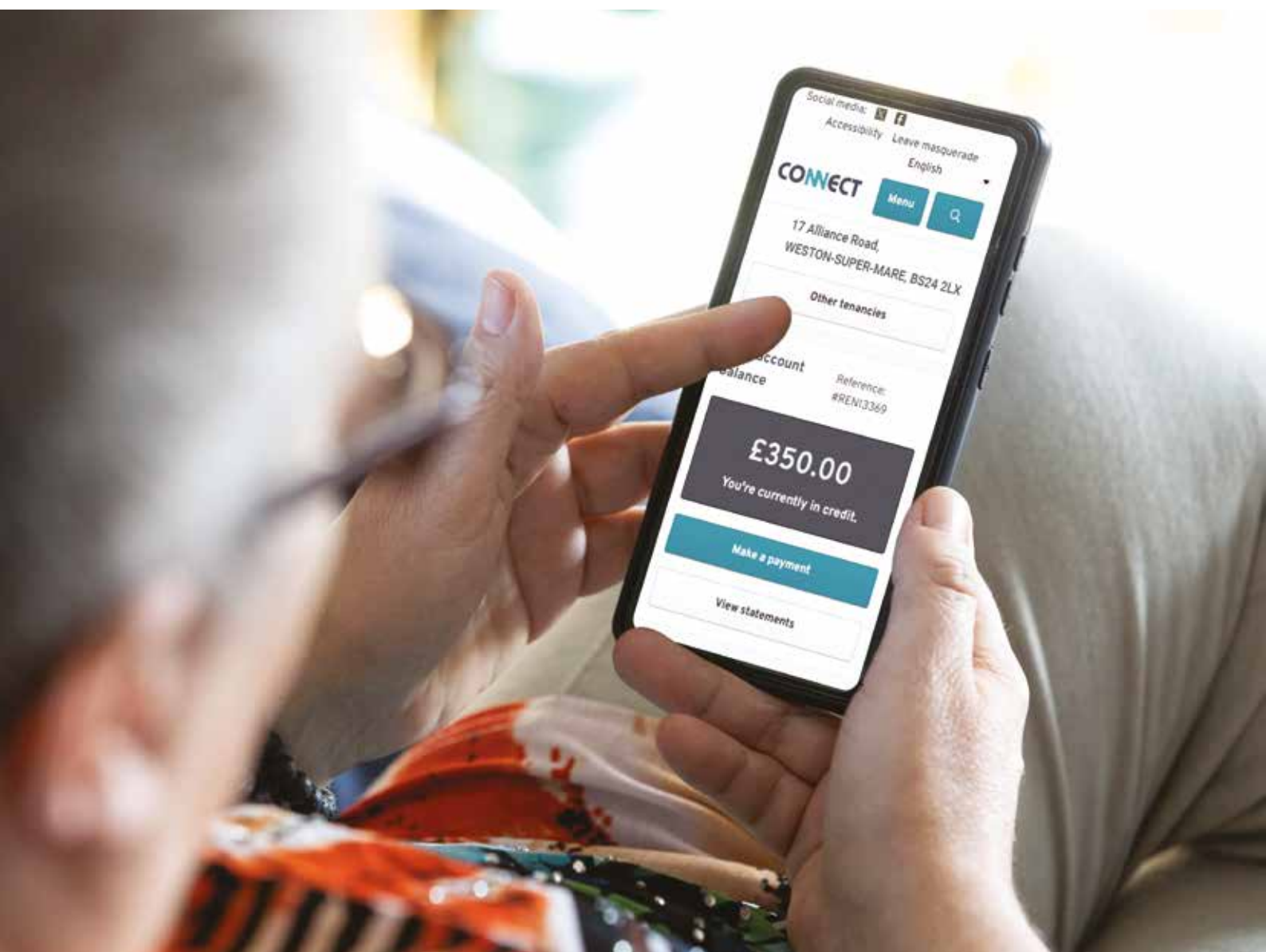
Technology and good quality data will provide efficiencies and service improvements in almost everything we do. This year we took some big steps on that journey.

### Connect, our new online customer portal

An online customer portal is a key element in our digital transformation - Connect is yet another way through which customers can access our services. With Connect, customers will be able to go online and carry out a range of tasks, from reporting repairs to checking their rent account.

What makes Connect really helpful for customers is that they can do this at whatever time suits them - they don't need to wait for our office hours to call us.

We've been working on Connect for over a year and, in March 2024, we launched it to our online customer community, HIVE, before rolling it out to all our customers in summer 2024.





Connect is going to improve the way I manage my tenancy. It's like having Alliance Homes right at my fingertips. There'll be no more hassle of digging around for documents – everything I need is all online.

One of the best parts is being able to report problems anytime, not just during office hours, that's a struggle while working.

Connect is simple and easy to use; registering and logging on is straightforward.

It's easy, accessible, and just works.

**Ron Semadeni, Alliance Homes customer**

## Connect: the first steps

100 HIVE customer members signed up to put our new online portal through its paces. They tested the many functions available to them, including booking repairs, making online payments,

checking their rent account and viewing their tenancy documents.

We used the HIVE feedback to refine and improve Connect functionality before rolling out to all our customers.

HIVE members really liked the convenience of accessing our services anytime, anywhere, with 82% of our test group saying they were satisfied with their experience using Connect.

82%



were satisfied with their experience of Connect

88%



found navigation easy

85%



thought the language was simple and clear

## Becoming a cloud-based business with SharePoint

Our digital transformation continued, as we became a cloud-based business following the roll out of SharePoint, our new document management system. SharePoint helped our teams to improve collaboration, as multiple colleagues can work on the same document simultaneously from anywhere.

For our customers SharePoint means their data is more secure. Information stored on the cloud can be shared securely through SharePoint, with access to documents more strictly managed.



## Improving our cyber security

This year we built on our existing Cyber Essentials status by upgrading both our hardware and software solutions. We've now obtained the government-backed Cyber Essential Plus accreditation. This means we can demonstrate best-in-class security practices, we're more resilient to security threats and better placed to protect our customers' data.

## Data and business insights

The purpose of improving both the use and quality of data we hold is to provide insights that can help us to understand how we can improve our services for our customers.

In the last year we've simplified the way the business produces the Statistical Data Return (SDR) for the Regulator of Social Housing. By automating large sections, we've significantly reduced the amount of time it takes to create the report.

Our data colleagues helped other teams across the organisation to automate the presentation of their data, meaning they can now better analyse their data and view trends, while also saving time to focus on the core services they deliver.

In the next year, we will be focusing on data protection and best practices, looking to enhance our capability to monitor and work with data owners in order to ensure we maintain the highest standards





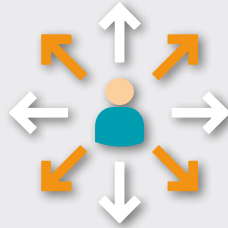
## Supporting our customers

1,306



Patients helped through Home from Hospital

375



Social Prescribing and Community Link worker referrals

422



Adult carers supported

616



Young carers supported

10



Carer volunteers recruited

50



Day centre customers supported

85%



Satisfaction with support services (Transactional surveys)

401



People given home energy advice

In 2023/24, we've seen more people access our support services with a growing variety of needs and challenges. Working together with North Somerset Council, we continue to support our communities to live independently, navigate housing options and find ways to help maximise their household income.

## Home from Hospital

In early 2024, our Home from Hospital service was expanded. As well as helping residents of North Somerset who are discharged locally, we can now support residents discharged from the Bristol Royal Infirmary and Southmead Hospital.

This year the team have risen to extra challenges. They've helped 45% more customers compared to the previous year and are building on their skills as they find that more customers have complex needs including health problems, financial stress and poor mental health.

## Caring for Carers

We continue to support carers across North Somerset and have worked to improve our service by increasing face-to-face home visits for our brief intervention sessions. This change allows us to respond with more timely support, provide specific practical advice and share strategies that help carers manage their roles effectively and reduce stress; 80% of these sessions are now conducted in person.



Carers Week UK march, June 2023



Thanks to funding from North Somerset Council, we launched a Green Social Prescribing Project in collaboration with the Community Investment Team and our Dementia Day Centre at Tamar Court.. The project's goal was to offer nature-based workshops designed to enhance happiness, reduce anxiety and increase social interactions.

More than 90 carers took part and based on feedback we reapplied for funding and were successfully awarded £7,500 in February 2024. This funding will allow us to expand the scope of the project to include food awareness, cooking skills and budgeting techniques.

In June 2023, the Carers Team organised a march through Weston-super-Mare as part of Carers Week UK celebrations, spreading awareness of unpaid carers in North Somerset. They were joined by representatives from North Somerset Council and 14 carers.

In December, the service hosted a fundraising initiative and Christmas celebration for the carers they support. They raised over £1,200 for the service helping them to arrange more wellbeing activities and subsidise these activities for carers in financial hardship.



Tamar Court, Weston-super-Mare



The Community Cooking Group promotes food awareness and shares budgeting tips





I want to support the community that has helped me so much. Often carers can feel unseen, but we're here! I want to encourage others to join groups like this. We are our own support network with a unique experience only we can relate to.

**Carmel**  
Carer support service member



## “I felt incredibly welcome”

Carmel is a carer for her adult son who has autism and body dysmorphia issues. She got involved in the Carers Support service in March 2023. She describes her experience as overwhelming at times, and she often felt isolated in her responsibilities, but the support service has been a real lifeline.

*“Joining a support service is nerve-racking especially when you’re caring for an adult with needs. It’s easy to feel like a bad mum and having time away can feel selfish. Breaking down the mental brick wall was difficult, but the first day I joined the group I felt incredibly welcome. The team were friendly, and the other carers provided tremendous support.”*

Through the service, Carmel has made great friends and is now a volunteer, running her own craft sessions where she teaches crochet to other carers.

## Young Carer to Carer advocate

Daisy has been involved with the Carers Support service since the age of eight. As a young carer supporting her mum, she explains that she often felt excluded from typical childhood activities, but the service has given her the chance to join in.

Daisy says the service is great for young carers who need to know that they’re not alone in their responsibilities and experiences.

*“We often don’t see ourselves represented, but the service gives us that visibility and a chance to make friends with other children in similar situations. It’s so important we don’t feel alone.”*

Now 18, Daisy has taken on the role of advocating to raise awareness of young carers and the positive futures they have ahead.

The service allows me to take part in experiences I wouldn’t have otherwise been able to, like the residential trips which allowed me to have fun with other kids my age.

Daisy  
Young carer

## Living well with dementia

Over the past year, our Dementia Day Service at Tamar Wellness Centre has supported 50 customers. The service provided a range of activities for them and allowed their carers much-needed respite.

One of the projects involved volunteer pupils from Priory Community Academy in Worle, Weston-super-Mare, working with customers at the Centre to promote intergenerational bonding and friendship. They’ve been working together on arts and crafts and sharing personal stories.

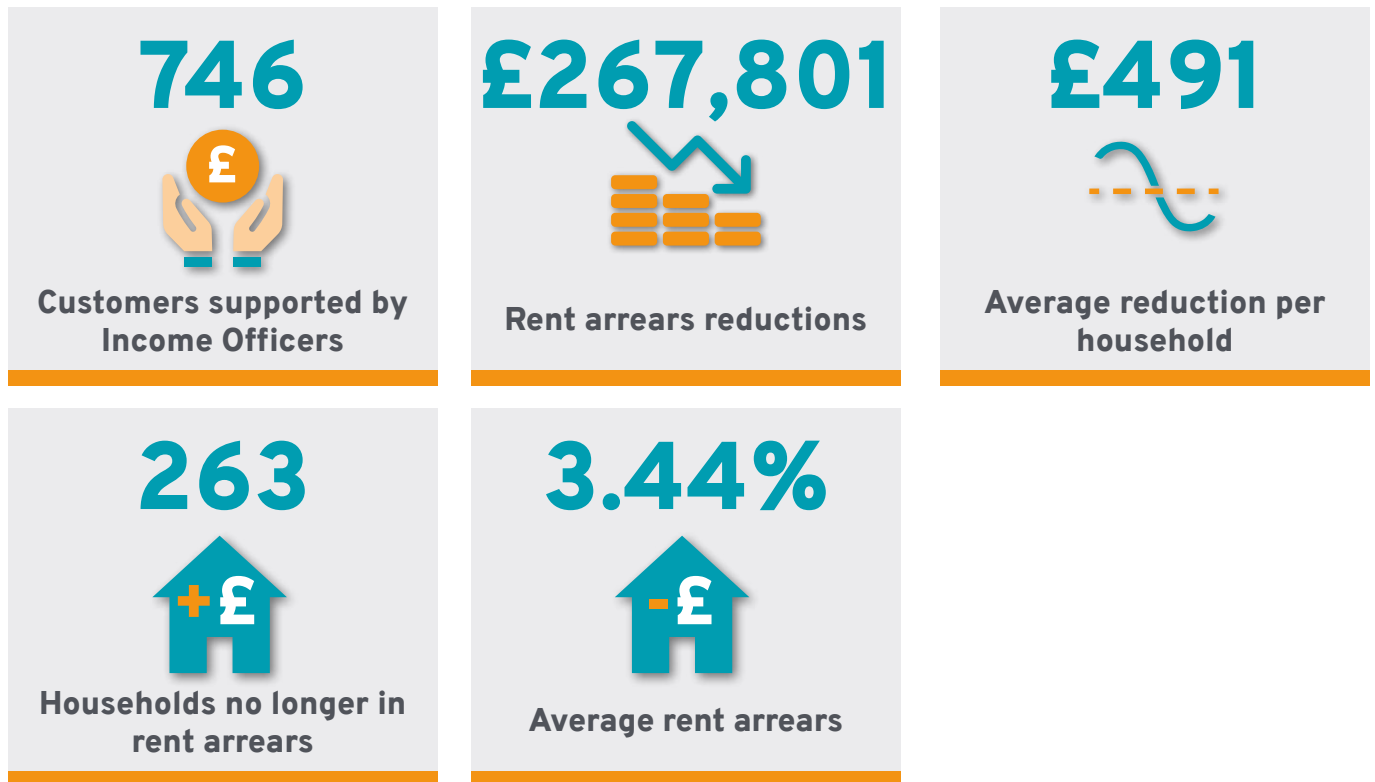
One of the pupils said: *“I like to go to the centre because it’s nice to socialise with people and it’s nice for those at the centre to meet new people once in a while.”*



## Supporting customers to maintain their tenancy

This year we introduced personalised early intervention measures so we can help more customers who are experiencing rent difficulties. Every customer, both new and existing, is now assigned a dedicated Income Officer to assist with their initial benefit claims and ongoing rent responsibilities. The officers provide a personalised service so they can monitor individual customer behaviours and better manage changes in their circumstances.

This approach has helped hundreds of customers reduce or eliminate their rent arrears.



## Help with money worries

Our team of Money Advisors work one-on-one with our customers to help them resolve money worries and get back on track. They assist in maximising household income, finding solutions to dealing with debt, and building strategies for money confidence.

Over the past year, our Money Advisors have opened more than **400 new cases** and unlocked over **£2.4 million** in income maximisation for our customers. They've been able to:



## Springboard Fund

The Springboard Fund supports customers in financial difficulty. This year, the fund distributed £90,000 to help 300 customers with things like the purchasing of white goods, resettlement in response to changes in circumstances, fees for Debt Relief Orders and funding the Tenant Support and Wellbeing Service.

### A new start with help from the Financial Inclusion Team

Rachel was referred to the Financial Inclusion Team by her income officer after struggling to maintain her three-bed home where she had lived for twenty years, raising her three children. The Spare Room Subsidy, also known as the 'bedroom tax', added extra financial strain on her income.

The thought of moving was overwhelming, especially as she was dealing with mental health challenges following the loss of her life partner and navigating her own gender identity journey. Additionally, she lives with her adult son who struggles with social anxiety.

The Financial Inclusion Team helped Rachel transition to a more manageable property. With their assistance, Rachel was able to apply for council tax support and put together an affordable payment plan on outstanding debt with the help of First Steps. The team also helped Rachel reduce her water debt and set up a £1 per month payment schedule.

Through our Springboard Fund, we were able to help Rachel buy a washing machine and a bed and mattress for her son, who was previously sleeping on the floor, as well as other essential items.

*"Without the team, I would be in a dire situation. They've helped me settle in my home and made me feel proud of where I live."*

The Financial Inclusion team also helped Rachel to legally change her name. Rachel says:



**It's the start of a new time in my life. I'm grateful for the non-judgmental and friendly approach of the Financial Inclusion Team. They saw me for who I truly am, acknowledged my challenges, and have supported me more than I could have ever imagined.**

**Rachel Pollock,  
Alliance Homes  
customer**



# Building more affordable homes

## Rent to Buy – a new route to home ownership

This year we welcomed our first Rent to Buy customers to our flagship development, Marina Gardens. Rent to Buy is a government scheme that makes it easier for people to transition from renting to buying, by offering subsidised rent for up to five years to help save up for a deposit.

Patrycja and her family were struggling to do just that, due to the high cost of renting privately in Portishead. Patrycja, who lives with her husband and 11-year-old daughter Magdalena, says: *“We can now call Portishead our long-term home. We feel more stable, and our daughter can grow up here. It’s a great relief to be able to plan for the future and to see home ownership as an option.”*

This added security isn’t just good for mum and dad. Their daughter, Magdalena, says: *“I’m so much closer to school, my friends. It’s great living here.”*

Rent to Buy marks our continued commitment to delivering much-needed new affordable homes and meeting a wide range of housing needs across the region.



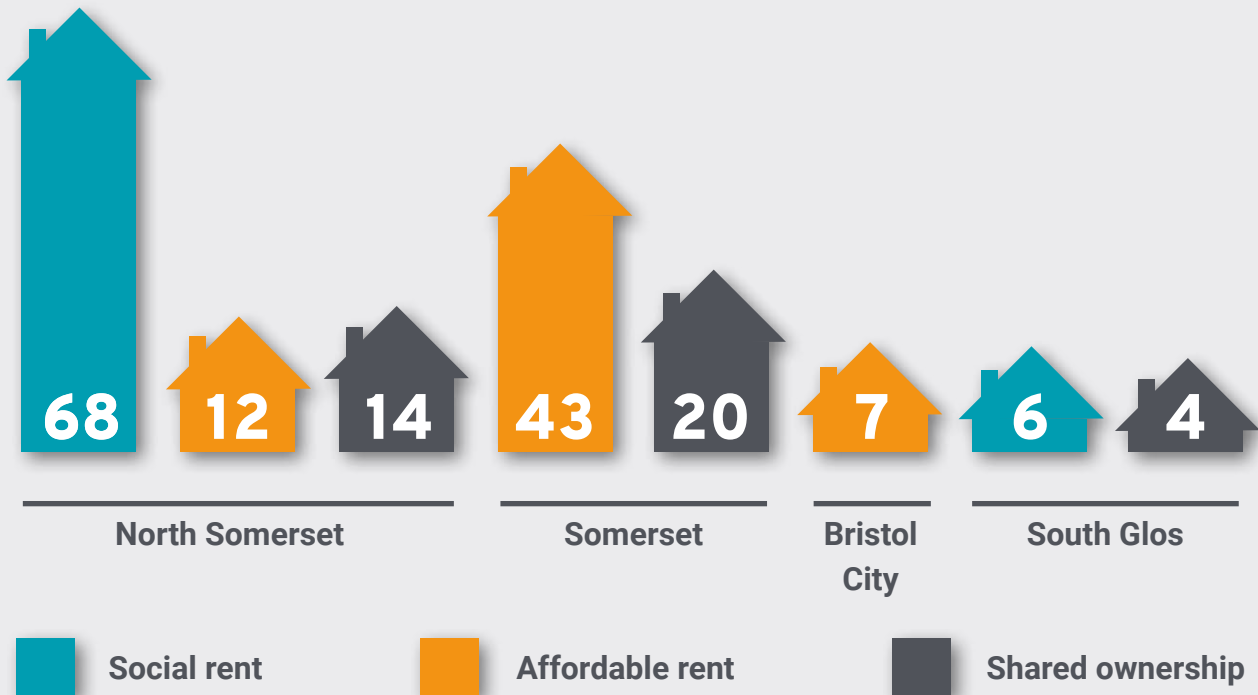




We feel more stable, and our daughter can grow up here. It's a great relief to be able to plan for the future and to see homeownership as an option.

Patrycja Sobczak-Migala,  
Alliance Homes Rent to Buy customer

## Types of homes built per local authority



We want to play our part in tackling the housing crisis in our region. During 2023/24, we delivered 174 new affordable homes for either rent or purchase through Shared Ownership. We prioritised our programme to deliver 78% of these homes for rent, in response to the housing need in our region..

In the last year, we continued delivering new affordable homes in our heartland of North Somerset, but we also strengthened our presence in Somerset County with new developments in Cheddar. This year alone we increased the number of homes we have in Somerset by 70% with our schemes at Steart Farm, Mendip View and Peregrine View.

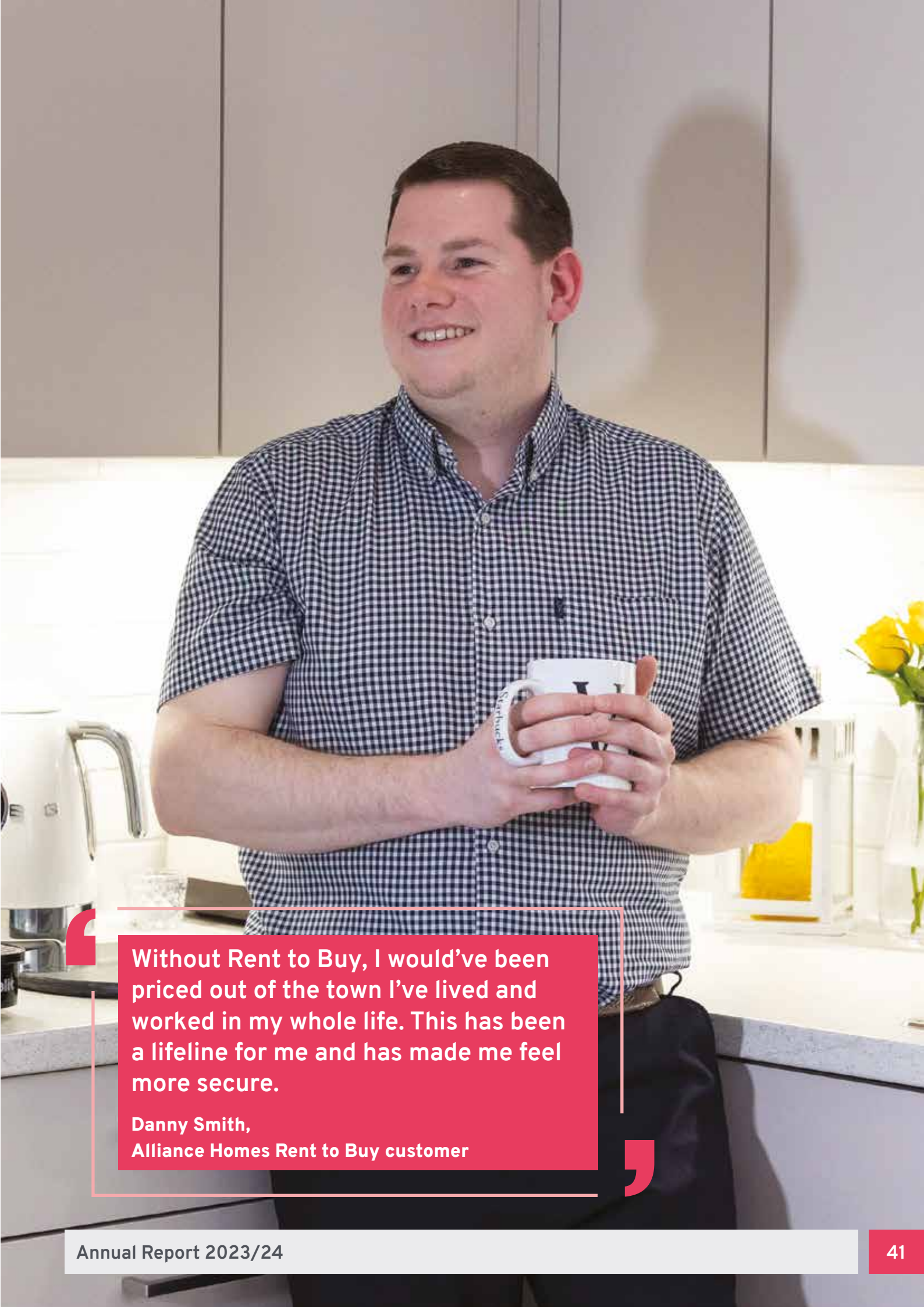
We plan to build more, so that we can achieve our ambition of delivering 2,000 new homes by 2033. During 2023/24, we grew our development pipeline by securing planning permissions and contracts that will deliver a further 223 new affordable homes:

- Parklands Village in Weston-super-Mare in partnership with Keepmoat, North Somerset Council and Homes England (125 homes)
- Charlton Gate in Brentry with Woodstock Homes (29 homes)
- Uplands in Nailsea (20 homes) with Stonewood Homes, North Somerset Council and Homes England
- Engine Common in Yate with Newland Homes (29 homes)

**567**

**homes already built out of 2,000 by 2033**





Without Rent to Buy, I would've been priced out of the town I've lived and worked in my whole life. This has been a lifeline for me and has made me feel more secure.

**Danny Smith,**  
Alliance Homes Rent to Buy customer



## Sam's Shared Ownership story

After separating from his wife, Sam was looking for a fresh start, and Shared Ownership provided the perfect opportunity. He moved to a brand new home at our Mendip View development in Cheddar in February 2024, and found the process seamless and the property ideal for his needs.

With the option to buy more shares in his property, Sam is enjoying the sense of stability and the space his new home offers, especially for his children. Sam says: "My wife and I separated, so Shared Ownership is a new start for me.

*"The property is perfect for the purposes that I need. Having the garden and extra space outside has been good for the children. I'm very settled and very happy here."*



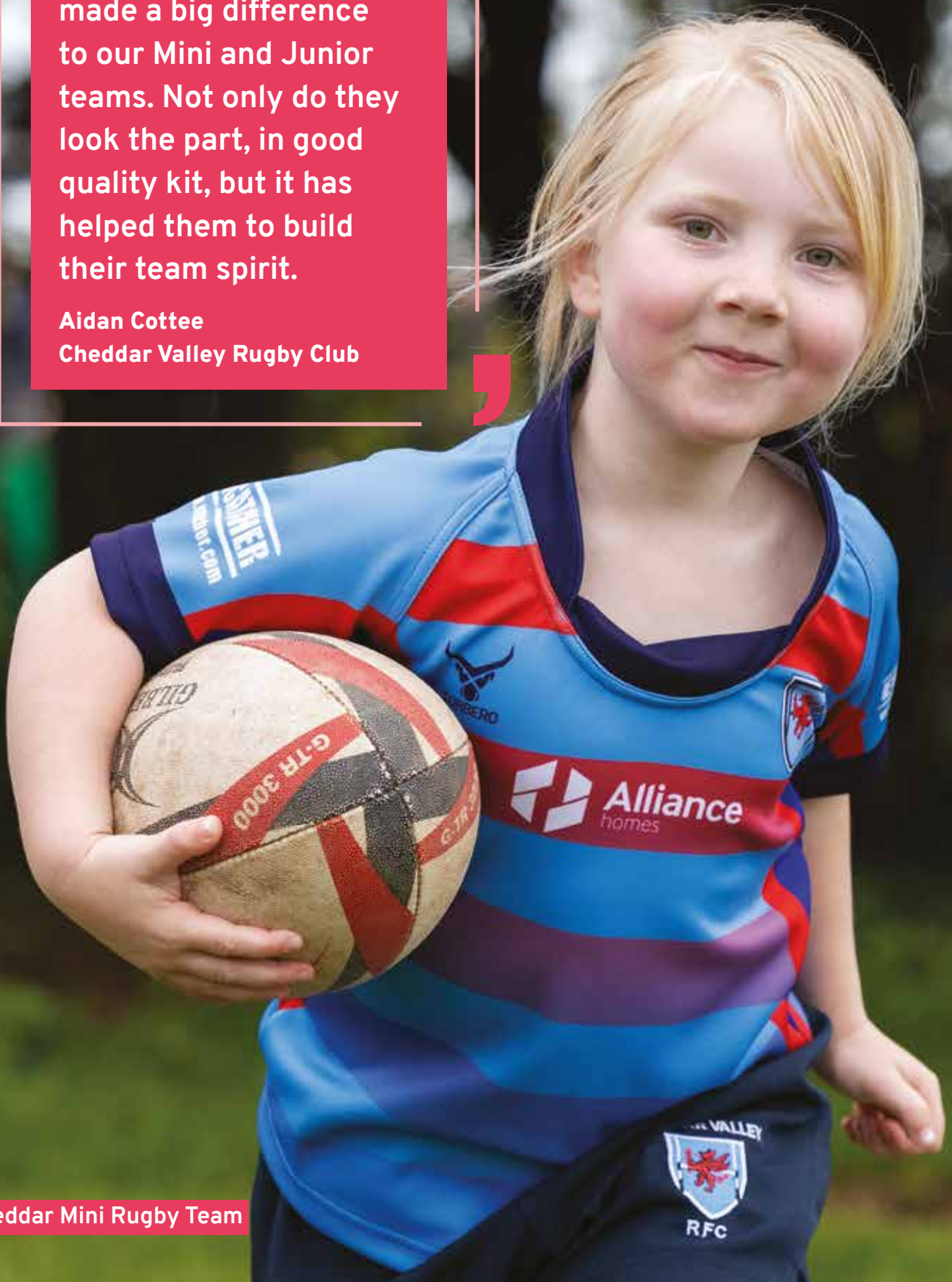
## More than bricks and mortar

In the past few years, we've brought vital new housing to Cheddar, but we know that creating thriving neighbourhoods isn't just about building homes. We want to support those communities and help them flourish.

Cheddar Valley Rugby Club is an integral part of the local community, so for the past year we've been pleased to sponsor the club's Mini and Youth teams. Through the sponsorship we've helped their youngest athletes to get new team kit so they could step out with pride when the club hosted the Minis and Youth rugby festival.

This generous donation from Alliance Homes has made a big difference to our Mini and Junior teams. Not only do they look the part, in good quality kit, but it has helped them to build their team spirit.

Aidan Cottee  
Cheddar Valley Rugby Club

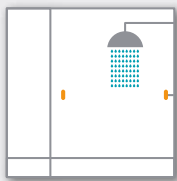


Cheddar Mini Rugby Team

# Investing in existing homes and neighbourhoods

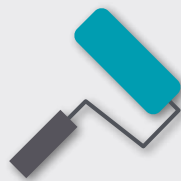
## Asset management – Improving homes

112



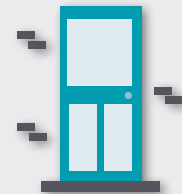
new bathrooms/  
wet rooms

636



External redecoration  
of homes

271



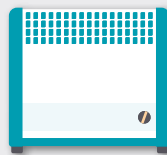
New doors

161



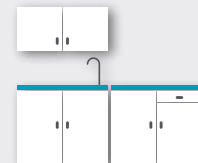
Boilers replaced

71



Fuel heating systems  
including radiators  
replaced

76



New kitchens

280



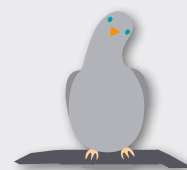
New windows

41



Roofs replaced covering  
118 dwellings

446



Bird guards installed  
for PV systems



This year we carried out more major works on customers' homes than ever before.

We took a proactive approach to our assets strategy, increasing the amount we spend on major works to £9.5 million. This investment will improve more customers' homes and reduce the need for repairs.

Customer satisfaction with major works has also increased to 80% this year (from 70% in 2022/23).

These results underline our commitment to improving the quality of our existing homes and neighbourhoods. We'll continue to build on this and have committed to spending £12 million next year.

Over the coming years we'll be developing our approach to asset value for money, net carbon zero and other policy objectives. A key focus will be on improving the energy efficiency of our existing homes by achieving EPC C on all homes by 2030.



# Community investment

Charitable donations



**£3,000**

Hours volunteered in community garden



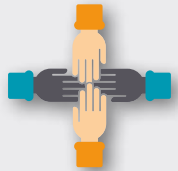
**2,035**

Community hub activities attended



**12,767**

Social value secured via our contractors



**£31,953**

Neighbourhood investment delivered



**£319,000**

Christmas hampers distributed



**400**

Social Prescribing and Community Link Workers referrals



**375**

Fruit and veg produced and distributed by Community Garden



**481kg**

Communities Together grants



**35**

grant applications

**10**

grants awarded

**£27,500**

funds awarded

## Communities Together grants

We want our customers to help us decide how best to support their communities. In January 2024, we awarded a total of £27,500 to ten local projects and organisations through our Communities Together Grant (CTG). The projects were chosen by our new Communities Together Feedback panel, with the larger awards being voted by our online customer community, HIVE. The successful applications ranged from an adult literacy project in Weston-super-Mare to supporting refugee engagement in schools.

### Tackling loneliness through art

The Serendipity Art and Craft Group was set up by customers in Weston-super-Mare. They wanted to practice and share their artistic skills, so they applied for a Communities Together grant and were successful.

*“As a group we decided we wanted to meet regularly and try out different art and craft techniques. Many of us are on low incomes and would struggle to contribute much money, so the Alliance Homes Communities Together grant has been a tremendous help.*

*“The greatest benefit of the group has been the strong friendships we’ve formed. Some of us live with physical and mental illnesses which can be isolating. Through the group, we’ve created a support network that’s helped reduce those feelings of loneliness. I’m now much more confident and happier. It’s got me out of the house - even if I’m in pain or feeling like rubbish, I want to come!”*

**Victoria Richards, Serendipity group member**



**I’m now  
much more  
confident and  
happier.**

**Victoria Richards  
Serendipity group  
member**



## Five years of Our Neighbourhood Network

This year, we celebrated five years since the Our Neighbourhood Network (ONN) initiative was set up with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. The programme aims to strengthen community resilience in three of our neighbourhoods in South Ward, Weston-super-Mare.

During this time ONN has made a huge difference to those communities, from establishing community hubs where customers can meet and take part in activities, to setting up outdoor community gardens for customers to enjoy nature and grow fresh fruit and vegetables. ONN has hosted lots of events and activities, with more than 30 local groups using the hubs and a total attendance of more than 12,000 community members.



## Growing Together

Our 'Growing Together' programme helps residents to go outdoors and get involved in green activities. It's an opportunity for residents to join our Community Gardening Team and help grow fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers. We run three community gardens across Weston-super-Mare.

At Coleridge Road Community Gardens, we host regular wellbeing sessions and plant sales to raise money for local charities, and utilise many of our services to support people across North Somerset.





Customers at our Coleridge Road Community Garden



## Discovering the outdoors with Nature Tots

Each Friday, we welcome children, together with their parents and carers at Coleridge Road Community Garden for our Nature Tots sessions. This is a great opportunity for children and their families to spend time outdoors while socialising and joining in with fun activities in the garden.

Activities range from planting and growing fruit and vegetables to making potions and pottering in the greenhouses. They can also get involved in outdoor cooking, from making jam to toasting marshmallows over a campfire.

Kelly Greatorex loves bringing four-year-old George and three-year-old Henry to the Friday sessions.

*"My boys really enjoy it, when they come here they play differently, and they get to interact with other kids. They love being outside, it's a comfort to them. Being outdoors is important for our family. I feel that being outside lifts up your spirits."*

A teacher herself, Kelly appreciates the effort George puts into the sessions. She says:

*"The session leader, George, always has amazing ideas and can create something out of nothing, which is an incredible skill, and it's always things that keep the kids entertained."*

Nature Tots is run by George Heathcote. She believes the sessions are an important way to address the 'nature deficit' that many children experience:

*"It's really important for children to get out in nature and feel at home there. Nature Tots provides them with a safe space to do this."*

George thinks the sessions are important for parents and carers, too.

**It's just as important making sure that the parents feel happy and confident about their children being outdoors and having the freedom to take risks, as it is for the children who experience it. Having young children can be lonely, so this space is really valuable for parents and carers. Just being outside helps with mental health.**

**George - Community Gardener**



The session leader always has amazing ideas and can create something out of nothing, which is an incredible skill, and it's always things that keep the kids entertained.

Kelly Greatorex  
Nature Tots parent





## Whizzy Wheels, a-go!

Following community feedback, ONN helped to improve the Whizzy Wheels cycle track, a community space where families and kids can play and cycle. The area was transformed thanks to the support of Safer Stronger North Somerset, the local neighbourhood police team, social value contributions from our contractors and a host of community volunteers. Safer Stronger North Somerset are now able to use this space for 'Bikeability', helping local children to ride confidently and learn road-safety skills.



## Community Living Rooms

The ongoing cost of living crisis continues to make life more challenging for our customers. In response, our community hubs adapted some of their sessions to become 'Community Living Rooms', offering comfortable, safe and warm spaces to socialise and enjoy a cup of tea together. These become increasingly important for those most in need. Here's what some of our customers said:

*"Having a warm place to go to during the winter months has been a blessing. The support I've received from the hub's community has helped me get on my feet."*

### Carol

*"Christmas dinner at the hub was the best time ever. Great food, great company and lots of giggles. It beats spending Christmas on my own."*

### Josie

## Tackling grief and isolation

In May 2023, we supported the Good Grief Festival in Weston-super-Mare. The festival brings people together and reduces social isolation for those in end-of-life care. Our community hubs hosted activities including a bereaved men's cookery group and 'No Barrier Here' sessions, where people discussed their wishes for the end of their life. We also ran art workshops for the Forget-Me-Not large art installation, where participants created contributions to a meadow of 800 flowers, each carrying a personal tribute of remembrance.



© Peter Goodrum Photography



## Spreading Christmas cheer

Alliance Homes and the For All Healthy Living Centre in Bournville joined forces to bring festive cheer to people across North Somerset last December.

Colleagues surprised more than 400 households with a special delivery of festive hampers, aiming to share the spirit of Christmas with those they believed would benefit from a little extra seasonal joy.

Each hamper included a selection of chocolates, a £25 supermarket gift voucher and a Christmas card inviting

people to local community groups and activities in their local neighbourhood.

Alliance Homes' Director of People and Communications, Helen Grantham, was among the colleagues personally delivering the festive packages. She says:

*"It was great to go out in our communities and put a smile on people's faces. Many customers have told us that we'd helped to make their Christmas special!"*

The hamper project was coordinated by

Helen Wheelock, our Community Growth Manager. Helen says:

*"We found the recipients of the hampers by asking our Support Team, Tenancy Team and community partners to nominate people they thought might benefit from a visit and a little extra Christmas cheer.*

*"This year we've delivered more hampers than ever before and that's thanks to all the local businesses and organisations who answered our call and made this possible."*



It was great to go out in our communities and put a smile on people's faces. Many customers have told us that we'd helped to make their Christmas special!

**Helen Grantham**

**Alliance Homes Director of People and Communications**

## Improving health and wellbeing through social prescribing

Our Social Prescribing Team, in partnership with Citizen's Advice North Somerset, is funded by Pier Health Group and North Somerset Council to provide residents with non-medical solutions that benefit their health and wellbeing.

In the past year, the service has welcomed new members and helped 1,033 people, while continuing to address the long-term challenges of COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis affecting many of our residents.

What our social prescribing customers say:

Thanks for believing in me when others had given up. You're giving me the confidence to get out and about again.

I feel much happier and more confident to start 2024 on a positive note thanks to your help.





# Being a green and ethical business

## Building sustainability

We're increasing our efforts to becoming a more sustainable business by reducing our environmental impact and making sure our homes are warmer and more energy efficient.

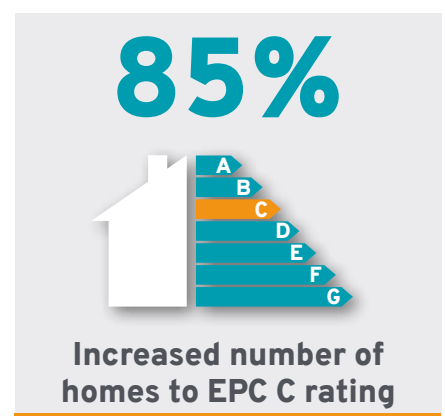
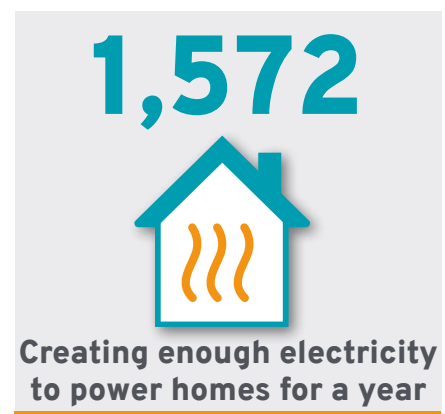
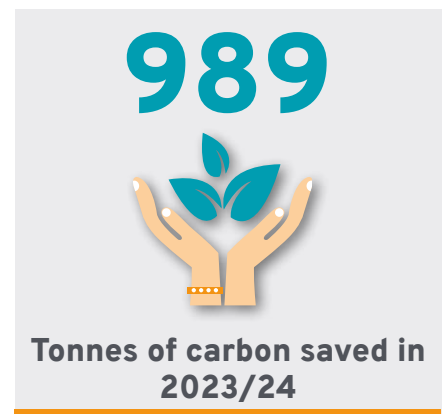
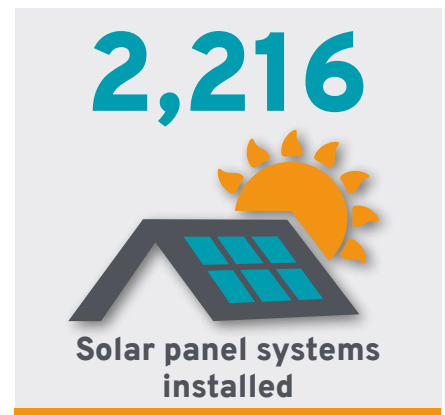
We've continued to invest in improving the energy efficiency of our homes and started work on our Warmer, Greener Living (WGL) project. This initiative, partly funded by the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, will improve the energy efficiency of 135 of our homes, making them warmer and more comfortable for our customers. During the year we identified those homes where improvements would have the biggest impact and we've been liaising with customers to prepare for the works.

We've also welcomed two new colleagues who joined Alliance Homes specifically to drive sustainability. The new role of Retrofit Project Manager was created to deliver the Warmer Greener Living project. Our new Sustainability Manager will create our sustainability plan and oversee projects across the organisation.

We recognise the impact our offices have on the environment so we've begun creating processes that will better monitor and manage energy in our head office. This includes technology that will provide real-time data on the electricity usage in each area of the building, helping us to identify areas for improvement.

## Supporting customers with energy advice

With the cost of living crisis continuing to affect our customers, the Home Energy Advice Team has had a busy first full year of work. The team's role is to help customers better manage their energy usage and save money. In the last year the team have helped more than 400 households, from providing energy saving tips to reduce bills, to helping customers manage their energy debts.



## Energy Advisor turns £10,000 debt into £4,000 refund

Homes Energy Advisor Andy Craig was able to delight our customer Colin and his sister Eirwen when he proved to the electricity provider that Colin's estimated bills of £10,000 should be a refund of more than £4,000.

Colin was referred to Andy by our Home from Hospital team, who were making arrangements for Colin to come out of hospital and go into care. Colin's sister Eirwen described how difficult she'd found it to convince the electricity provider that her brother's estimated bill was incorrect.

Andy looked at the billing and reviewed Colin's heating system and home situation to calculate an estimated bill. He used this information to challenge the electricity provider. After several months, in the spring of 2024, Andy was able to share the good news with Colin and his sister. The electricity provider agreed that Colin did not owe any money and, in fact, he had been overcharged by £4,484.

They treated my brother so badly. I tried to investigate it, but I couldn't get anywhere - it made me ill.

When the cheque came through it was an unbelievable relief. I'm so pleased my brother has some money now - he doesn't have much so this will be so good for him.

I couldn't have done it without Andy. He's a brilliant person, he's so good, it doesn't matter who you are, Andy treats everyone the same way.

**Eirwen**  
Customer's sister

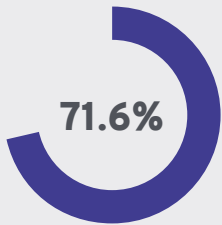




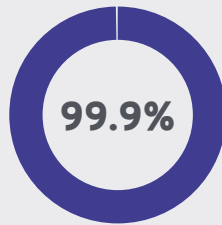
# Safety first culture

## Tenant Satisfaction Measures

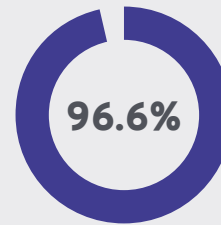
### Maintaining building safety



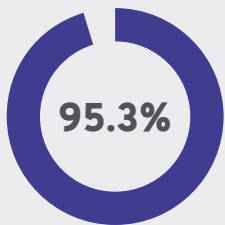
of customers are satisfied that their home is safe



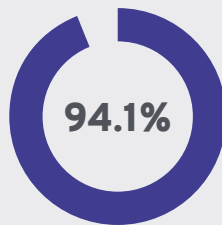
of our homes have up to date gas safety checks



of our homes have up to date fire risk assessments



of our homes have up to date asbestos checks



of our homes have up to date legionella checks



of our homes have up to date communal lift safety checks

The safety of our customers is our top priority. This year we began works to improve the fire safety in some of our blocks of flats with tailored solutions for each building. We are exploring ways of using the latest technologies for further safety improvements by creating remote systems that will closely monitor alarms.

Our gas and electrical works are checked by third parties, to make sure we deliver the highest possible standards of workmanship in these safety critical areas.

Having a clear understanding of the asbestos in our homes means we can effectively manage it to keep our customers and colleagues safe. This year we reached a significant safety milestone, all of our homes have now had an asbestos survey.



Hillsborough House  
Weston-super-Mare



# Being a great place to work

## Officially a Great Place to Work

In 2023, we were once again certified as a Great Place to Work™ (GPTW). We were also recognised as one of the best workplaces for women and wellbeing among large businesses in the UK.

Since achieving our first accreditation in 2022, we've been working with our colleagues to maintain and enhance our status as a Great Place to Work. We've been engaging with our colleagues through a 'Your Voice' forum, implementing initiatives to build trust, promoting a culture of recognition and creating career development opportunities.

We're proud that in 2023, we improved our GPTW score by 4%, with 73% of our colleagues agreeing that we are a Great Place to Work.

**92%**

say people here are treated fairly regardless of their sexual orientation

**91%**

say people here are treated fairly regardless of their race

**90%**

say people here are treated fairly regardless of their sex

**89%**

say this is a physically safe place to work.

**89%**

say when you join the company, you are made to feel welcome



The people in our organisation are supportive and that's what makes this a great place to work. Their encouragement and focus on inclusivity help women like me thrive and succeed.

**Kirsty Page, Repairs Manager**



## Wellbeing

To best support our teams, we use the Great Place to Work survey and colleague forums such as Your Voice, where colleagues can talk directly to our strategic leadership team about how we can best support their wellbeing at work.

As a result, we've been working closely with our occupational health provider to help colleagues understand their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We've also introduced a wellbeing space where colleagues can use available resources or just take time to decompress and reflect whenever they need it. Our colleagues have also been using their two 'Make the Difference' days to volunteer in our communities and support each other's mental health.

In response to the cost of living challenges, with our Money Advisors, we hosted a series of financial wellbeing initiatives, giving our colleagues top tips on how to manage their income. Our mental health first-aiders and cold-water swimmers also actively help colleagues manage their wellbeing and mental health.



## Equality, diversity and inclusion

People are our greatest strength and that's why it's important we understand their diversity and needs. Together with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Champions, we've been building a strategy to support our colleagues and customers.

In the past year, we've attended Weston-super-Mare Pride, hosted 'Take your dog to work' days, heard from colleagues about their mental health experiences, and helped to create an internal diversity training course for all colleagues.

We know there's more to do to increase the diversity of our workplace, board and leadership teams and to make sure we reflect the communities we serve. We've been working with consultants on the Insight Programme to enable people from different backgrounds to work with us temporarily as part of our commitment to bringing more diverse voices to our board.



## Recognition

Delivering a great service for our customers is at the heart of everything we do, and we can only provide that service with great colleagues who live and breathe our AGAME values.

Following colleagues' feedback, we've implemented our Above and Beyond programme that allows us to acknowledge, celebrate and share their success.

We now have six ways to recognise colleague contributions: colleague-to-colleague kudos points, on-the-spot manager awards, Operational Leadership Team awards, and an overall annual awards ceremony to celebrate the best of the best, team recognition and long-service awards.

Here's what some of our Above and Beyond award winning colleagues are saying:

*"It was such a lovely surprise to receive the #AGAME award. Working in the community is not just a job for me, it's my passion. Every day I can do something I love and help towards making a positive impact on the lives of those in our communities."*

**Helen Wheelock, Community Growth Manager**

*"I'm very grateful for the nomination, which I never thought I would be put forward for. I've been busy helping to deliver our online customer portal, and I can't wait to see the positive change this'll bring to our customers."*

**Becky Lee, Transformation Project Manager**

## Developing opportunities

We want all our colleagues to be able to have the skills and knowledge to do their best and deliver their AGAME every day. This includes having the opportunity to succeed by developing and progressing professionally and personally. In October 2023 we launched the AGAME Skills Knowledge (ASK) Framework for managers. This allows meaningful performance conversations to take place to ensure we're providing the right support, feedback and development to our colleagues. This is being rolled out to all colleagues in 2024.

## Growing our own talent

We're proud to have several colleagues enrolled in professional qualification programmes. Eliot Weston, Technical Project Manager, is currently taking part in a Level 6 apprenticeship with the University of the West of England (UWE) to become a Chartered Surveyor, fully funded and supported by Alliance Homes. This year, we've also welcomed trades apprentices into our Home Repairs Service.

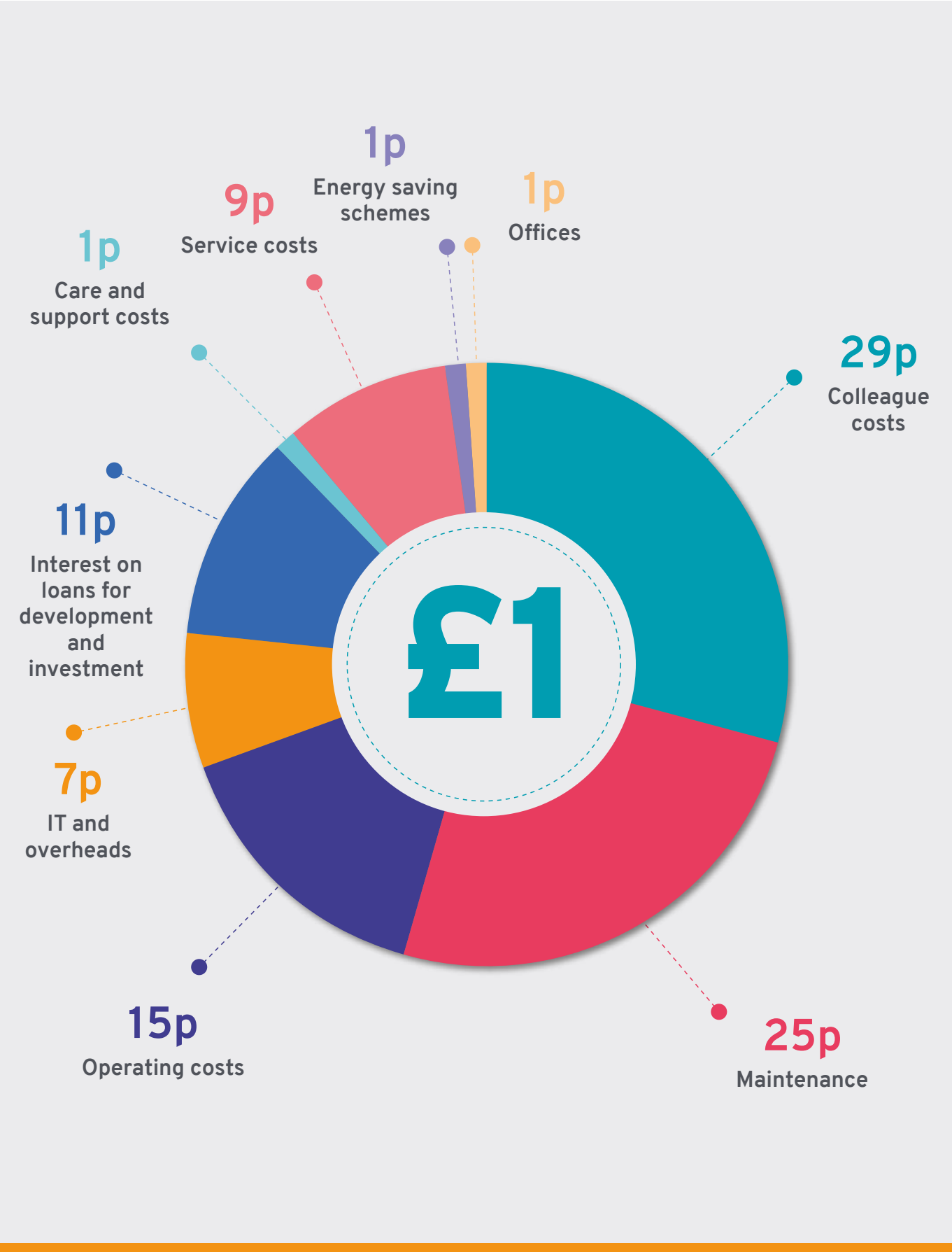




**The opportunity to work, study, and build a portfolio for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors was a chance I didn't want to miss. The support I've received from Alliance, my manager and the university has been great. I believe starting the apprenticeship has paved my way to a future career, unveiling opportunities that are already within reach once qualified, and then Chartered.”**  
**Eliot Weston, Technical Project Manager**



# How we spend the pound





Cheddar Youth Rugby Team



40 Martingale Way, Portishead, BS20 7AW

03000 120 120

[alliancehomes.org.uk](http://alliancehomes.org.uk)

