



Annual Report for Residents

2023/24





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Welcome from our Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel members



Kathryn Hallett - Chair

As a member I have really enjoyed learning about the work of Hightown and having an input into making changes to Hightown's policies and practices. The work we have done includes deciding how to allocate money to spend on improving estates, following requests from residents. It is important to be a member of the panel so that you can hold Hightown's performance to account.



Tahlia Carter - Vice Chair

It is purposeful to be able to participate in resident involvement activities for Hightown and gives me a sense of fulfilment and also helps to shape and develop the organisation with a resident's lens. Hightown values resident involvement and recognise the importance and value that it brings to the organisation. I would highly encourage residents and owners, should they have the time, to enquire about becoming involved; it is a hugely impactful and vital role.



Maria Peel

I enjoy being a member of the RVSP as I can bring my personal experiences and contribute to the ideas of wants and requirements of other residents. I have been on the RVSP for several years and attend meetings regarding the choice of contractors, submitting tenders for various sections in the development of building and repairs. I feel I can provide advice and recommendations on how to increase awareness which might include training programmes.



Ragini Patel

I have taken part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions which have carefully been monitored along with government guidance. My involvement with various focus groups and summer events have been helpful to improve the standards of areas like anti-social behaviour, repairs and complaints processes. Together we have aimed to improve the quality of social housing in all areas.



Samantha Trafford

I feel like I have found a community. We are like a little family and I really enjoy it. I enjoy the fact they're like another group of friends to me and we can have a catch up as well as the meetings. It's nice as we have a common ground and an interest of helping our communities and building a bond between Hightown and its residents. You also get to learn a lot and have a good laugh whilst doing it!



Cara Shanks

As a member of the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel you get an insight into the hard work that Hightown do to provide safe homes for their residents, as well as having the the opportunity to make a positive impact on the wider Hightown community, ensuring that resident priorities are met and concerns are raised. It is important to engage so that resident needs are reflected in policies which then helps build better communities.



If you want to influence change and improvement of Hightown's services and meet new people, we'd love to hear from you.
Email: involve@hightownha.org.uk

About Hightown

Hightown is a charitable housing association, operating in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, aiming to help people who need support and care or who cannot afford to buy or rent a home at market values. We do this by building hundreds of much needed new homes and providing care and supported housing services for a wide range of people.

Our mission

Building homes.
Supporting people.

Our values

-  Put residents and service users first
-  Treat people with respect
-  Be cost effective
-  Don't compromise standards or safety
-  Develop passionate and committed teams

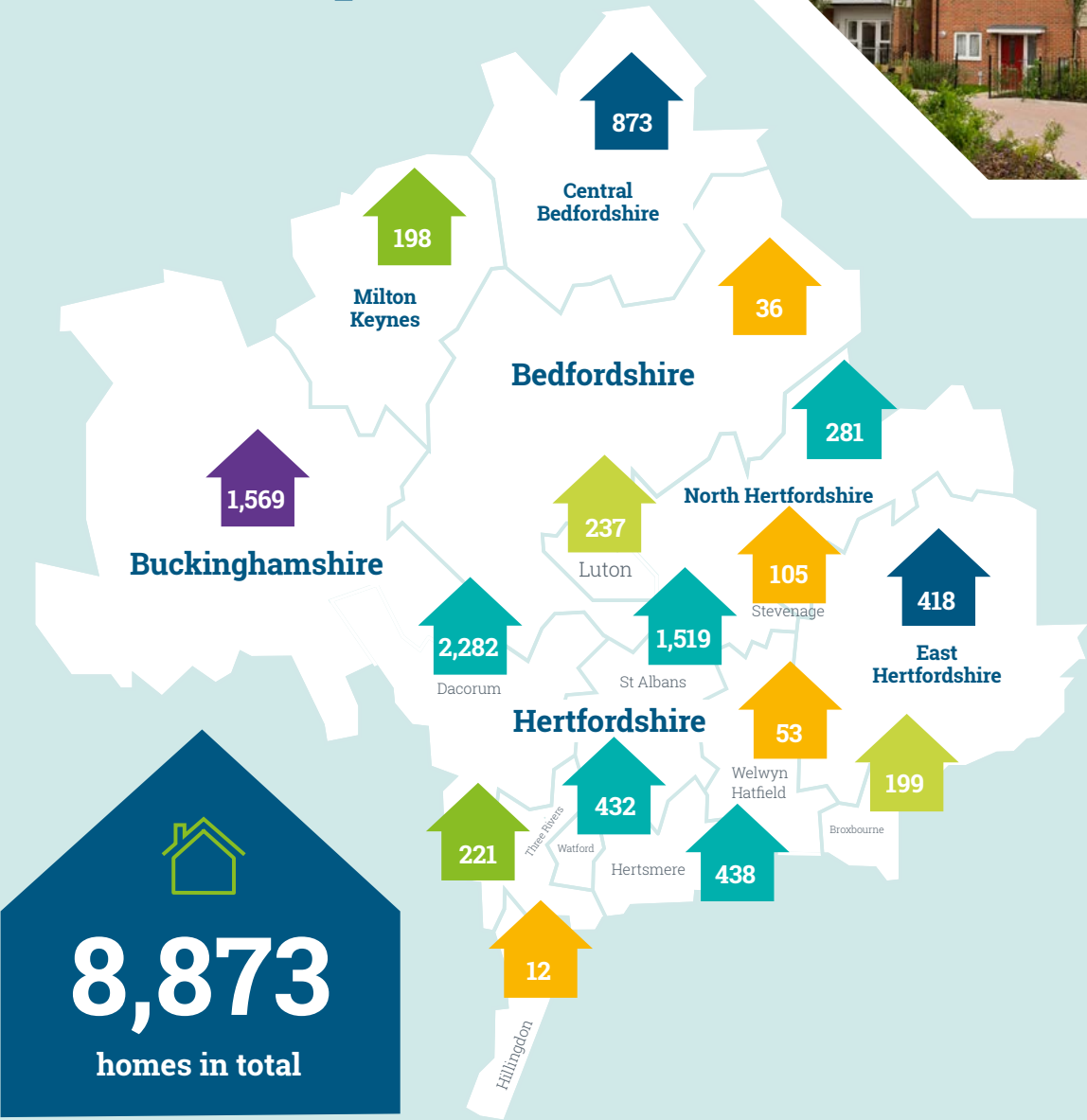
Our culture

















Hightown's culture aligns with our values and social purpose. We are supportive, inclusive and responsive and share an ambition to learn and to develop for the benefit of current and future residents and service users.

Our purpose

Hightown's aim is to provide as many homes as we can at below market rates and a wide range of housing and support for people who are vulnerable and/or disabled. Hightown's history over more than 50 years shows our continuing focus on our strong social purpose.

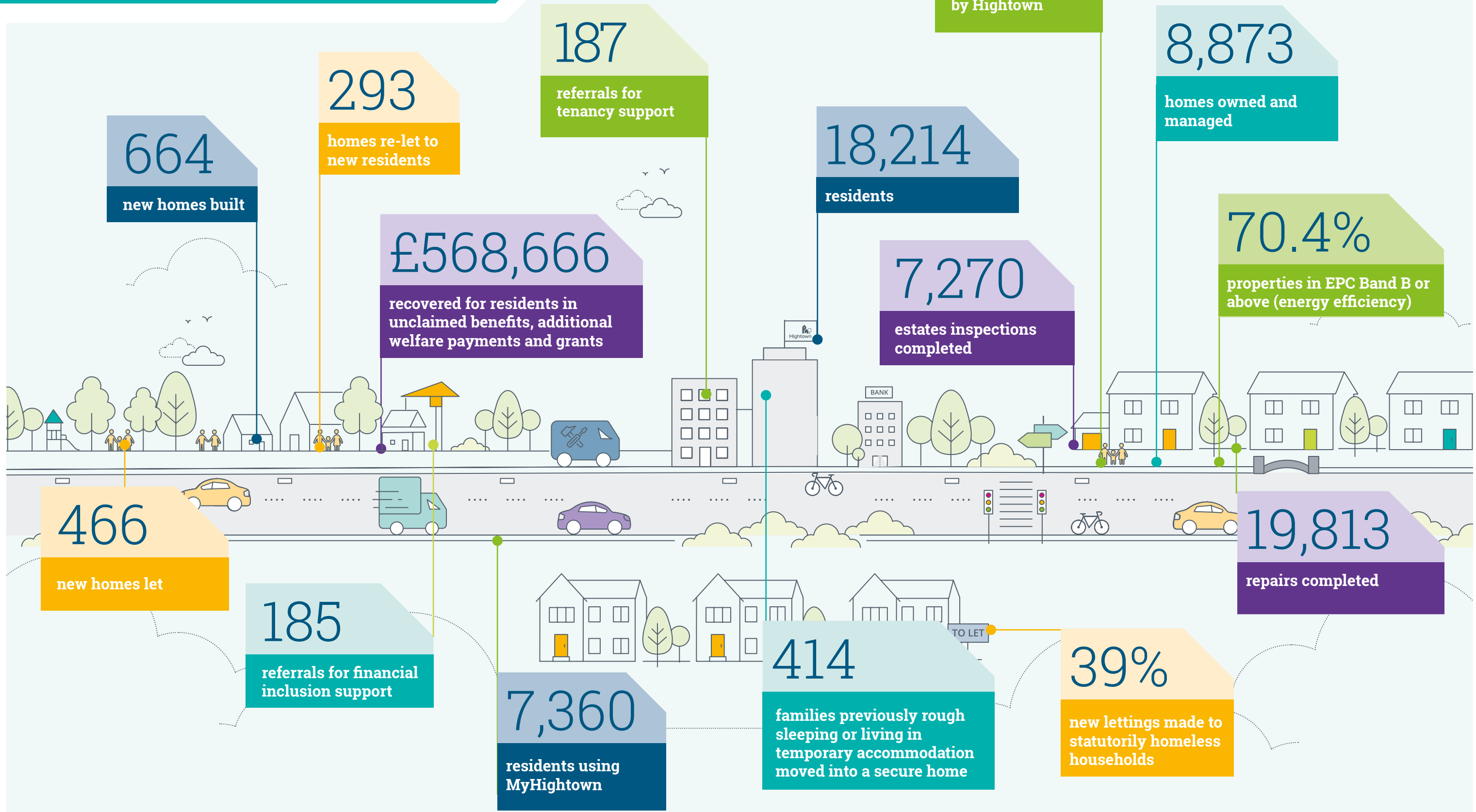
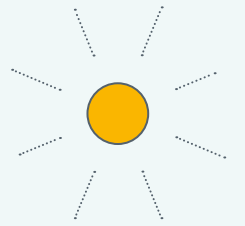
Where we operate



 Bedfordshire	36	 Luton	237
 Broxbourne	199	 Milton Keynes	198
 Buckinghamshire	1,569	 North Hertfordshire	281
 Central Bedfordshire	873	 St Albans	1,519
 Dacorum	2,282	 Stevenage	105
 East Hertfordshire	418	 Three Rivers	221
 Hertsmere	438	 Watford	432
 LB Hillingdon	12	 Welwyn Hatfield	53

2023/24

Highlights of the year



Giving you a **voice**

It's important for our residents to have a say in the services that we provide as you know what it's like to live in our homes, experiencing the services we deliver. Your review and scrutiny of our services helps us to improve and deliver a better service for everyone, which is why we take every opportunity to ask for your feedback and suggestions and provide a range of ways for you to do this.

We reviewed our Resident Involvement Strategy during the year and developed and implemented an action plan to enhance opportunities for residents to get involved in.

In 2023/24, residents were involved in:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ✓ Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel | ✓ Festive Open Day | ✓ Resident Involvement Strategy focus group |
| ✓ Complaints Scrutiny Group | ✓ Estate meet and greets with Housing Officers | ✓ Feedback on support for carers |
| ✓ Estate Champions inspections | ✓ Anti-social behaviour door knocks working in partnership with the Police | ✓ Resident and Service User networking event |
| ✓ Contractor tender and selection | ✓ Annual summer events on estates | ✓ Hightown website review focus group |
| ✓ Parking consultations | ✓ Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) action plan focus group | ✓ Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey |
| ✓ Estate surveys | | ✓ Transactional satisfaction surveys for individual service areas (such as repairs) |
| ✓ Anti-Social Behaviour Scrutiny Group | | |



Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel

Our Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel (RVSP) plays a key role in scrutinising our performance and shaping Hightown's services. The RVSP is made up of and chaired by residents and meets every three months with Hightown managers and a member of Hightown's Board to review and evaluate our services, performance and policies.

Last year, the RVSP assessed the impact and value for money of Hightown's programme of resident involvement activities, provided feedback on the results of an independent review of Hightown's anti-social behaviour service, considered and approved resident bids for estate improvements. They assisted with the drafting and publication of the Annual Report for Residents and scrutinised Hightown's performance in key service areas.

We would like to thank the RVSP for their work over the last year and for their contributions to the production of this report.



Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel and VoiceBox networking event

Our residents are our reason for being here and your views and opinions matter to us. Our Housing and Care and Supported Housing teams joined forces in September 2023 to host a networking event with our Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel and VoiceBox (Hightown's service user involvement group).

This collaboration was an excellent opportunity for the two groups to learn about each other's roles and to share ideas and experiences. Attendees enjoyed meeting each other and learned heaps from their discussions. Shetal Jagatia-Patel, Head of Housing and Abbey Oakley, Head of Care and Supported Housing, gave presentations at the networking event, highlighting the roles of their respective groups and the work the members do to help Hightown improve its services.





Looking ahead

Following a successful RVSP and Care and Supported Housing VoiceBox networking event, we will be holding two workshops with members in the coming year. We will also be recruiting to our new Resident Involvement Officer post and co-opting residents to our Operations Committee.



Giving residents a voice: Sammie's story

The Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel (RVSP) brings residents together as a collective, independent voice, encouraging two-way communication between residents and Hightown. We caught up with one of its members, Sammie, who is an active participant in the RVSP and believes the group is helping to 'create a bond between Hightown and its residents'.



Sammie joined the RVSP after becoming a Hightown resident six years ago. As someone who loves to help people in her profession as a Police Contact Enquiry Officer, it was a perfect option for Sammie to continue helping those around her in her daily life. Since joining the panel, Sammie has seen many positive outcomes and changes. One of the main changes is the opportunity to be a communicator between other residents and Hightown as she is able to understand information and processes from both sides. She says:

"I can understand as a resident how we feel about certain things going on and I

can be a voice for those who are unable to speak up, but also understand from Hightown's side so I can feedback to others. It's hard for Hightown to ensure every single resident is heard, but at least this way people feel they're being listened to as they trust me to relay this information on their behalf. It is really rewarding to know I'm helping to make a difference to someone else's worries."

In quarterly meetings, Sammie and other members of the RVSP discuss issues and decide where to spend Hightown's budget for estate improvements, ensuring everyone has a fair outcome.

Most importantly, they make sure all parties involved have a full understanding of their reasoning behind each decision made. Another aspect of the RVSP's work is making sure information for residents is accessible for all readers. From the chosen colour scheme to the amount of information on one page, Sammie said: "It's about making it fair for everyone."

Since COVID-19, the RVSP has become more flexible for members to join the quarterly meetings, as they are now hybrid with some members attending in person and some joining online. This has proved a huge benefit for Sammie, who previously struggled to attend meetings due to juggling life with a young son, a job and living a fair distance from Hightown's office in Hemel Hempstead. She said:

"That's the best thing about this now, they have helped to accommodate me in that way. The support has been great and you feel valued being a part of such a supportive group as I cannot always travel down there, I can now join the meetings online."

Sammie believes anyone who has the time should get involved as it is worth it.

“

You can see what goes on behind the scenes and you can see that even though you may be far away from the head office that you're not ignored and there is so much going on in the background that you don't even realise. You're not just becoming a member for yourself, but for everyone around you too – you are creating a community in your own right. ”



How are **we doing?**

The new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) were published by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2023. The TSMs involve an annual survey to tenants and shared owners to get feedback on satisfaction across a range of service areas. We ran the TSM survey and submitted our results to the Regulator on 30 June 2024.

66.2% of residents and **36.1%** of shared owners responded to the survey stated that they are satisfied with Hightown as a landlord.

Despite a national trend of falling satisfaction rates, Hightown has shown a small increase in overall satisfaction compared to last year's satisfaction survey for general needs residents.



The measures are split across six themes:



Overall satisfaction



Respectful and helpful engagement



Responsible neighbourhood management



Maintaining building safety



Keeping properties in good repair



Effective handling of complaints



Looking ahead

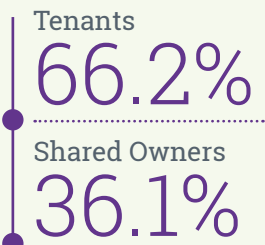
Key themes were identified from the analysis of the TSM survey results and an action plan has been developed and agreed with the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel (RVSP). The action plan will be implemented over the coming year and progress will be monitored by the RVSP and Hightown's Operations Committee.

How we are performing



You can view the results on our website:
<https://www.hightownha.org.uk/about-us/legal-and-regulatory/our-performance/>

Overall resident satisfaction



Respectful and helpful engagement



Responsible neighbourhood management



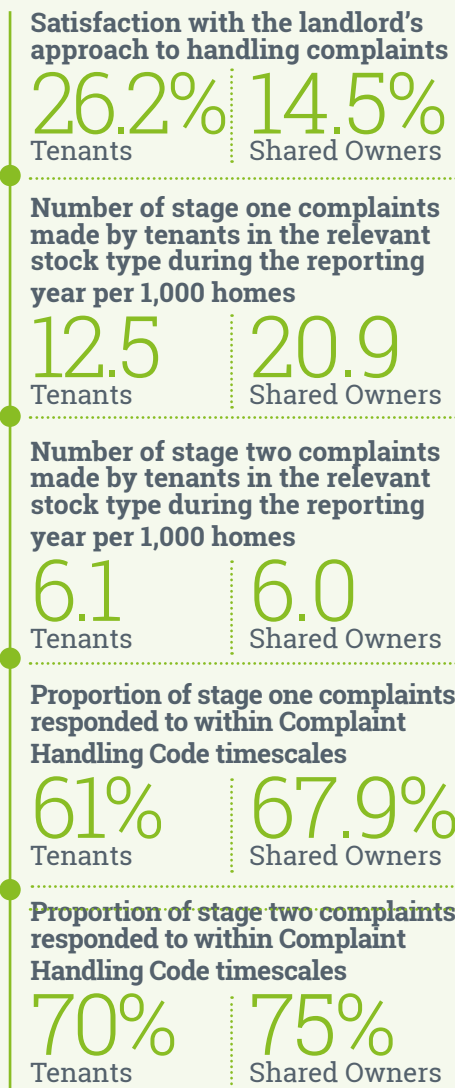
Maintaining building safety



Keeping properties in good repair



Effective handling of complaints





Complaints

We aim to provide excellent services to all of our residents and we welcome complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our services. Sometimes things go wrong, but we work hard to put them right. We have a two stage formal complaints process. If our service has fallen short of your expectations, please let us know and we will log and investigate your complaint and provide you with a written response.

We are a member of the independent Housing Ombudsman Service and assess the way we manage our complaints against the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. As a result of a Housing Ombudsman determination, Hightown reviewed our complaints policy and removed the informal early resolution step of the policy in November 2023.

You can find out more about our complaints process and read our self-assessment against the Ombudsman's code:
www.hightownha.org.uk/complimentscomplaints

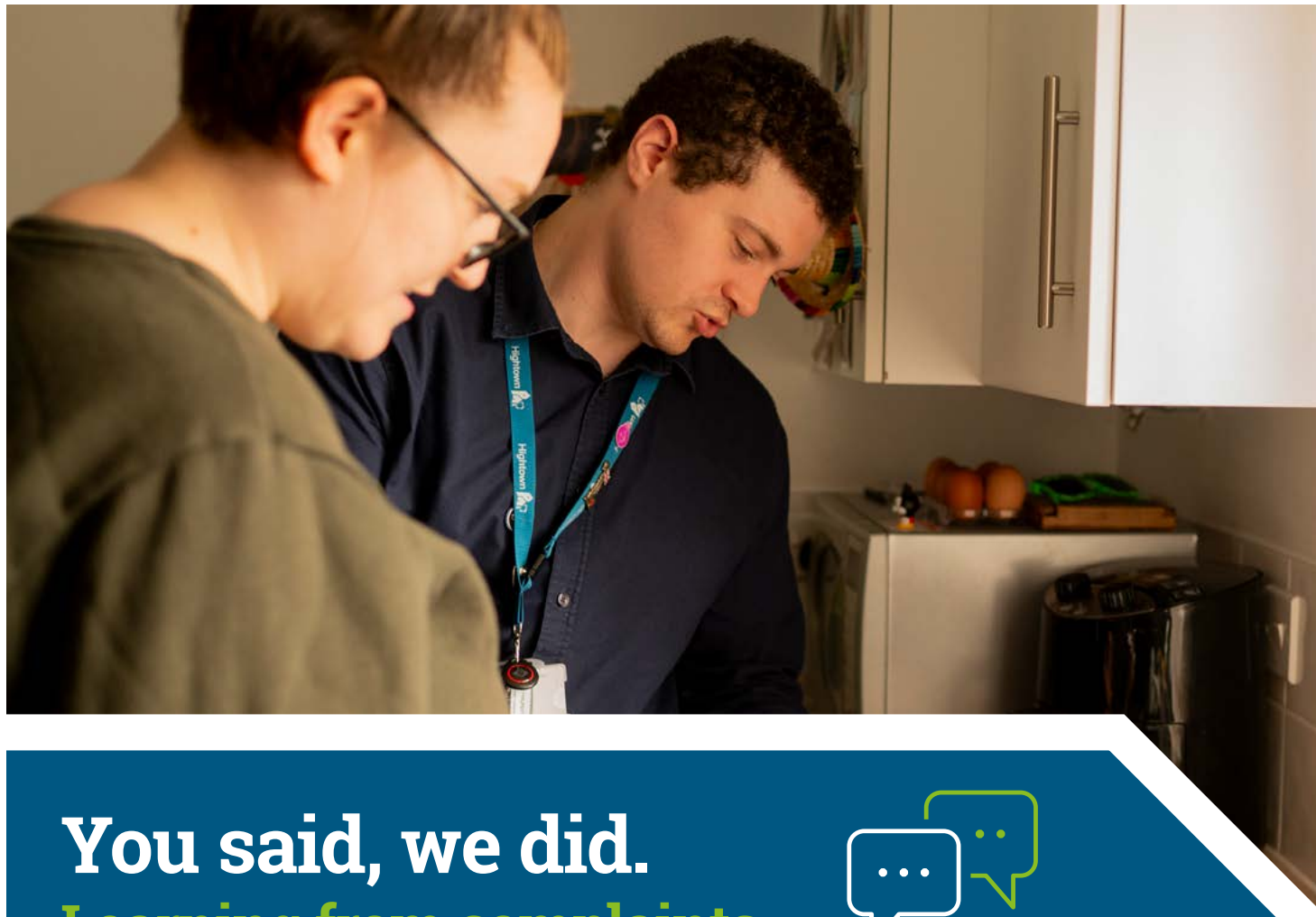


We received a total of 268 complaints for head office departments in 2023/24.

85  
complaints were resolved informally (before November 2023)

124  
complaints were logged at Formal Stage One

59  
complaints reached Formal Stage Two



You said, we did. Learning from complaints



We made several changes to our services as part of learning from complaints, including:

- ✓ Improving how we communicate and keep residents informed of progress in anti-social behaviour cases
- ✓ Implementing a process to ensure that casework or complaints are reallocated if the member of staff investigating is absent or leaves the Association
- ✓ Reviewing the void recharge process in full to ensure transparency and clarity
- ✓ Improving record keeping and processes for refund requests
- ✓ Reviewing the process for keeping residents informed about how the repairs they have reported are progressing
- ✓ Reviewing the process for escalating issues which are the responsibility of a managing agent or outside of Hightown's jurisdiction so that residents are supported with this
- ✓ Reviewing how we provide information and guidance on damp and mould to ensure it is supportive and helpful to residents
- ✓ Changing our process for the replacement of door entry phone systems to avoid delays

Complaints Scrutiny Group


Every quarter, Hightown managers and our Complaints Scrutiny Group Panel meet to review the complaints we have received and suggest any measures to prevent similar complaints in the future as well as identify and scrutinise any patterns or trends.

Here are some of the actions we have taken:

- ✓ Our staff have received additional training on Hightown's complaint handling policy and procedures
- ✓ We have increased the monitoring of monthly repairs reports and how often we contact developers to ensure residents are updated appropriately
- ✓ We will communicate full information and advice to residents in response to service queries, including offering any further actions to support them in their individual circumstances such as signposting or referrals to specialist support agencies
- ✓ We will implement a meticulous review of the tasks and actions outstanding when staff are due to leave post

We want you to feel valued, listened to and be confident that we're acting on your views. Have your say by joining the Complaints Scrutiny Group Panel if you want to:

- ✓ Scrutinise Hightown's complaints performance
- ✓ Influence change and improvement of Hightown's services
- ✓ Be involved in the development of Hightown's services
- ✓ Meet new people

 We'd love to hear from you. Please let us know by emailing involve@hightownha.org.uk



Looking ahead

The Housing Ombudsman has published a new complaint handling code, which became statutory on 1 April 2024. This new code introduces requirements for social landlords to complete an annual submission and to publish an annual report and self-assessment on complaints. We will be carrying out the self-assessment and producing the annual report for submission to the Ombudsman, which can be found on our website.

Compliments

Delivering excellent customer services is what motivates everyone at Hightown. In 2023/24, we recorded 171 compliments. The services they relate to are:

Department	Compliment
Income Recovery	90
Repairs	52
Estates	15
Housing	6
Lettings	4
Home Ownership	3
Reception	1

“

I am forever grateful for Hightown Housing to have given me the opportunity to live here, it was a blessing and it came at a time when I was having difficulties. It has been an absolute pleasure living here.

”

“

You've taken a lot of stress and pressure off my shoulders while I have been grieving and I really appreciate that, thank you.

”

“

Thank you so much for the very speedy response to my email. I returned home from work and the fence panel was fixed back to the post.

”

“

You're an absolute star, I'm so grateful for everything you've done for me, I can't thank you enough, you've really helped me.

”

Taking action against anti-social behaviour

Hightown takes anti-social behaviour (ASB) very seriously and is committed to the Government's 'Respect: ASB charter for Housing'. We understand the negative impact it has on residents and the community. We work to tackle the issues head on to stop and prevent them from happening again, so everyone can live in a community where they feel safe and respected. Our tenancy agreements set out every resident's responsibility and includes a section on ASB.

Over the last year, we have continued to work to improve our response to reports of ASB and introduced a new Anti-Social Behaviour Officer role. Our ASB Officer started in January 2024 and supports with investigation and resolution of issues. This includes working with our Housing Officers and Property Services Inspectors and working in partnership with the Police and Local Authority Community Safety teams.

Hightown continues to implement our strategy to empower residents to report nuisance behaviour and work together to find a solution right for everyone.

To report any ASB issues, please contact us using any of the below channels:



Hightown's website



Your My Hightown account



Contact your Housing Officer during office hours on 01442 292300



Leave a message out of hours on our 24-hour messaging service by calling 07768 286694. This is a message service only; a member of staff will contact you within two working days of the message being received



To find out more about our work on ASB, please visit our website www.hightownha.org.uk/my-home/my-neighbourhood/anti-social-behaviour/



Case Study

Kelly and Rory

Kelly and Rory have had a tumultuous 11 years together – one no one would wish for themselves. The couple's journey started after Rory's brother, who they had been living with, evicted them from his home. They were left devastated and had to declare themselves homeless as they had nowhere to go.

They spent 10 years living in hostels away from each other, which was not easy, but they made it work, knowing that something better was coming for them. In August 2023, they moved into their first home together – a new build, one bed flat in Luton. We were lucky enough to meet them, with their Housing Officer Pauline (pictured with Kelly and Rory) and hear their story.

When asked what they liked about their new home, Kelly replied: "It's kind of perfect for us. I love it when we live together."

Kelly said she was "lost for words" when she first viewed the property and they were both so happy and excited to be moving in. After spending so much time apart and hours looking and bidding for properties, they couldn't wait to get into their new home and start their life together.

As often happens with new builds, their development was delayed, but they note that: "Hightown always kept us informed of the progress" and that they "can't fault Hightown [staff] one little bit. Hightown has been brilliant, absolutely brilliant."

Having a secure property has made a huge difference to Kelly and Rory's lives. They commented that they were "much happier" and that their confidence had grown massively. Settling in has "been perfect" for them as they have been able to make it "more homely."



“

Kelly and Rory have been such a pleasure to work with, they are so grateful for their property and strive to keep on top of all aspects of their tenancy. Kelly is an unofficial estate champion, sending photos of issues when she is on her way to work. They are also good, caring neighbours, understanding that everyone has different needs. They are model residents!

Pauline O'Connor, Housing Officer

”

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters to us at Hightown. As a housing association, we offer a range of services to help people be the best they can be and help local communities thrive.

We aim to ensure equality of opportunity by adopting an equitable approach and working to eliminate disadvantage and unfair discrimination against people by reason of their diversity characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation), caring responsibilities or through financial exclusion.

We recognise that residents' needs differ for a variety of reasons, which can impact on their ability to access services or to participate in their community. For this reason, we believe it is important that equality considerations underpin our policies and service delivery so that we can demonstrate our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

We produced an EDI three-year plan (2023-2026) which focuses on three key areas:

- Residents and people who use our services
- Leadership
- Our staff



Equality

Offering equal rights and opportunity to everyone and protecting people from being discriminated against.



Diversity

Recognising that each person is unique, embracing and respecting people's differences, including their beliefs, abilities, preferences, backgrounds, values and identities.



Inclusion

Everyone, without exception, has the right to be included, respected and appreciated as valuable members of the community and identities.

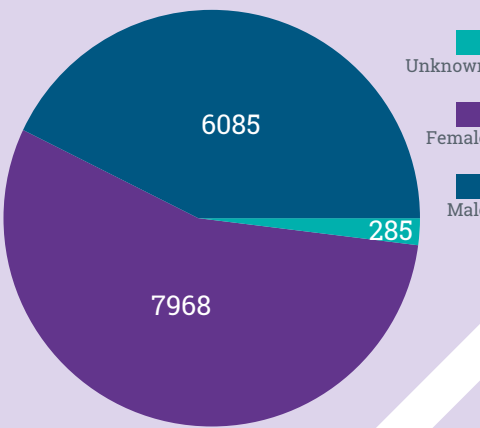
Tenant household profiles

Based on current residents – 28/03/2024

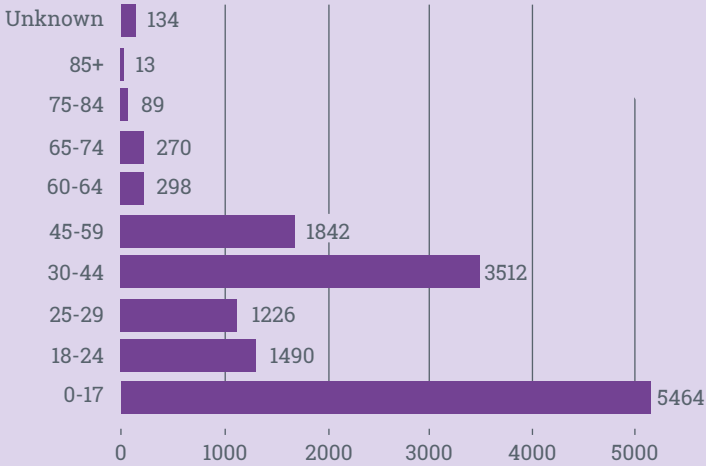
Total number of household members:

14,338

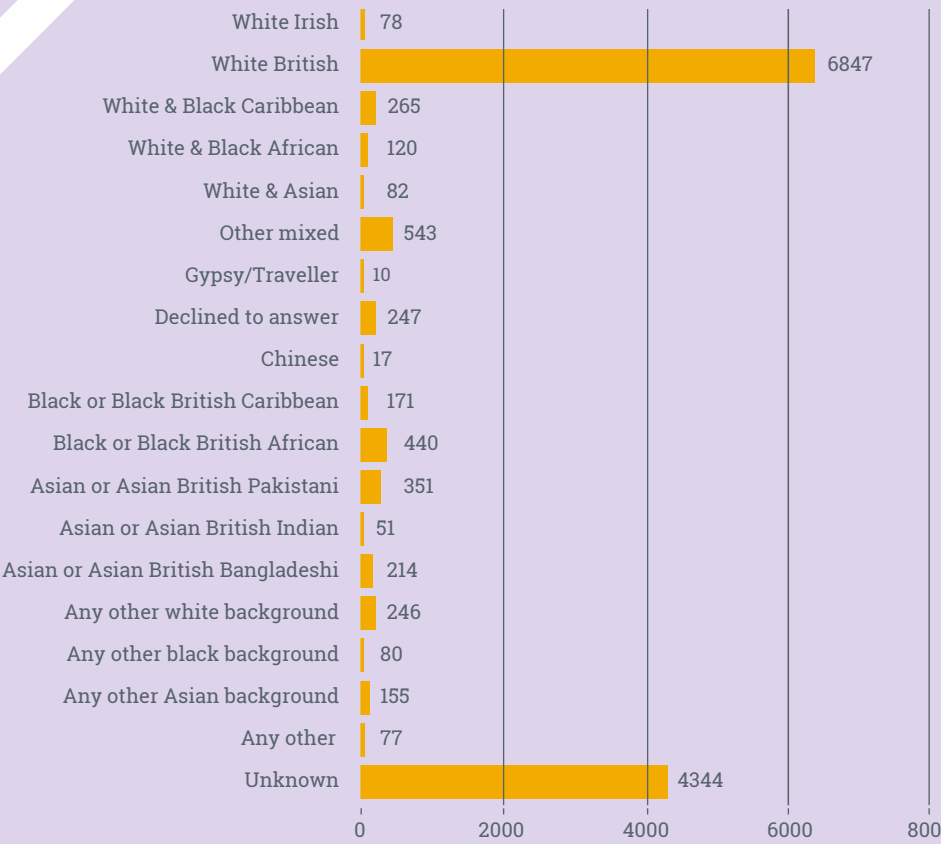
Household gender breakdown



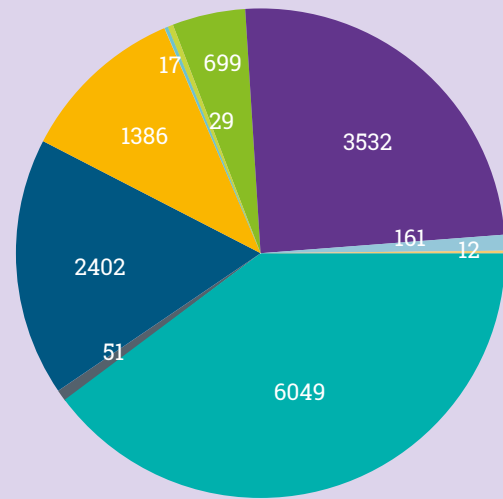
Household age group breakdown



Household ethnicity breakdown

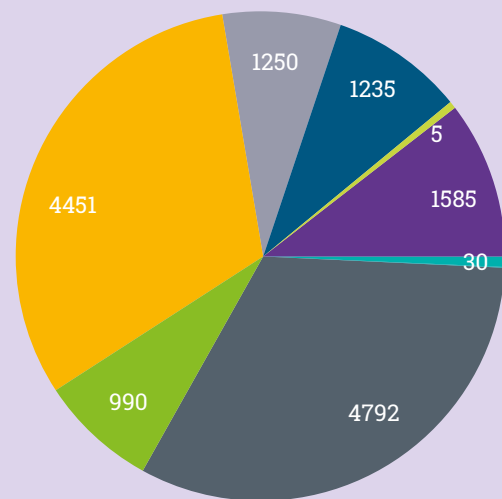


Household religion breakdown



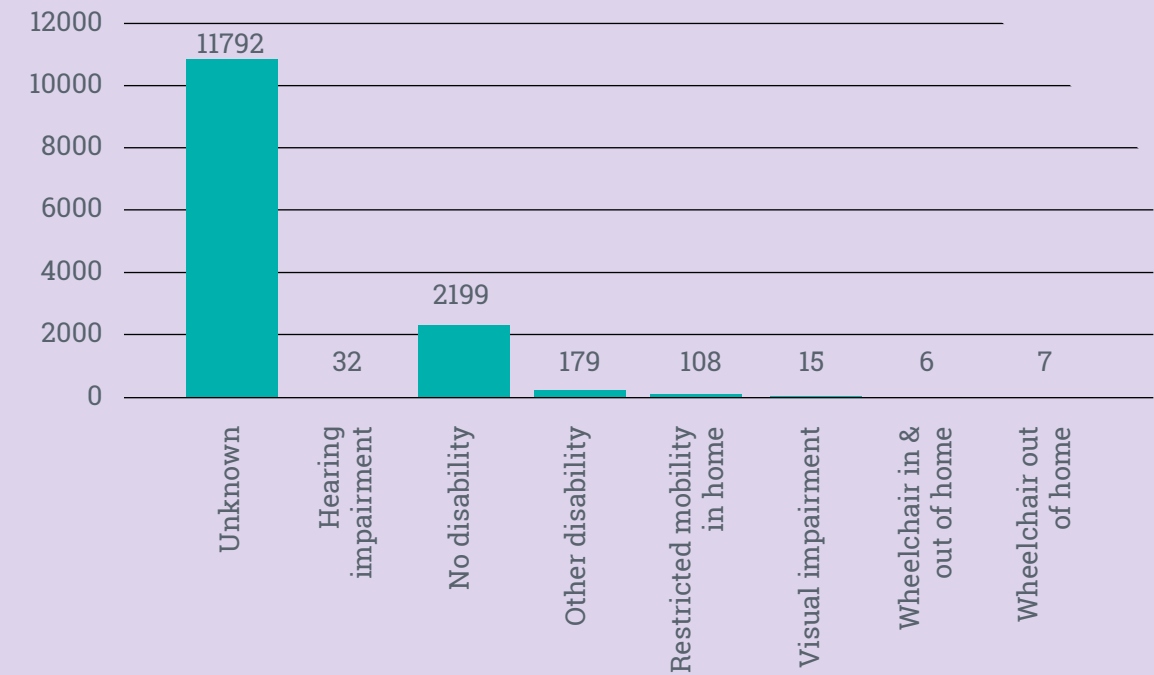
Unknown
Buddhist
Christian
Declined to answer
Hindu
Jewish
Muslim
No religion
Other religion
Sikh

Household composition breakdown

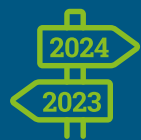
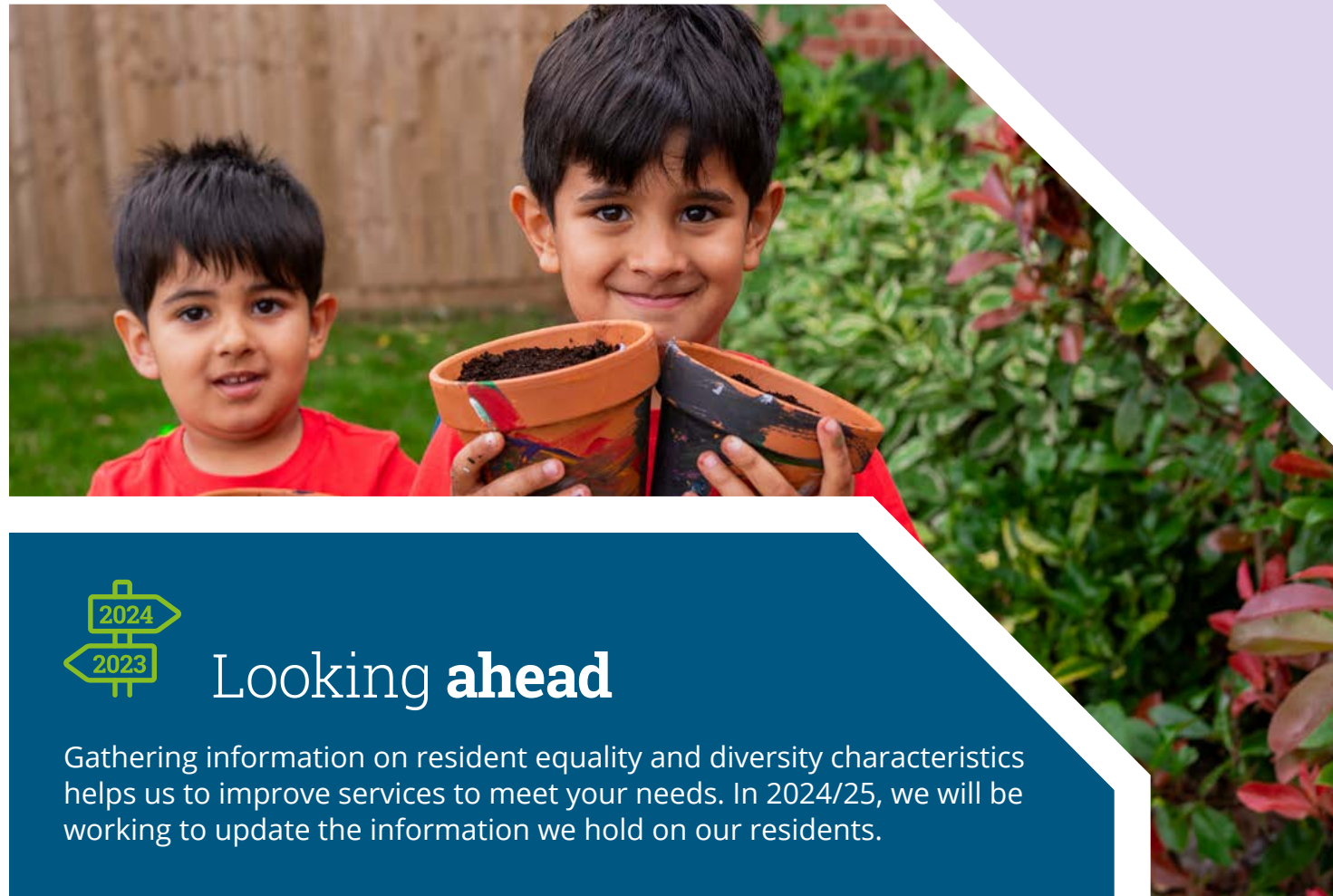
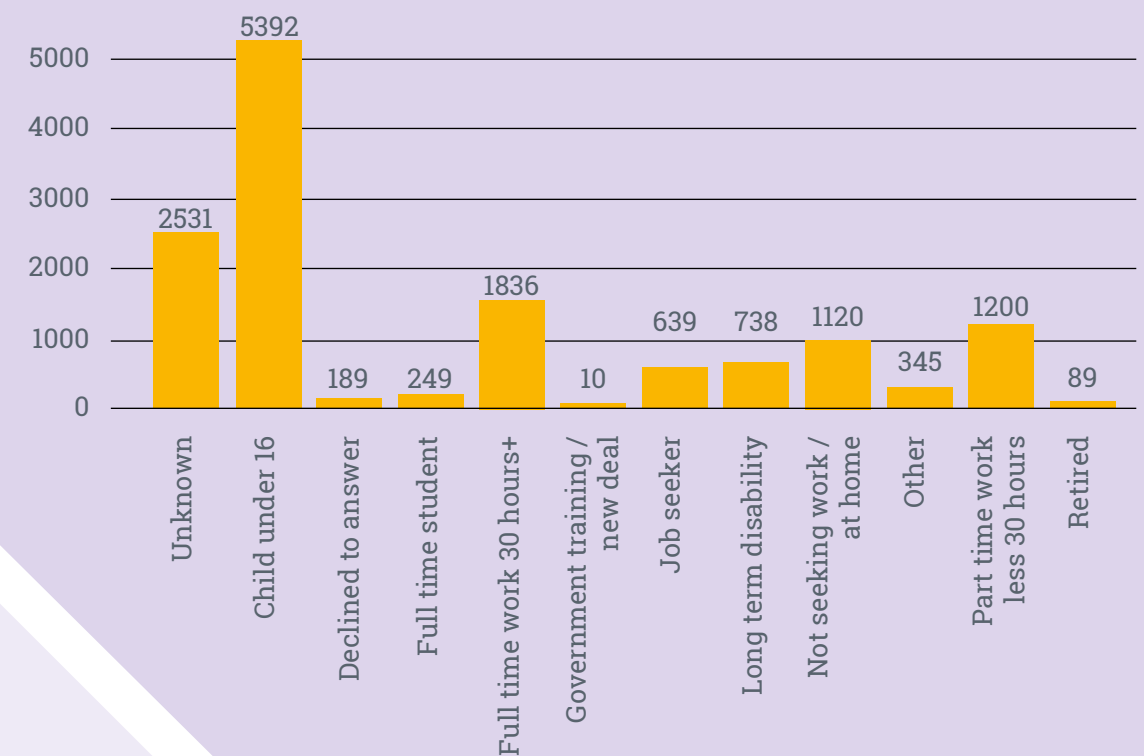


Unknown
1 adult and 1+ children
2 adult
2 adult and 1+ children
2+ adult
Single adult

Household disability breakdown



Household economic status breakdown



Looking ahead

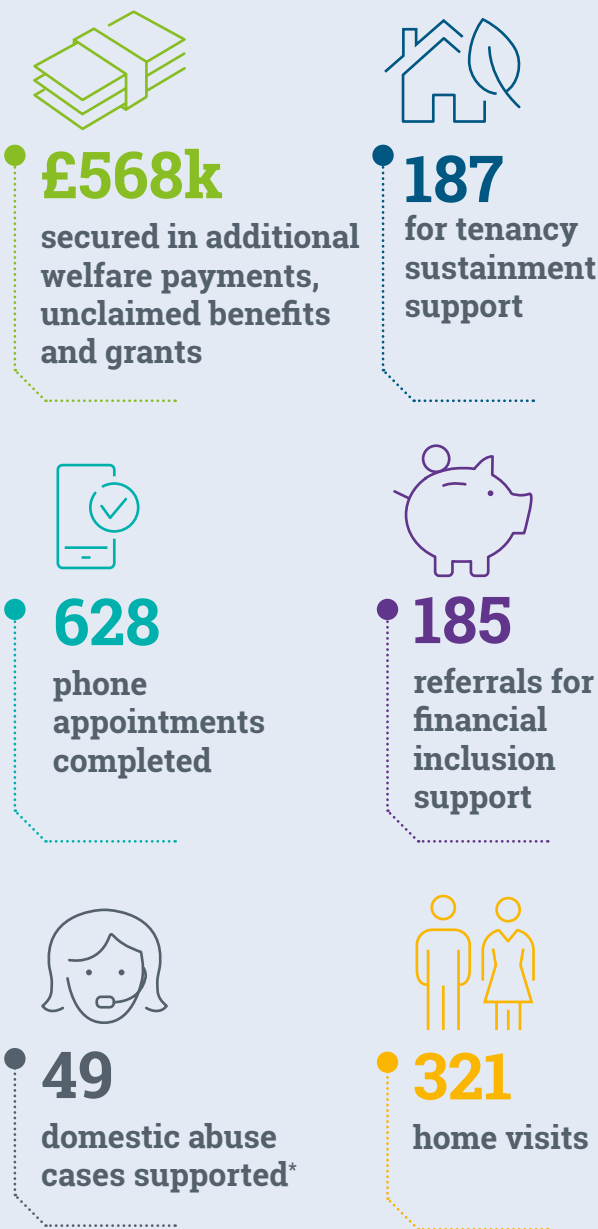
Gathering information on resident equality and diversity characteristics helps us to improve services to meet your needs. In 2024/25, we will be working to update the information we hold on our residents.

Tenancy support

The Tenancy Support team consist of two Financial Inclusion Officers and two Tenancy Sustainment Officers. This year saw the introduction of a Tenancy Support Supervisor to bring the two functions of the team closer as the scope of vulnerability and the need for support overlaps and becomes ever more complex. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Cost of Living crisis is continuing to be felt by our residents and support is now more essential than ever.

The Financial Inclusion Officers primarily deal with residents who need more financial based advice such as debts or budgeting, while the Tenancy Sustainment Officers handle cases where residents have complex needs.

The team have made huge efforts to engage with external support agencies and develop new partnerships, with the aim of sustaining more tenancies and enhancing the wellbeing of our residents. We have actively engaged with statutory services such as the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) and made vast inroads with Local Authorities to improve communication and availability of resources. The team is also keen to ensure internal partnerships with teams across Hightown are strong and to understand the journey of our residents throughout their tenancy.



Some of the fabulous work done this year has not only included excellent outcomes in terms of unclaimed benefits, which safeguard the residents' tenancy and provide a much-needed increase to their income, but have supported with:

- Provision of carpets or essential white goods
- Tackling rent arrears
- Access to mental health support
- Help residents check their benefit entitlements
- Access to localised support for marginalised communities
- Help residents with benefit applications
- Mattresses
- Assist residents to manage their benefits accounts
- Vacuum cleaners
- Provide residents with advice on maximising their income
- Support with obtaining ID
- Help residents to budget on a low income
- Home security
- Resolve benefit issues
- Home clearance
- Make referrals for additional support to agencies such as Adult and Children's Services, Mental Health and Debt agencies
- Assist in applying for benefits such as Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments, Personal Independence Payments and Pension Credit
- Challenge and appeal benefit decisions and resolve benefit issues



Tenancy Support team from left to right: Steven Kunes, Melanie Gomez, Sean Riley, Sarah-Jane Jackson, Nichola Thompson.

***If you are experiencing domestic abuse and would like support, please contact Women's Aid on 0808 2000 247. You can also find their details in the useful contacts section of this report.**

The team have sat on support panels for Domestic Abuse, seeing one of the team obtaining Domestic Abuse Champion status through a national Domestic Abuse Charity. They also take part in partnership working including Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Care Leaver, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group (ASBAG) and Safeguarding meetings to ensure that our residents are safe and advocated for.



Case Study Clive's Story

Clive* who progressed from a homeless service into general needs accommodation was greatly assisted by Hightown's Financial Inclusion team during his move. Due to Clive being a vulnerable resident, he received help with claiming benefits such as housing benefits, council tax support and any additional benefits he was entitled to.

The Financial Inclusion Officer completed a change of circumstance application to transfer Clive's housing benefit to his new home which successfully backdated to his tenancy start date, in turn clearing his arrears. Thanks to Hightown's Financial Inclusion Officer, with both this and a council tax support application being successful and backdated, Clive was able to enjoy his new home and life with his rent and council tax covered in full.

Clive's source of income was his state pension and he was guided through applying for pension credit which increased his monthly income. Although not everything always runs smoothly and there were several issues with the application, Clive's Financial Inclusion Officer supported him and worked with the Pension Credit Service to resolve these and Clive was awarded a backdate

of over £20,000 with ongoing payments activated. This has helped to turn Clive's life around and he is now able to start enjoying some security with an additional support referral to Age UK, who help him with daily tasks and regular companionship visits.

Clive's income has increased considerably since he started receiving support from the Financial Inclusion team at Hightown. He can now live comfortably and afford to purchase necessary items and can finally plan a trip to reunite with his family. At present, the Financial Inclusion Officer is continuing to support Clive to apply for disability benefits and a free TV licence.

Clive wants to thank those at Hightown who have helped him and continue to support him.

*Name has been changed to protect identity

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact your Housing Officer or Income Recovery Officer for a referral to the Tenancy Support service.



Residents' events

Every year, Hightown staff enjoy meeting residents at our summer events. The summer events last year provided an opportunity for residents to come together, share their experiences and contribute valuable feedback while taking part in a range of family-friendly, sustainability themed activities.

Over 80 residents attended events on estates across Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. They met with staff and partner agencies including the Police and Fire Services. Families and children enjoyed face painting, flowerpot painting, a smoothie bike, toddler soft play and small petting zoo. Residents also had the opportunity to learn more about sustainable living.



Hightown festive open day

We held an open day at Adeyfield Church in Hemel Hempstead in December 2023. This was an opportunity for residents to meet with and speak to staff and support agencies.

Children enjoyed meeting Santa and nativity farm animals and participated in arts and crafts activities. Staff answered residents' queries regarding their properties and tenancies, giving information and advice on tackling anti-social behaviour, repairs and parking concerns. Residents also had the opportunity to speak with local support agencies such as MIND and benefit support agencies. The event was a huge success.



Your **online** portal

Did you know?

You can use our online resident account portal any time, anywhere to:

- ☒ check your balance
- ☒ report a repair
- ☒ update your details
- ☒ pay your rent
- ☒ make a complaint



Signed up yet?

Visit: myaccount.hightownha.org.uk



Building safety

As a social landlord, we are committed to ensuring our residents' safety and welfare. Following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, the UK government took steps to enhance building regulations and fire safety. The review highlighted the need for stronger regulations, specifically around high-risk residential buildings.

We have a dedicated Building Safety team who oversee safety standards in the buildings we own and manage. Working together with tenants helps us make your homes even safer.

Hightown carries out Stock Condition Surveys every five years and it is very important that you allow access to your home for the inspection to be completed. A Stock Condition Survey is an important assessment of the condition of the main elements of the inside and outside of your home including the roof, windows, electrics, kitchen and bathroom.

The survey helps us to assess the age and condition of each building element so that we can plan for future works. It also helps to make sure that your home is safe, well maintained and meets the Decent Homes Standard. The survey does not collect information on any outstanding repairs to your home, if you need to report a repair you can do this via the MyHightown portal or by contacting our Repairs team (please see details in the useful contacts section of this report).



If you have any questions or concerns about building safety, please contact building.safety@hightownha.org.uk



Looking ahead

We will publish our proposed approach and work with residents to create a robust engagement strategy for high rise buildings (those over 18 metres tall).

Your Home

Our priority is to make sure your homes are safe, secure and well-maintained.



76.8%

repairs completed on the first visit



89.7%

overall satisfaction with the repairs service



100%

gas safety checks completed



603

fire risk assessments completed



30,432

calls to repairs



19,813

repairs completed



Major works completed 2023/24

Type	Quantity
Door replacements	341
External decorations	222
Heating and hot water replacements	167
Internal decorations (this refers to the internal communal areas primarily consisting of painting)	67
Window replacements	62
Kitchen replacements	61
Bathroom replacements	60
Electrical works upgrades	36
Communal area flooring replacements	4
Other (including roof replacements and works to paths and paving)	36

Our repairs and maintenance expenditure



Routine maintenance **£4,706,267**



Planned maintenance **£1,173,513**



Major repairs **£3,860,090**



Your neighbourhood

Working in partnership is essential in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas that Hightown operates and to keep you safe in your neighbourhood and community.

The Housing team works with a range of professionals to support our residents to keep your community safe by preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour and hate incidents. Examples of the agencies are Police and Fire Service, Mediation, Adult Social Services, Community Mental Health teams, Community Safety teams.

Last financial year, we carried out **7,270** estate inspections – an increase from last year. We invested an additional **£22,000** at 10 estates and neighbourhood upgrades following bids from residents.



You said, we did.

Resident bids for estate improvements

In 2023/24, Our Residents' Voice & Scrutiny Panel agreed several improvements to our estates, following request from residents. These include:

- ☒ Install CCV for the bin at Gadebridge Point
- ☒ Upgrade CCTV with additional cameras and systems at Hosking Court
- ☒ Security lighting on unit pathway to car park and houses at Rainbird Road
- ☒ Stepping stones in rear garden for access to read meters
- ☒ Install security lighting to car park and bin area
- ☒ Parking bay line and relocation of visitor bays
- ☒ Creation of security fencing



Looking ahead

The Regulator of Social Housing's new Consumer Standards came into force on 1 April 2024. One of the new standards, The Neighbourhood and Community Standard, sets out requirements for social landlords in relation to the safety of shared spaces, local co-operation, anti-social behaviour and hate incidents, as well as domestic abuse.

Money matters

How we spend our income, per £1

£0.09

managing your homes

£0.22

repairing your homes

£0.26

improving your home

£0.43

paying loans to build your homes



Tenancy fraud

Tenancy fraud is a serious breach of tenancy and is a criminal offence under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. Hightown is committed to taking action against all types of tenancy fraud to ensure that our homes are let to people in housing need.

Our Housing Officers carry out tenancy audits to ensure we have an accurate record of who is living in our properties.

Types of tenancy fraud include:



Unlawful subletting:

When a resident does not live in their property and rents it out to someone else without permission from Hightown



Succession fraud:

When someone who is not entitled tries to take over the tenancy following a resident's death



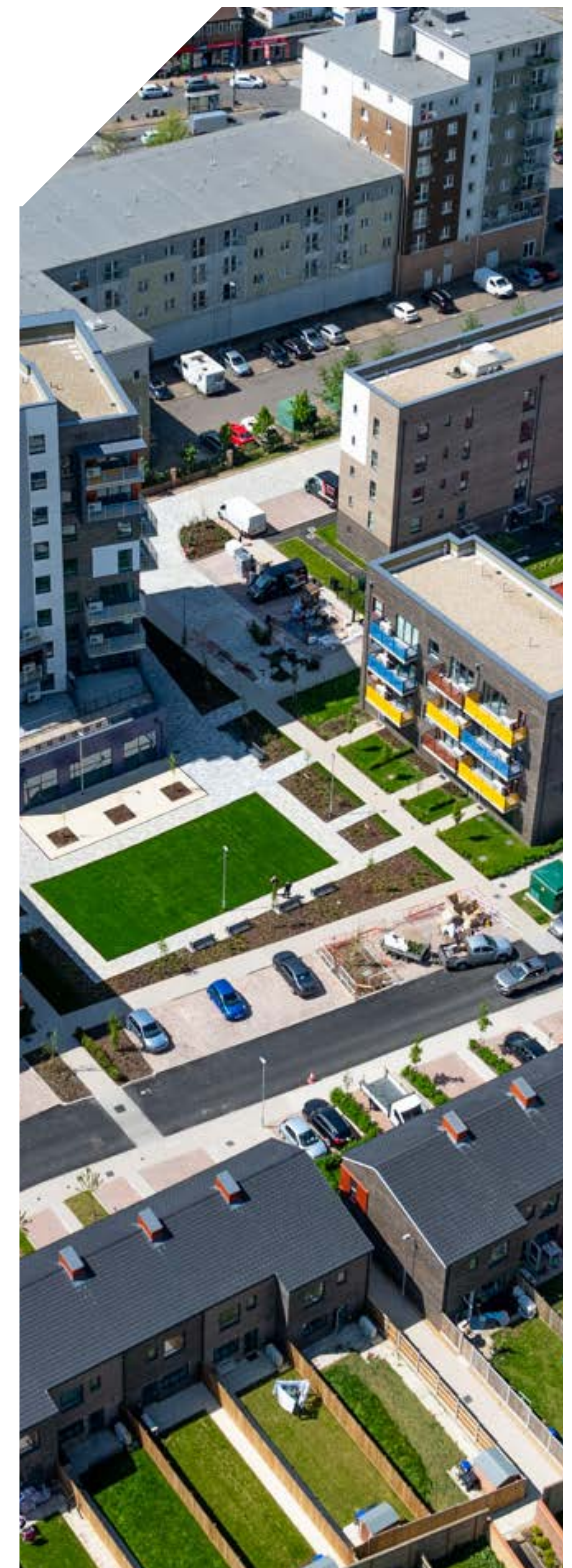
Key selling:

When a resident passes on their keys to someone who takes over their tenancy illegally for a one-off payment



Abandonment:

When a resident does not live in their property and lives elsewhere, leaving it empty



Looking ahead

We will be holding a 'Tenancy Fraud Key Amnesty' event in **October 2024**. This will encourage residents to report any concerns they have regarding these issues as well as providing any residents committing tenancy fraud an opportunity to end their tenancy and return their keys without Hightown taking legal action against them in relation to the fraud.

Our sustainability journey

Hightown has continued to invest, improve and achieve high energy efficiency ratings for our homes.

In 2023/24, we invested £381,000 in energy efficiency throughout existing Hightown properties. This included replacing 167 heating and hot water systems as well as improving the insulation of 101 properties to help lower the need for heating and in turn reduce heating costs.

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating measures the energy efficiency of a property. We have 32 properties at Band D, with 70.4% of properties at Band B and above. Plans are in place to retrofit all our

Band D properties by 2025 to improve their energy performance. As we continue to make improvements to existing homes and build new energy efficient properties this rating will continue to increase.

One of the most significant investments which Hightown has implemented has been to install new heating systems known as low carbon air source heat pumps (ASHP). Air source heat pumps work by taking heat from the air outside and increasing it to a higher temperature, this is then put into the central heating system – like existing gas central heating (National Grid).

In 2023/24, out of the 664 homes Hightown built, 30% had air source heat pumps installed.



Nick and Lucy, Hightown residents, commented on the benefits of having air source heat pumps:

“

We've been able to have the heating on for longer at a cheaper cost. We've found that having a constant temperature on instead of turning it up and down has kept it cheaper. The true benefit of air source heat pumps is that it does save you money. ”

As we continue into the next financial year, Hightown will continue to improve our energy efficiency in our properties. It is an important part of Hightown's strategy and drive to help residents reduce the cost of heating. Hightown aims to achieve net carbon emissions status by 2050.

Meet our Board members &

Executive leadership team



Bob Macnaughton
Chair

Joined Board in 2015

Chair since September 2017 Member of the Remuneration & Nominations Committee



Qadeer Kiani OBE
Chair Designate

Co-opted February 2024

Member of the Remuneration & Nominations Committee



Cordelia Pace
Vice-Chair

Joined Board in 2017

Chair of Remuneration & Nominations Committee and Member of Operations and Investment Committees

Designated Board member for Whistleblowing



Sarah Pickup CBE
Vice-Chair

Joined Board in 2017

Chair of Operations Committee and member of Risk & Audit and Remuneration & Nominations Committees



Sarah Barton

Joined Board in 2021

Chair of the Risk & Audit Committee and Member of the Remuneration & Nominations and Investment Committees



Olayinka Bolaji

Co-opted February 2024

Member of the Operations and Investment Committees



Leslie Channon

Co-opted February 2024

Member of the Operations and Risk & Audit Committees



Charmaine De Souza

Joined Board in 2021

Member of Operations and Remuneration & Nominations Committees

Board lead for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



Chris Ellmore

Joined Board in 2023

Member of the Risk & Audit Committee



Zeena Farook

Joined Board in 2023

Member of the Investment and Operations Committees



Alan Head

Joined Board in 2018

Chair of the Development Committee and member of the Risk & Audit and Remuneration & Nominations Committees



David Matthews

Joined Board in 2020

Member of the Risk & Audit Committee



David Bogle
Chief Executive

Years with Hightown: 30
Years in Role: 30
Years in Sector: 40



Andrew Royall
Director of Development

Years with Hightown: 21
Years in Role: 7
Years in Sector: 32



Gemma Richardson
Director of Care & Supported Housing – job share

Years with Hightown: 19
Years in Role: 2.5 years
Years in Sector: 19



Amy Laurie
Director of Care & Supported Housing – job share

Years with Hightown: 6 plus 4.5 years previously
Years in Role: 2.5 years
Years in Sector: 20



David Skinner
Director of Financial Services

Years with Hightown: 15
Years in Role: 15
Years in Sector: 27



Natalie Sturrock
Director of Housing

Years with Hightown: 15.5
Years in Role: 2 years
Years in Sector: 15.5



Value for money

We measure how we are performing against similar housing associations to make sure that the services we provide give you value for money.



£482.74
Housing
Management
costs per unit
(top group)



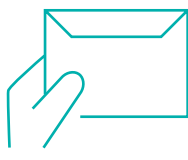
£906.14
Responsive
repairs per
property
(top group)



6.54%
Overheads as
% of turnover
(top group)



1.63%
Rent lost due to
empty homes
(general needs)
(top group)



97.88%
Rent collected
(general needs)
(upper group)

Source of the figures is Housemark



Useful contacts



Hightown resources		
Hightown main contact	01442 292300	housing.services@hightownha.org.uk
Did you know you can look up the contact details for the officers responsible for your home on MyHightown? Log in at https://myaccount.hightownha.org.uk		
To report a repair during office hours	01442 292301	maintenance.services@hightownha.org.uk or on MyHightown at https://myaccount.hightownha.org.uk
To report an emergency repair out of office hours	0845 160 0077 0203 701 3525	
To talk to your Housing Officer about anti-social behaviour	01442 292300	housing.services@hightownha.org.uk
Report nuisance neighbours (Text or phone)	07768 286694	www.hightownha.org.uk or on MyHightown at https://myaccount.hightownha.org.uk
Having difficulty paying your rent, or to set up a direct debit	01442 292 387	www.hightownha.org.uk
Pay your rent with your Allpay swipe card	0844 557 8321	www.allpayments.net or on MyHightown at https://myaccount.hightownha.org.uk
Report subletting/fraud	07768 286694	housing.services@hightownha.org.uk
To join an inspection of your estate	01442 292300	property.servicesadmin@hightownha.org.uk

Additional resources		
Reporting a gas leak	0800 111 999	housing.services@hightownha.org.uk
Housing Ombudsman	0300 111 3000	www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
My Home contents insurance	0345 450 7288	www.thistlemyhome.co.uk
The Money Advice Service	0800 138 7777	www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
National Debtline	0808 808 4000	www.nationaldebtline.co.uk
Step Change debt charity	0800 138 1111	www.stepchange.org
Turn2Us – for help accessing benefits and grants	0808 802 2000 0203 701 3525	www.turn2us.org.uk
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111	www.crimestoppers-uk.org
Police (non-emergency)	101	
Homeswapper/options to move		tenants@homeswapper.co.uk
Samaritans	116 123	www.samaritans.org
Citizens Advice Bureau	03444 111 444	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Women's Aid	0808 2000 247	www.womensaid.org.uk
Mind charity	0300 123 3393	info@mind.org.uk

More information regarding local services is available on the Hightown website.

**Building homes.
Supporting people.**



Hightown

Hightown House, Maylands Avenue
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 4XH

www.hightownha.org.uk



Hightown Housing Association Limited
Co-Operative and Community Benefit Society Registration No. 18077R
Regulator of Social Housing Registration No. L2179