



ANNUAL TENANTS & RESIDENTS REPORT

2019-2020

our Performance & Achievements



PRIDE



QUALITY

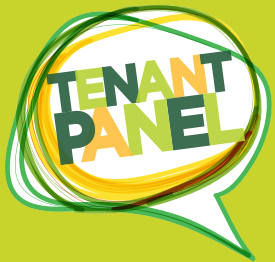


INTEGRITY



INNOVATION





The Chair of the Tenant Panel's **ANNUAL STATEMENT**

.....

Welcome to this year's annual report which covers the period from April 2019 to March 2020 and also includes the work that has continued during the COVID-19 Pandemic. So, whilst it may feel like everything has been on pause for most of 2020, we still have a good deal of progress to report.

Tenant Panel has continued to hold online meetings every month, reviewing GCH's performance, customer complaints and the ongoing impact of the restrictions and lockdowns on its services.

We have continued to provide strong links between tenants, staff and the GCH Board, ensuring that tenants voices are heard and that we have a say in the decisions that affect our services, homes and communities. We have reviewed 7 policies and monitored and challenged GCH's performance across all service areas. We have had a particularly strong focus on customer complaints, how GCH has responded, and most importantly, learnt from them.

In response to feedback from customers we have identified 'getting repairs right first time' as an area for focus and we have been involved in a Challenge and Change scrutiny review working with interested tenants to agree improvements. We have also continued to review the quality of GCH's communication, including the letters it has written to all customers about the impact of the restrictions on services, to ensure they are customer friendly.

We continue to focus on the learning from the Grenfell tragedy and GCH's progress against the 'Together with Tenants Plan and Charter', which we adopted in July 2019. We also welcome the new Social Housing White Paper and an increased focus on tenants by the Regulator.

Looking forward **over the next 12 months we will be;**

- Reflecting on the impact the Pandemic has had on our communities, current GCH services and the way services are delivered in the future. We have reviewed the feedback from the recent customer survey and are working with GCH on its plans for the future.
- Reviewing the impact of the new Social Housing White Paper and Code of Governance, working with GCH to ensure it implements the recommendations and new requirements, including a simpler complaints process.
- Checking progress with the Neighbourhood Plans, making sure we hold GCH to account.
- We have been pleased to see GCH working closely with community groups and partners across our neighbourhoods, providing funding and personal support during the Pandemic. We are committed to ensuring that GCH continues to provide support to our communities, particularly in relation to employment and training and that this remains a strong focus next year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow panel members for their time, commitment, and flexibility over the last 12 months, as we have continued working together in very difficult circumstances.

Let's keep working together to keep our communities safe, healthy and strong.



James Smith
Chair,
GCH Tenant Panel

Update from TENANT PANEL

Tenant Panel have been really busy over the past year and continued meeting online during the Pandemic.

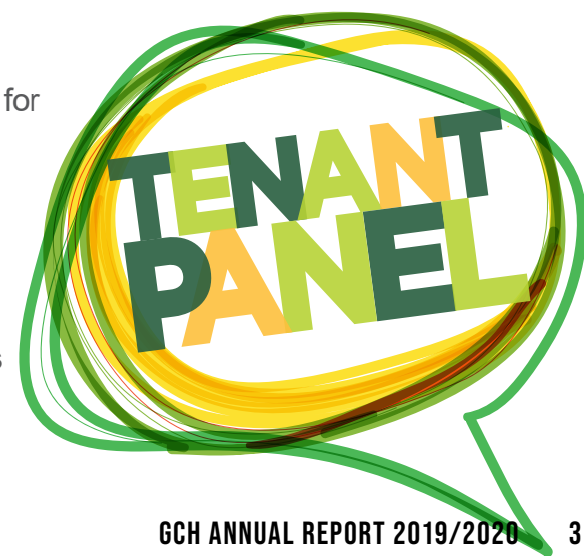
Some of the things that our Tenant Panel have *achieved* are;

- Approved 7 customer policies (2019 –2020).
- Continued to monitor performance on a monthly basis.
- Continued to monitor complaints on a monthly basis.
- Received regular updates on COVID-19 and how services are being delivered during the Pandemic.
- Received presentations covering Tenancy Sustainment, our new partnership with Buildbase and Regeneration.
- Reviewed the annual complaints and compliments report.
- Commissioned Challenge and Change reviews focusing on repairs and “getting it right first time”, health and safety compliance and the quality of our lettings.
- Received a presentation on the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Approved the Reasonable Adjustment Policy.
- Reviewed the results of the Tenant Survey on future service delivery.
- Reviewed progress against the Neighbourhood Plans and Tenant Engagement Strategy.
- Fed into the content and style of this Annual Tenant Report.
- Reviewed the Mazars Complaints Audit Report.

Future *focus* for the Panel;

- Continued focus on performance and complaint management.
 - Ensuring we deliver on our Neighbourhood Promises and Tenant Engagement action plan.
 - Review of Tenant Engagement approach post COVID-19 to incorporate learning during this period.
 - Review of GCH future ways of working and service delivery proposals as they come forward.
 - Social Housing White Paper and what this means for GCH customers.
 - Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower enquiry and what this means for GCH customers.
 - New Code of Governance – understanding what this means for the relationship between Board and Tenant Panel.
- Key areas of focus have been around repairs, quality of customer communication (particularly keeping customers in the loop) and learning from complaints.**

A Tenant Panel
virtual meeting.



A message **FROM THE BOARD**

Over the last 12 months we have continued our strong track record of listening to our tenants, ensuring that they are at the heart of what we do and are empowered to challenge, develop, and improve our services. This has never been more important than in 2020 when our tenants, their communities and the services we provide have been hugely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and the resulting restrictions.

During this period, the Board has continued to work closely with Tenant Panel and our leadership team to ensure we maintain valued services, communicate effectively with our tenants and provide essential support to our communities. As a Board we have also taken account of your recent survey feedback, about how we have performed during lockdown and your service delivery priorities for the future, in the development of GCH's Strategic Plan for 2021.

In 2019 we became early adopters of the Together with Tenants Plan, launching a new tenant agreed GCH Tenant Charter which embodies our commitment to ensuring that our residents' voices are heard throughout the organisation. Ongoing feedback from our tenants supports the Board's continued commitment to ensuring greater value for money by optimising our resources and reducing our costs to build more homes and deliver services that meet current and future tenants' needs through our 'Save to invest plan'.

Over the next 12 months we will continue to work with Tenant Panel on the learning from the Grenfell tragedy, including implementing the requirements of the new Social Housing White Paper and new Code of Governance for Housing Association Boards, whilst we also continue to improve services and deliver value for money in response to your feedback.



Asif Bhatti
Chair of the Board



Customer *Service*

- We responded to **56,517**  **telephone calls**, with 97.8% of those calls managed at the first point of contact.
- We received **90**  **COMPLAINTS** from **customers**, with 54 of those upheld (58%). Nine complaints were escalated to Head of Service level and 3 complaints were further escalated to the Stage 3 complaints panel.
- **94.4%** of customer complaints were responded to within our service standard of **10 days response**.



Achievements for APRIL 2019 TO MARCH 2020



we have spent
£3.15MILLION
on
repairs

Home *improvements* and repairs

- We have continued to provide a high-quality Repairs service, resulting in excellent **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION LEVELS CURRENTLY RUNNING AT 90%**.
- **16,200 REPAIRS** at an average of cost of **£106** per property.
- **100%** of emergency repairs were **completed on time**.
- **88%** of appointable repairs **were completed on time**.
- **92%** of repairs were **fixed on the first visit**.

Building *New* Homes

- We completed **64 NEW HOMES** and started the construction of a further 158.
- We started work on schemes to bring forward **a further 221 homes** to ensure we meet our Development Target of **456 NEW HOMES BY 2024**.
- **93.3% Satisfaction rate** for our new homes.
- We delivered **202 new homes since 2015**.

These have been supported by over **£2.1MILLION** of grant subsidy from Homes England.



Homes
England

With funding from the
Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Continuing to *invest* in your home

We undertook **1,430 improvements** to ensure we maintain the Government's Decent Homes Standard on all of our properties.

In 2019/20 we spent **£5.1 million** and completed the following improvements:

- **52** New Kitchens.
- **18** New Bathrooms.
- **96** Electrical Rewires.
- **140** Central Heating Upgrades.
- **348** New Doors and Windows.
- **124** Major Medical Adaptations.
- **172** Properties had Roof Replacements.
- **119** Properties were externally decorated.
- **6** Emergency Lighting Systems Upgraded.
- **146** External and Environmental Improvements.
- **8** Access Control/Door Entry Systems Upgraded.

*In 2019/20
we have spent*
£5.1MILLION
on
improvements

Customer satisfaction
levels on our planned
improvement
programs were

87%

Making sure your homes are *safe*

We invested **£250,000** on the communal areas of 24 blocks in order to improve fire safety, including:

- Replacement of over **88** communal fire doors.
- Upgrading of **50** electrical cupboards.
- Upgrading of **50** communal areas to install fire resistant plaster board.
- Installation of over **20** fire resistant loft hatches.



We continued to ensure that all our properties were fully compliant with the relevant legislation and best practice guidelines.

We have completed the following checks and tests:

- **5,147** Home Safety (including Gas Test).
- **18** Dry Riser Tests.
- **56** Fire Panel Tests.
- **1,980** Emergency Light Tests.
- **102** Fire Equipment Tests. **88** Water Safety Tests.
- **30** Fire Risk Assessments.
- **3,273** Domestic Electrical Tests.
- **877** Door Entry Auto Unit and Door Entry System Tests.
- **240** Vertical Lift Services.
- **93** Stair Lift Services.






89%
of tenants
were
satisfied with the
lettings process

Managing your tenancy

- We undertook **4 estate inspections**, covering **25 neighbourhoods** including: **1,396 roads**, **728 blocks of flats**, and **116 garage sites**.
- We **gained injunctions against 9 tenants** who would not allow us access to their home to complete Home and Electrical Safety Checks.
- We supported tenants on **29 cases of Hoarding**, with 33 cases resolved in the past two years.
- We **re-let 252 of our existing properties** within an average of 20.5 days.
- Our dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour team **resolved 318 cases**.
- To resolve serious cases of **anti-social behaviour** we obtained 5 evictions, 3 terminations of tenancy, 3 injunctions and 4 acceptable behaviour contracts.



**WE CONTINUED TO INVEST
IN THE CLEANLINESS OF OUR
COMMUNITIES WITH THE
REMOVAL OF FLY TIPPING
COSTING £60,000**

At GCH we are committed to investing in our communities and creating opportunities to make a real difference

Supporting *successful* communities

- We delivered community funding totalling nearly **£60,000** to support our community partners to provide a range of support services for our tenants plus delivery of a variety of community events and activities throughout the year.
- We delivered 7 summer 2019 events across the City and supported a range of community events including Matson Community Power, Last Blast Festival and Barton and Tredworth Cultural Fayre.
- Working alongside the Police we held weekly Junior Warden sessions at **7 schools** throughout the academic year incorporating a variety of activities.
- Our SHINE Employment & Training Service continued to support people on their journey into work, with tenants benefiting from CV updating, developing job search skills, access to photo ID, volunteering placements and employability training.
- We continued to run Universal Credit and Digital Inclusion sessions at 2 libraries in the city and **helped 28 people** access the internet to apply for benefits, set up an email address and search for jobs.



Supporting our older and more vulnerable tenants

- A further three schemes benefited from significant investment in their communal areas with **new flooring and furniture**.
- 12 tenants were referred to the Tenancy Sustainment Team for advice and guidance to ensure they **maximise their income** and help them maintain their independence.
- Our Homeless Team provided safe and secure accommodation for **95 families and 28 single people**.
- In co-operation with the City Council, we successfully set up an extra 4 dispersed properties to be used on a temporary basis for homelessness taking the total properties up to 34.
- Independent Living Officers delivered and supported over **749 older people**.



Supporting Independent Living

Lifelink is our 24-hour telecare alarm service, providing customers with easy access to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Just the push of a button opens a direct line to our Lifelink call centre, who can then speak to the customer and find out what sort of help they need and ensure the appropriate response is arranged, such as such as family or friends, the emergency services or doctor, or one of our First Responders.

For a free
no obligation
demonstration,
or to arrange an
installation please
call us on
01452 833133

**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP
TO SUPPORT INDEPENDENT LIVING**

LifeLink
COMPLETE PEACE OF MIND

www.lifelink.uk.com



If the customer is not able to speak the operator, we will ensure that appropriate help is provided. Calls can be made from anywhere in the customer's home, even in their garden.

We can provide a range of Telecare sensors that all connect to the Lifelink alarm unit to assist customers around their home and help keep them independent, including falls and bed occupancy sensors.

Along with our Lifelink Package, we offer a 24 hour Responder Service option, where the team will act as an emergency contact. Our First Responders are fully insured and trained in First Aid and Manual handling. They use vehicles fully equipped with first-aid equipment and lifting apparatus.



In 2019/20 we....

- We installed **319 ALARMS** across the County.
- We helped **111 RESIDENTS** go home from hospital to a safe environment and maintain their independence using our Responder service.
- We responded to **332 EMERGENCY CALLS** with a potential saving to the NHS of £47,000 in ambulance visits.
- We attended emergency visits within an **average response time of 29 MINUTES.**

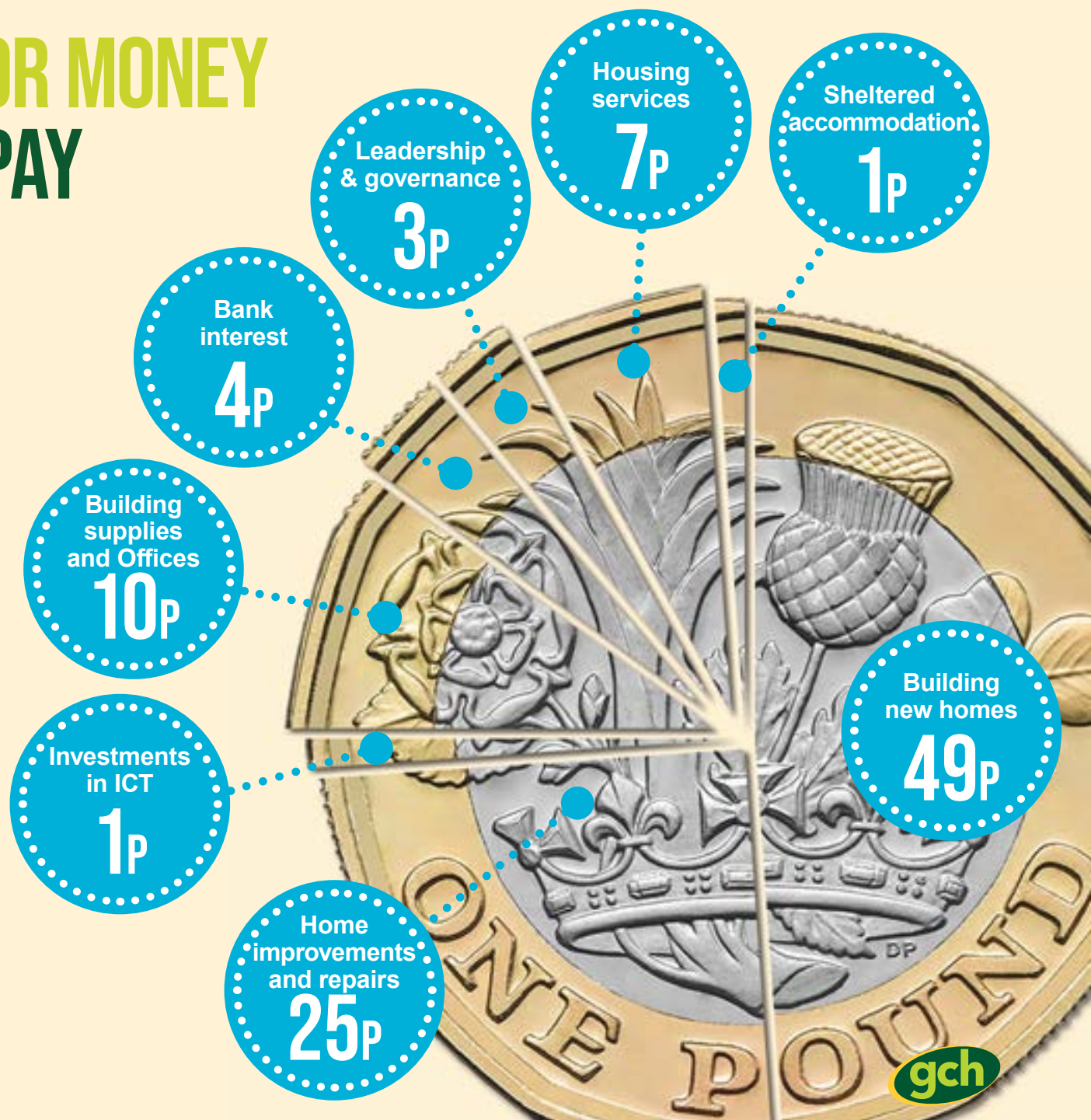
PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY FOR THE RENT YOU PAY

Collecting rent *effectively*

- We collected **£29,945** of former rent arrears.
- **709 CUSTOMERS** have signed up to our self-service system **MyGCH** in order to access rent accounts information remotely and to make online payments.
- The Tenancy Sustainment Team dealt with **1,739 referrals** providing a range of support, with additional income for customers totalling **£2,718,913**.

The Average
GCH weekly rent
is

£78.60



Your feedback & COMPLAINTS

At GCH we welcome feedback, both positive and negative, from our customers to help us improve the services we deliver. We have signed up to the new Housing Ombudsman complaint code and we are working in partnership with Tenant Panel to monitor learning from the feedback we gain from complaints.

Our Tenant Panel receive a detailed monthly report regarding complaints and play an active role in addressing any issues raised.

Complaints and compliments can be made using the method of contact that best suits our customers.

During the year of 2019-2020 we received **90 complaints** and **44 compliments**. We responded to 94.4% of complaints within our target. As the months progressed we saw the number of complaints steadily decrease.

The complaints were related to...

Income	10
PropertyCare	27
Property Services	24
Tenancy Services	19
Anti-Social Behaviour	7
Independent Living	3



Overall we upheld 58% of these complaints.



Regarding the 2 complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman, no further action was required by GCH.

You said - we did!

You said - You were unhappy with the lack of communication from some contractors and the fact you could not identify them.

We did - We have standardised the process contractors must follow and worked with them to ensure letter drops to tenants are completed in the agreed timescale and ID badges are worn by contractors at all times.

You said - You were unhappy with the level of noise from one of our contractors and there were no working barriers in place/no warning signs around the area.

We did - We take the Health and Safety of our tenants very seriously and we stopped working with the contractor for future work.

You said - You found rent statements misleading as they may not include housing benefits, Direct Debits or payments which are in progress.

We did - We have amended the rent statement to a) Clearly show the "balance as at" date (and state it in 2 places) and b) Ensure that statements are produced as quickly as possible once the data is available to minimise the amount of transactions not shown.

You said - You felt engineers attitudes didn't always meet customer service standards, they didn't always attend booked appointments/gave late notice if not attending and they sometimes didn't have the required parts available owing to a shortfall in communication between them and the office.

We did - We ran team briefing sessions for all engineers reminding them of our telephone policy, the importance of body language and the GCH customer service requirements. We removed an engineer from the call out rota, monitored performance and timescales.

Lessons learnt from YOUR COMPLAINTS

- Improved how we book in appointments and communicate with customers throughout the repairs process, ensuring we 'keep them in the loop'.
- Improved and strengthened our monitoring of contractors to reduce service delays.
- Complaint response letters were revised in line with the Housing Ombudsman's guidance and approved by Tenant Panel.
- The Compensation Policy was changed to clarify that tenants can choose between work being carried out or a cash value as their compensation.
- Expected standards of behaviour and service were reinforced with GCH staff following customer complaints about staff rudeness.
- We have improved the speed of access to independent specialist surveyors.



- We are improving customer contact and information relating to planned home improvements.
- We will include dissatisfied customers in meetings with our cleaning contractors as appropriate in the future.
- We have introduced a better system for assisting customers with multiple complaints.
- We have provided clearer information on the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, including repairs.
- We have improved internal communications between teams regarding serious incidents so we can communicate more effectively with customers and their families.
- We are providing additional training on welfare reform to ensure all staff are able to provide up to date timely support to customers.
- We have reinforced safe parking advice for all our staff and contractors.

- The Complaints Policy was revised and approved by Tenant Panel to include a case management approach for vulnerable tenants and complex cases.
- Working with Tenant Panel we have launched a 'Tone of Voice' programme which reinforces how we treat customers with respect. This has resulted in training for all staff, including Trauma Informed approaches, to ensure an appropriate approach for vulnerable tenants and complex cases.
- Training for all front-line staff to link infestations with potential property issues is to be implemented along with procedural changes.
- The procedure and process for home safety checks in void properties was updated to include boiler testing.

Support for **DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS**

.....

**DURING 2019/20 WE SIGNED UP TO THE CHARTERED
INSTITUTE OF HOUSING'S 'MAKE A STAND' AGAINST
DOMESTIC ABUSE PLEDGE. THIS REFLECTS
OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING;**

- **WE HAVE EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE**
 - **WE PUBLICISE INFORMATION ABOUT NATIONAL AND LOCAL
DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE ON OUR
WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**
 - **WE PROVIDE SUPPORT TO STAFF AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE AND ENSURING OWNERSHIP OF THIS IMPORTANT
AREA OF WORK AT THE MOST SENIOR LEVEL
OF THE ORGANISATION..**
-

Every year, almost 2 million people in the UK experience Domestic Abuse. Seven women a month are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales.

Research by SafeLives revealed that **85% of victims of abuse sought help five times on average from professionals in the year before they got effective help** to stop the abuse. It is well recognised that early intervention by agencies can help protect adults and children from harm as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of abuse.

As a housing provider, we may be the first point of contact in spotting and responding to Domestic Abuse. It is also recognised that housing will be a key barrier in a person attempting to leave abusive situations.

At the heart of our commitment to tackling Domestic Abuse is our partnership approach with organisations like; Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Service (GDASS), the Nelson Trust and Victim Support. We also refer into the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) framework to review specific high-level cases with the police and partnership agencies to deliver a co-ordinated response to abuse.

If you are suffering from Domestic Abuse, help is available:

- **The Survivors Handbook** (published by Women's Aid) offers practical support and information for women experiencing domestic abuse, with simple guidance on every aspect of seeking support.
- **Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)** offers specialised local support for those experiencing domestic abuse. If you are a man or woman living with, considering leaving, or continuing to have problems with an abusive partner in Gloucestershire, you can call GDASS and self-refer in confidence, by phoning **01452 726570** or emailing **support@gdass.org.uk**
- The **Freephone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline** number can be called for advice and assistance on **0808 2000 247**

IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 999 AND ASK FOR THE POLICE!

Our Tenant Promises

2015-2020

.....

In 2014, the City Council put forward a clear option for the stock transfer of Council owned Housing to GCH, who had been managing the homes on their behalf since 2005, as part of a formal offer document. The formal process was endorsed through an independent tenant ballot held in July /August 2014, which saw 64% of tenants voting with 89.1% support for transfer in September 2014.

The Council's offer document included 8 tenant promises to be delivered by GCH in the first 5 years as part of the transfer agreement between 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2020. In May 2020 we presented a report to Tenant Panel, the GCH Board and Gloucester City Council, setting out how we have delivered against those promises and how we will continue to work with our tenants and residents to **'Build homes and communities where people can thrive.'**

We have a strong track record of ensuring that tenants are at the heart of what we do and are empowered to challenge, develop and improve our services. We believe in providing valued tenant and resident services that are underpinned by our core values: Pride, Quality, Integrity and Innovation and we are committed to ensuring that our tenants' voices are heard throughout the organisation via a number of channels, including; strong representation on our Board, effective challenge through our Tenant Panel and Challenge and Change scrutiny reviews.

Here's a quick overview of how we have delivered on our promises.....

Promise one

REPAIRING AND MAINTAINING YOUR HOMES

.....

Between 2015 and 2020 we completed 110,743 Repairs, spending a total of £16.8 million and we have maintained full compliance across all Landlord Health and Safety Checks.

Promise two

IMPROVING YOUR HOMES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

.....

Between 2015 and 2020 we made 6,833 improvements to our homes spending £32.6 million and further £1,000,000 on a range of community improvements.

Promise three

DELIVER EXCELLENT HOUSING SERVICES BY PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST

.....

We have carried out over 2,000 tenancy visits to our customers homes every year.

Promise four INVOLVING, ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING TENANTS

.....
Our new 5 Year Neighbourhood Plans are based on detailed feedback from over 500 GCH tenants and residents.

Promise five SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING

.....
Since 2015 we have spent over £1.77 million on aids and adaptations.

Promise six DELIVERING SERVICES WHICH REPRESENT VALUE FOR MONEY, ENSURING EVERY PENNY COUNTS

.....
We have maintained a strong rent performance and in the last year the Tenancy Sustainment Team supported 1,739 referrals and helped tenants access £2.7million worth of support.

Promise seven BUILDING MORE AFFORDABLE HOMES AND DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH CONSIDERED BUSINESS EXPANSION

.....
Between 2015 and 2020 we have built 205 new homes, investing £42 million in development.

Promise eight INVESTING IN YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY

.....
We have provided over £250,000 of Community Investment funding since 2015.

For the full report please visit www.gch.co.uk/corporate-plan

While our tenant promises have been delivered, working with our customers we have agreed a range of new local offers in our 5 year Neighbourhood Plans which were launched in April 2020. It has been a difficult year with challenges to the way we deliver your services and invest in your communities however we have fulfilled the following commitments whilst also continuing to deliver essential services and provide practical support to our communities.

Progress on NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

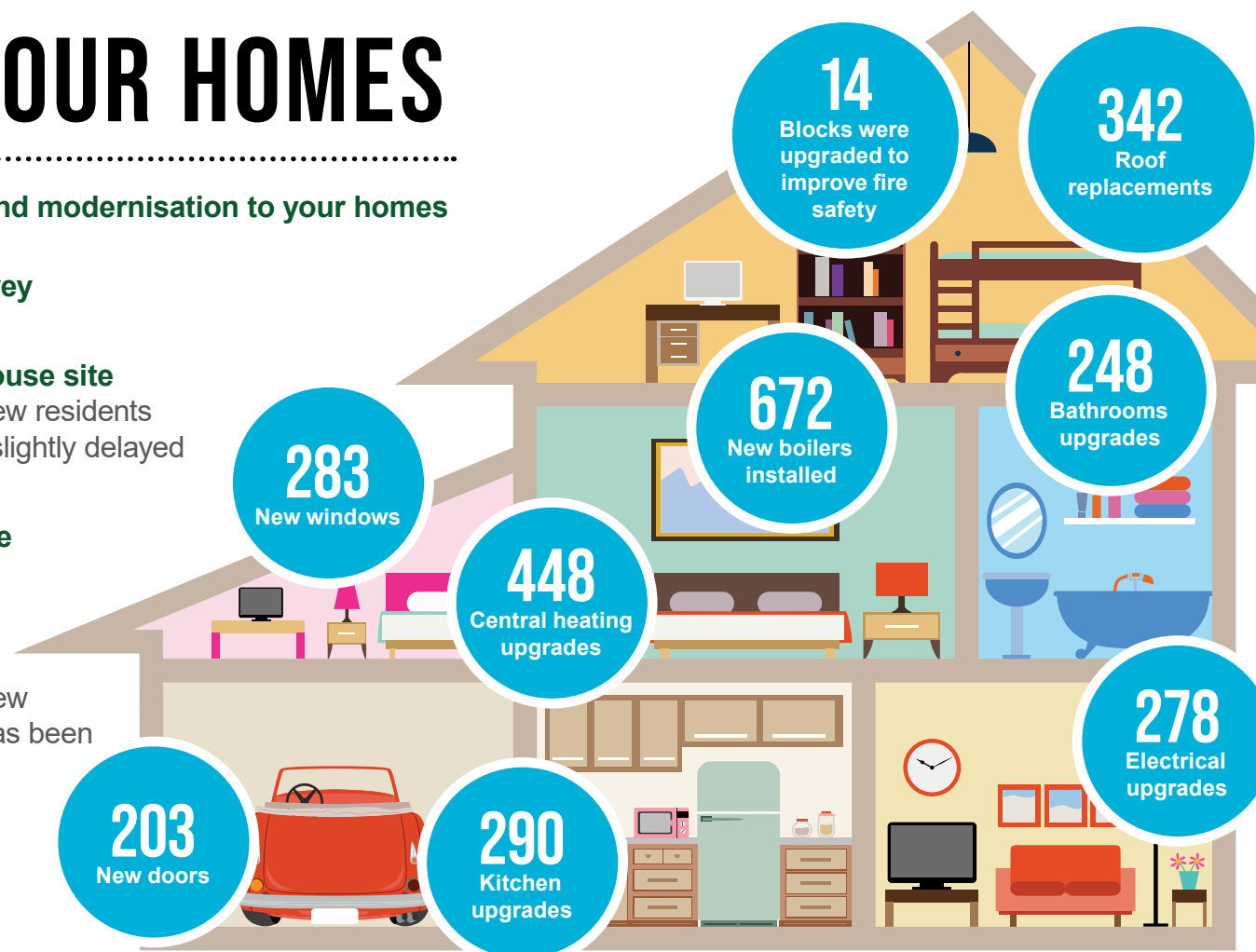
In 2019 we launched your Neighbourhood Plans which set out priorities and investment plans covering your homes and communities across the City over the next 5 years. These plans replace the tenant promises and represent a joint approach between GCH and our tenants to continue improving and delivering valued services and investment that meet community needs.

The Pandemic has delayed some of the plans however we continue to carry out as much work as we can in a safe manner.

Investment in YOUR HOMES

We will: Provide a programme of investment and modernisation to your homes in response to the priorities you have identified:

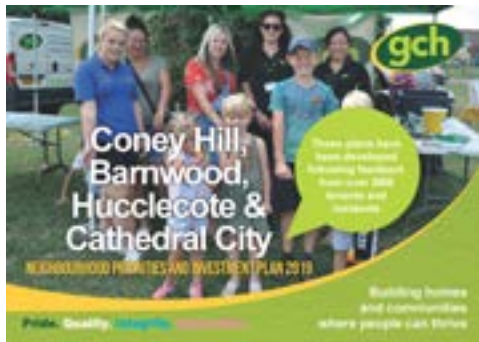
- **Undertake a comprehensive stock condition survey**
On-target to survey all properties by 2024.
- **Build 31 New 1&2 bedroom flats on Sherborne House site**
All 31 New build flats will be handed over and let to new residents by the end of February 2021. The scheme has been slightly delayed due to the impact of COVID-19.
- **Build 5 New flats on Worcester Parade garage site**
Planning has now been approved for this site.
We forecast completion by the end of March 2022.
- **Hand over 24 New flats in Worcester Street**
All 24 New build flats will be handed over and let to new residents by the end of January 2021. The scheme has been slightly delayed due to the impact of COVID-19.
- **Achieve a high band C energy rating across all of our properties by 2024.**



Investment in YOUR COMMUNITIES

Helping support and improve community and recreational facilities.

- In 2019 we delivered 9 community events over the summer season in partnership with local organisations. These included summer fairs, fun days and activity days.
- In 2020 we held 9 COVID-19-safe Repairs Roadshows.
- We worked alongside, and funded, a range of community partners to deliver services to residents offering recreational, training and employment support opportunities.
- The Estate Services Team have continued to deliver a high-quality service and also provided support across the city with food deliveries to vulnerable residents supporting our partner agencies.





We will continue to provide valued Housing Services

- Completed quarterly Estate Inspections during 2019 and one Estate Inspection in July 2020 when it was safe to do so during the Pandemic.
- During COVID-19 we are completing essential home visits only in accordance with Government guidance. We will resume tenancy audits when it is appropriate and safe to do so for customers and colleagues.
- Our Tenancy Sustainment Team continued to provide their support and updates on benefit and budgeting advice and changes supporting tenants to access over £1,632,501 additional income since April 2020.
- We improved our void standard following the outcome of a Challenge and Change scrutiny review.
- Our Housing and Independent Living officers made over 1,080 welfare telephone calls to customers during the first lockdown.
- We were early adopters of the Together with Tenants Charter and plan and Tenant Panel have continued to monitor our progress.

We will continue to work hard to ensure that our tenants and residents remain at the heart of what we do

- We have developed a range of digital inclusion projects that will offer support for people wishing to get online, get more involved or give feedback digitally.
- Tenants were involved in the development and testing of the MyGCH online portal.
- Tenant Panel were involved in the development of a new Tenant Engagement Strategy and have reviewed its first years progress.
- GCH is rightly prioritising complaints, using them as learning opportunities to shape service delivery and increase tenant satisfaction. Tenant Panel's monthly review of complaints allows tenants to scrutinise performance and hold GCH to account.



Celebrating our *diverse* communities

- In partnership with a number of organisations and agencies we have continued to provide employment and training opportunities to residents in the most deprived parts of the City to **help improve long-term opportunities** for residents.



- We successfully retained the **Diversity Champion Award**, which is a leading Diversity standard recognising and promoting organisational excellence and achievement in Diversity. We were highly commended for our approaches in terms of internal and external events and initiatives.

- We continue to be a **Stonewall champion** and are active members of the **Housing Equality network**.
- All staff have undertaken up to date **equality and diversity training** and we have a robust Equality strategy in place agreed by our Tenant Panel and Board.
- We delivered **83 minor adaptations within an average of 24 days** and **158 major adaptations within an average of 34 days** at a total cost of **£324,000**. It is astonishing to think that when GCH took over this service in 2005 it used to take 374 days for a minor adaptation and 513 days for a major adaptation.



PRIDE
IN
Gloucestershire

**WE PROVIDED FUNDING
AND SPONSORSHIP,
AS WELL AS BEING
A LEAD PARTNER FOR
THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE
PRIDE ANNUAL EVENT
IN SEPTEMBER 2019**



Celebrating and supporting our **COMMUNITIES IN 2020**

2020 was a difficult year for us all and particularly our communities. We have had to re-think the delivery of valued and essential services in a COVID-safe way and also provide critical community support. In 2020 we experienced the true value of resilient and engaged communities where existing community groups, local residents and community based organisations like GCH were able to work together and ensure residents were supported, had easy access to free or affordable food, activities and health and wellbeing support.

Here are some examples of the support we provided;

- Funding and practical support to help set up community support schemes and foodbanks to support vulnerable residents.
- A number of small and socially distanced street parties and afternoon tea deliveries to commemorate VE Day.
- Delivered seed and salad growing packs to 80 tenants.
- Wellbeing packs for our Independent Living scheme residents.
- During the School Holidays we supported Holiday Kitchens around Gloucester to provide free lunches for local residents.





- During June we asked for your nominations for a visit from the Cake Fairy. Working with the Redwell Centre we made special deliveries to 17 tenants to say thank you
- In June we handed out over 40 free sunflower kits to tenants across the City and encouraged them to get involved in our sunflower growing competition.
- When restrictions were eased a little we held socially-distanced Repairs Roadshows with PropertyCare staff on hand and attending and resolving over 50 jobs.
- During the Summer we worked with Gloucester Cathedral to donate art packs to families living in our temporary homeless accommodation.
- The 2020 Garden Competition was a huge success with 32 brilliant entries as more people turned their hands to lockdown gardening projects.
- Although Pride celebrations were different this year we continued to celebrate diversity and even held our first virtual art competition.
- During Get Online Week in October we launched our Digital Divide project offering loan of a tablet to help our tenants to connect to the internet.
- In November we provided over 60 free adult colouring packs to tenants around the City, supporting mental health.
- 40 free pumpkins to support our first Pumpkin carving competition.



When COVID-19 brought life to a standstill the Community Investment Team were busy working with community partners to identify how we could support our communities. As well as providing over £7,000 of community support funding the delivery of food and emergency parcels and setting up a foodbank in Westgate, our strong partnerships across the City enabled us to offer support where it was needed most;

We have continued to help customers access training and employment with a particular focus on getting online and accessing services to keep them safe and improve their health and wellbeing.



We have been successful in accessing funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, enabling us to offer our tenants access to our **FREE TABLET LOAN SCHEME***

This scheme can help tenants with little or no online skills to get online through the loan of a free tablet device and ongoing support.

If you have any questions or would like to apply, please contact Elaine Meyer on 07387 026220 or email getinvolved@gch.co.uk

Here are some examples of how we have supported our tenants:

Ms S completed a Habitat Management Course in Autumn last year and has since completed other courses in the community and worked us to develop her CV. To aid her job search we have provided her with a digital device and supported her to use it effectively for job applications. Growing in confidence, she has a plan of action and has set her own goals to work towards.

Mr J was referred as a vulnerable adult living without a washing machine and had large items left in his garden. We accessed funding for a new washing machine from the Barnwood Trust and our Estates Team helped to remove the risky items.

At the same time our Gas Servicing Team discovered that his cooker was unsafe so we were able to help Mr J to replace this too. Whilst awaiting the replacement cooker we arranged for him to receive microwave meals from our partner, the Club @ Tuffley so that he could continue to have a hot healthy meal each day.

If we can help you or someone living in one of our homes to get online or back into work please contact us on **01452 424344**, visit www.gch.co.uk/shine or email getinvolved@gch.co.uk.

We know everyone's situation is different so we will tailor our support to help meet your needs.



*Terms and conditions apply and an agreement will be made tailored to the individual and their needs. Applicants must be a GCH tenant/live in a GCH home and there are a limited number of devices available. Tablets will be prioritised for those in greatest need and without other online access. All successful applicants will be asked to agree to GCH's Acceptable Use Policy. All services provided following COVID-19 Safety Guidelines which may change at any time. Thanks to the Government for making this possible.

Helping you manage in DIFFICULT TIMES

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team have been working tirelessly since the lockdown in March supporting our customers who have struggled during this challenging time. They have been helping customers remotely to access extra grants and funding, food vouchers and have also helped to resolve benefit issues and maximise incomes. Here are some examples of how they have helped...

Mrs R

Mrs R, a single mother with 4 children was put on furlough during lockdown and called us for support. Due to her furlough payments being below the minimum threshold for exemption, her Universal Credit claim was benefit capped which meant she was struggling to pay her rent and meet everyday expenses.

Our team worked with the family to make all the relevant applications and also referred them to the Community Investment Team for support in finding work. Food and fuel vouchers were issued by Gloucester Foodbank (who are now issuing support online) and they also received help through the COVID-19 Children's Fund who provided them with **food and fuel vouchers worth £922**. With the money saved they were able to pay for school uniforms.

Severn Trent Water Trust fund were also contacted and agreed to **write off £437** worth of water arrears and reduced their ongoing water costs. In addition to this, they also received help from the Council Tax Hardship Fund of **£150 towards their Council Tax bill**.

TENANCY

Miss B

Miss B, a young single mum with a young baby and suffering with mental health issues experienced a deterioration in her health and was unable to access her usual support services because of COVID-19 restrictions. With a limited income on Universal Credit she was struggling to buy basic essentials.

The GCH Tenancy Sustainment team provided support to help her claim Personal Independence Payments and with some assistance from her Mental Health Nurse, she was awarded enhanced daily living and standard mobility at **an extra £112 a week**. The team also applied for help via the COVID-19 Children's Fund which granted her a cot with a mattress (£100), weekly gas and electric top ups for 12 weeks (£284) and **food vouchers of £110** a fortnight for 12 weeks (£660.00) – **totalling an additional £1,044**. A cooker was also obtained from a community fund as her existing one was broken.

To improve access to her support networks, our team assisted her in applying to Homeseeker to help her move closer to family. Whilst Miss B is still having some difficulties with her health, our help and support and that of community partners like GL Communities, has been constant throughout this year and has really helped manage her debts.

The first quarter of 2020 was tough but despite the lockdown the team managed to help struggling customers access an amazing £560,000 of benefits and claimed over £51,000 in Discretionary Housing Payments for tenants.

Checking today *could change tomorrow!*

Visit our website to try out our benefit calculator at www.gch.co.uk/budget or you can call **01452 833217** or email tenancy.sustainment@gch.co.uk to arrange a telephone appointment.



Our commitment to EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GCH

2020 has been a pivotal year for reviewing the inequalities that exist across all communities. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted and increased health, social and economic inequality, as well as discrimination.

At GCH, we know that the work we do has an impact on thousands of people across our communities.

As a result, the diversity of the people we are in contact with and offer services to is wide ranging. As an organisation working with some of the most deprived communities and vulnerable residents, we have an important role in creating a fair society through the services we provide, the people we employ and the money we spend. In response we are committed to fully incorporating equality into the way we do business, making every effort to actively eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunities, tackle the stigma of social housing and ensure our staff and communities are supported to achieve their full potential.

Some of the things we are doing to achieve this are;

- Ensuring that GCH has a diverse workforce and inclusive culture where all staff and Board members understand the role they play in promoting Equality and Diversity.
- Providing an employment offer that attracts and retains staff that represent our communities.
- Having a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory attitudes and behaviours from staff, customers, partners and from any individuals within the communities within which we work.
- Ensuring we understand our customers needs and provide responsive, flexible and accessible services.
- Developing housing offers that ensure we can support a variety of aspirations and needs.
- Continuing to invest in and support community groups and hubs that provide services and facilities for our communities.



Tenants Shaping THE FUTURE OF GCH

Over the summer we asked you to share your views on how we have delivered services during the Pandemic and how you would like us to deliver services in the future. 474 customers responded to the survey and here's what they said :

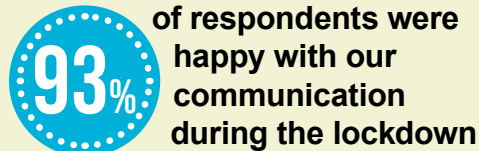
What does this mean?

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey. The customer feedback we received will be used to shape the way we deliver services in the future.

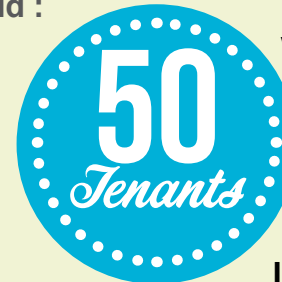
Over the next few months we will be reviewing the feedback to look at how we can improve our services to better meet your needs.

Due to the restrictions in place associated with COVID-19, our reception is currently closed and will be open for appointments only when restrictions are eased. We will continue to monitor its use so that we can plan longer term face-to-face services in line with tenant needs.

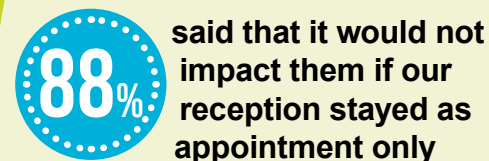
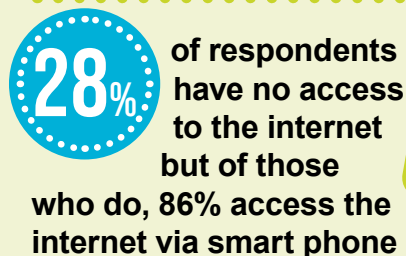
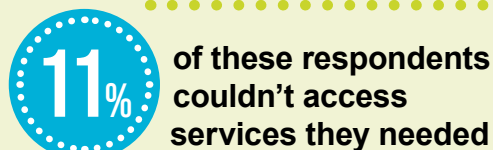
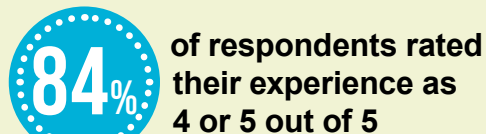
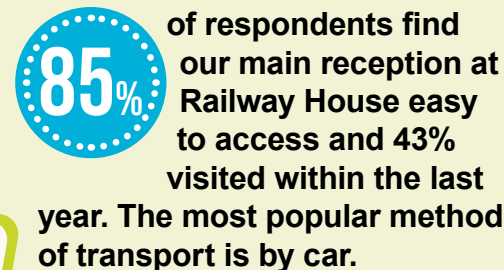
Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views and congratulations to the prize draw winner Miss Chamberlain.



397 respondents communicate with us via phone, followed by 112 by email, followed by 105 preferring to meet face-to-face



who responded would like more help to get online and our Community Investment Team are in touch



Our future commitments **TOGETHER WITH TENANTS**

I am delighted with another outstanding set of customer driven performance and service delivery outcomes over the last 12 months.

It is fantastic that our tenants are involved at all levels of decision making and challenge, sitting on our Board and Tenant Panel, reviewing and challenging our customer facing policies, service delivery and performance. Tenant Panel members are also involved in all high-level complaint reviews and decisions.

More than ever, it is vitally important that we help and support our tenants and their families. We see ourselves as a strong anchor organisation providing stability and opportunities to our tenants and residents, playing a key role in helping to empower their communities to create places where people want to live, work, and do business.

In 2019 GCH became an early adopter of the Together with Tenants Charter and plan which ensured that we embedded the learning from the Grenfell tragedy into our existing health and safety, tenant engagement and communication approaches. In November 2020 the

Government published its Social Housing White paper which built on this charter and set out seven commitments that tenants should expect from their landlord:

1. To be safe in your home.
2. To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints, safety and how it spends its money.
3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman.
4. To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord.
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. Support with taking your first step into home ownership.

The National Housing Federation have also developed a new Code of Governance for the Boards of Housing Associations which will ensure that the GCH board continues to be highly accountable to their tenants and residents.

At GCH we are proud to be at the forefront of providing high quality services and improving the standard of our homes by listening to and consulting with our tenants. We recognise that we sometimes get things wrong

and are committed to learning from complaints and customer feedback to ensure we improve our services and the quality of your homes. We are committed to investing in your homes and communities and recognise that in relation to making some of our older homes energy

Tenants are **AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO**

We have a strong track record of listening to and learning from our customers, making sure we understand their needs and helping to empower the communities they live in.

efficient this requires significant resource and will take time, but we are determined to deliver to our mission of building homes and communities where people can thrive.

Over the next 12 months and beyond, we will ensure our own Tenant agreed GCH Charter (which mirrors the Government Charter) continues to be at the forefront of everything we do by:

- Putting existing and future customers at the centre of all our decision-making considerations.
- Maintaining tenant confidence in the safety of their homes.
- Using what we know about our customers to make the right housing choices and fairer access to our services based on their housing needs, health and family circumstances.
- Providing an improved customer experience, ensuring our customer's voices remain at the heart of all our decision-making.
- Providing the required investment in our tenant's homes to the GCH Standard.
- Empowering customers, by giving them choice about when and how they use our services, and by making it easier to access information about their home.
- Improving how we communicate with customers, always ensuring we have open and honest conversations.
- Creating opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of our tenant's homes.
- Improving life chances through better education, training and job opportunities.
- Developing new homes within the City to high quality design standards which meets housing need.
- Supporting and recognising the value of everyone in our communities.
- Actively challenging negative stereotypes about social housing and our tenants.

TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT



Our social purpose has always been to provide safe and secure homes for those that cannot otherwise afford one and this will always be our focus. We will continue to work with our community partners, the City Council, the local MP, Government agencies, other Housing Associations and the Private Sector to tackle inequalities, improve health and wellbeing outcomes and build stronger, successful communities for all.



Ashley Green
Chief Executive

get involved!

THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND WITH US...

We would love to speak to you about what might suit you best. If you would like more information or to speak with our Community Investment Team about the opportunities listed below please get in touch.

- Tenant Board Members
- Tenant Panel
- Challenge and Change Reviews
- Tenant and Resident Groups
- Neighbourhood Walkabouts
- Tenant Digital Champions
- Community Events
- Junior Wardens
- Shine Employment and Training Support
- Join a Community Group



Contact us on 01452 424344 or email getinvolved@gch.co.uk



SIGN UP TODAY!

If you want to be part of the Tenant Panel and make your voice heard, simply complete the form online at:

www.gch.co.uk/tenantpanel

or contact us on:

tenantpanel@gch.co.uk

or call Tori on:

01452 833200



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

One of our team will contact you to discuss the new Tenant Panel and any other opportunities to get involved that you may be interested in.

For full details about the new Tenant Panel, visit:

www.gch.co.uk/TenantPanel

