herefordshire housing

>People >Homes >Communities

Total wellbeing

Annual Report - 2016/17

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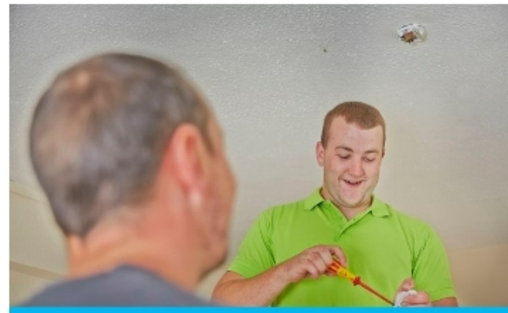
For more information
contact us on 0300 777 4321



Cover image - Jessica aged 3 at one of our summer activities

Introduction

In past Annual Reports we have told you about how we were changing, how we were evolving to enhance our services and reach out to more people across Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. This year, our Report is different.

The year to April 2016 witnessed unparalleled change. Our customers, particularly those in receipt of benefits, saw a range of changes including the continuing roll out of Universal Credit, the ongoing impact of changes to housing benefit levels, the benefit cap and a range of other changes to Council Tax and disability benefits. This change will continue into 2017 and beyond. With ongoing austerity, alongside the wider reductions in public spending, times are hard for the people we serve. For the sector, the impact of the 1% rent reductions for four years, together with the forthcoming cap on rents at Local Housing Allowance levels means our income will come under significant pressure.

At the same time, the need for our services, and in particular for good quality, truly affordable housing of whatever tenure continues to increase.

This is a challenge and everyone at the Herefordshire Housing Group is unwavering in our efforts to provide more and better services.

In 2016, we rose to this challenge. Not just at providing good quality housing in Herefordshire, we also developed our approach to Total Wellbeing across Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. Through our sister organisation, the Independence Trust, we sustained our position as a leading national provider of Telecare with 30,000 customers nationally and strengthened our delivery of a range of wellbeing services in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. We have worked with Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to introduce new, cost effective services. Notable was the innovative Rapid Response service; the evidence is that it saves the West Midlands Ambulance Service more than £350,000 each year.

Our core remains housing. We have worked hard to make sure not just that our customers get the best service possible but that we also focus on Value for Money. The board is relentless in concentrating on how we can make the most of our assets for the benefit of our communities.

I reported to you last year how we had stretched our finances to build more homes. This has allowed our development programme to grow and if you ever drive in to Hereford along the A465 from Abergavenny, you will have seen the transformation we have delivered at The Oval, Hereford. We have worked closely with the community to redevelop 198 ugly and unpopular concrete walk-up flats with 215 predominantly houses with gardens. Pursuing funding opportunities will continue next year to raise even more money to build.

So this Annual Report is different because the impact of the change around us is so great, we need to re-evaluate the part we play. We have started a review of our strategic direction and as Chair, I am determined that we will strengthen our commitment to housing and health in the four counties.

We have a talented board and range of colleagues who will continue to challenge ourselves to do even more. We will continue to deliver for our customers, now and in the future •

Ruth Cooke, Chair

People

Understanding our customers and their needs

There have been many changes by government, which have impacted on our customers during the past 12 months. We are committed to knowing and understanding our customers to ensure we can meet their needs and deliver the right services and level of support.

There have been reductions, freezes and changes to many benefits and services, while at the same time increases to the cost of living and only a fractional increase in Herefordshire wages, **just 11% in 13 years.** Cuts and freezes to benefits including job seekers allowance, child tax credits and working tax credits have led to many of our tenants facing issues with affordability. The children's society estimates that families are now **losing 12%** from their benefits compared to last year and the losses for families in receipt of the 'disabled child' sum have been up to **£3140!** The combination of cuts to social care budgets and a growing demand for services is challenging, we've been working to understand our customers' needs through these changes, responding with the services and support required.

Initiatives like our Customer First programme enable us to be out and about more, visiting customers in their homes, understanding their circumstances and how we can better support them. We've made changes to the way we allocate homes and have introduced services like Job Club. Working closely with our customers and understanding their needs has enabled us to reduce rent arears to a record low and increase the income of some of our tenants.

Check the infographic on page 8 to see how we've done •

People

Employment survey results,

547 households were surveyed

% of those of working age

40.9% Employed

14.6% Seeking work

We've worked with customers to reduce **£251,500** worth of arrears

% of rent arrears just **0.98%**

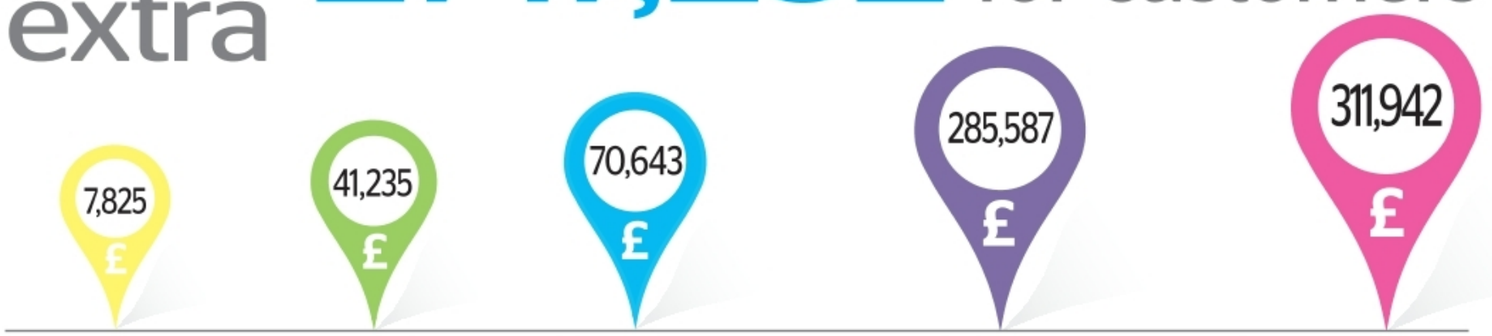
33 Herefordshire households downsized as a result of Welfare Reform

33 customers switched to Universal Credit

Male Domestic Abuse Service - referrals are increasing monthly averaging **3** a month

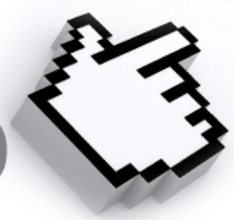
Our financial inclusion Officers supported **1026** customers

Sourced an extra **£717,232** of financial gains for customers



Grants	Council Tax Benefit	Discretionary Housing Payments	Employment Support Allowance/ Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support/Tax credits/Pension Credit/Disability benefits	Housing Benefit

Job Club



11% increase in users of HHL internet services

Supported **779** customers to get back into work

Making the Headlines

Headlines

Home ownership in England has fallen to its lowest level in 30 years as the growing gap between earnings and property prices has created a housing crisis - **The Guardian**

Herefordshire has the 3rd highest private rental prices in the West Midlands - **Private rental market statistics Valuation Office Agency 2014**

Herefordshire Council says 18,000 new homes are needed in the county by 2031 - of which 1,000 could be affordable schemes built by Herefordshire Housing - **BBC Hereford & Worcester**

One third of England's privately rented homes are classed as non-decent, meaning they fall below the basic standard of health, safety and habitability set by the government - **Sky News** •

Here for Herefordshire

We know housing's becoming an ever increasing target of government austerity. There's no longer grants, meaning that the building of social housing has become increasingly difficult, add to this demand outstripping supply, Herefordshire house prices **rising by 105% in the past 13 years** and the forecast is beginning to look increasingly cloudy for customers wanting to buy or rent homes! Here at Herefordshire Housing we've responded by growing our development programme, we're **committed to social and affordable housing for the people of Herefordshire** •

Building homes and communities

for Herefordshire

Here's what we've achieved in the last 12 months...

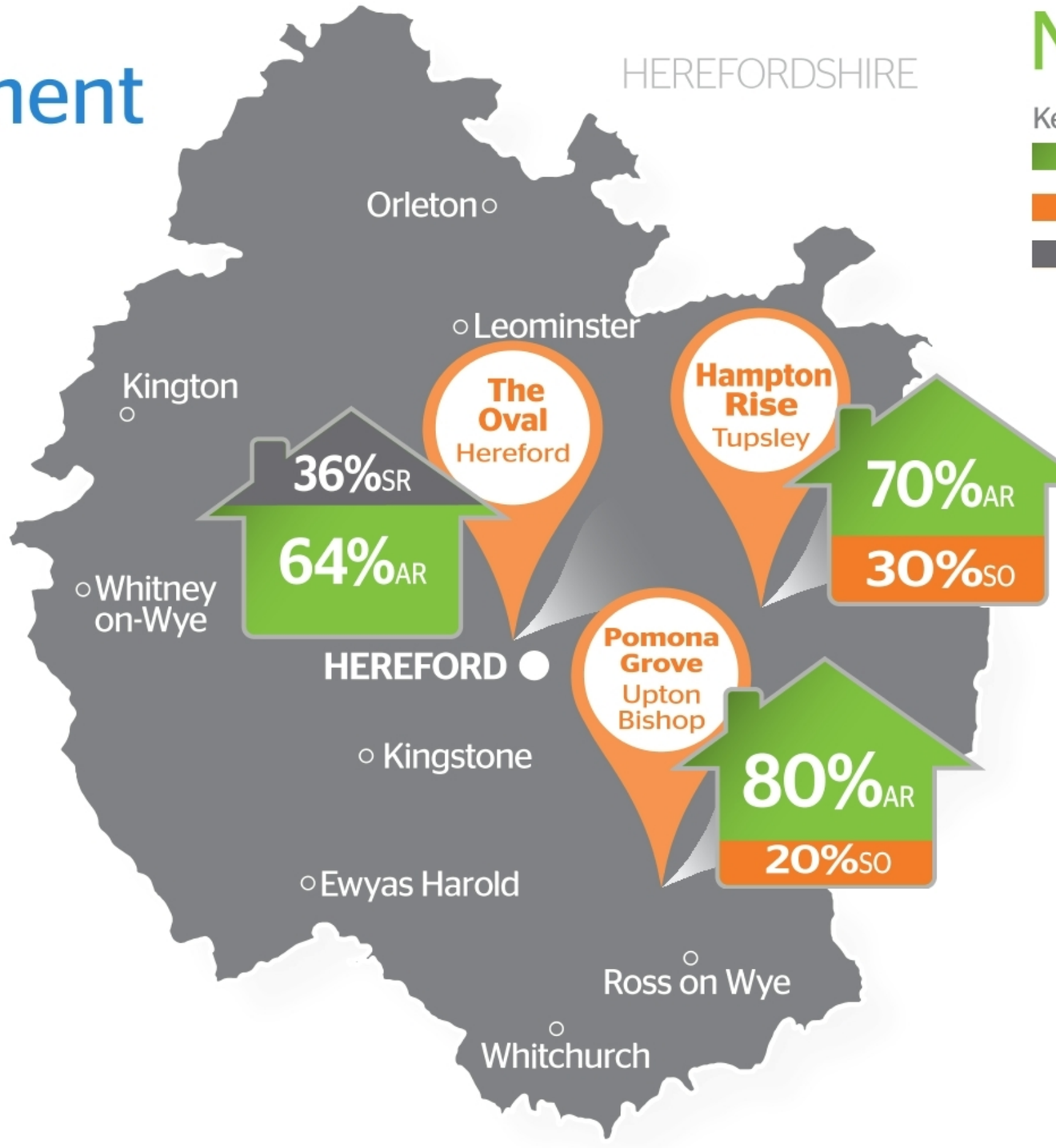
Improvement

We spent over £10 million in maintaining our homes

100% of homes met the HHL Decent Homes Standard Plus

91.99% of customers satisfied with improvements service

New Build



Key

- AR - Affordable Rent
- SO - Shared Ownership
- SR - Social Rent

Here's more developments for the future 2016/2017

- **55** The Oval - Hereford
- **10** Pomona Grove - Upton Bishop
- **10** Hampton Rise - Hereford

We work hard to achieve value for money, which has meant we could support our communities;

Void property turnaround time

16.4 days

98% of emergency, urgent and routine repairs completed in target time

91% RENT of customers were satisfied with the process of renting a property from HHL

88% of customers were satisfied with how Herefordshire Housing dealt with repairs and maintenance

In Herefordshire Rural North residents were asked to rate their neighbourhood;

SILVER TIDYNESS

GOLD SAFETY

SILVER CLEANLINESS

£100,000 Awarded by us to fund the Newton Farm skate park.

£15,000 awarded to fund community groups and organistations,

£5,000 for Madley Youth group to Improve play facilities,

£250 to Knit & Natter, a knitting and social group who wanted to knit for the British Poppy Appeal and needed to purchase wool

17 Emergency grants approved - Including **£398.16** for the creation of a hard surfaced area for a guide dog

EVERY £1 we invested generated **£4.17** in social value.

WE INVESTED £10,322,561

Invested

£3million in energy efficiency works

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

groups and organisations benefited from the community grant fund.

How we're doing

Herefordshire Housing are proud to offer customers the total wellbeing package, from a decent home through to mental health services and community grants.

We're a non profit organisation with the customer at the heart of everything we do. To enable us to deliver value for money along with exceptional customer service we need to challenge what we do and how we do it. From delivering residents information on their tenancy obligations to maintaining properties, we're constantly evaluating what we do. Part of this comes through customer satisfaction data provided on our behalf by a company called Voluntas. This data allows us to monitor and develop our organisation to become the best it can be.

Another part of service evaluation is provided by our Customer Challenge Panel, an independent group made up of residents of all ages and backgrounds. They scrutanise our services and help us to do a better job. This year our team of **7 members** have worked with us on; welfare reforms, empty properties and working on putting the customer first •

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Since July 2015.

Some of what we've improved as a result of what you've told us/ customer feedback

> Responding more efficiently to queries and making sure we keep customers up to date
> Recording tenants mobility needs and health issues that we can support/work around
> Customer comments are feeding directly into our regular colleague 1-1 meetings
> Taking steps to remove the backlog of programmed repair work to bring down waiting times

How we're doing

We asked

547

customers on a scale of **0-10** how satisfied they were with the following; The percentage of **7-10** scores were:

87.6%
Said they were satisfied with us

86.8%
Said they'd want to continue renting with us

83.7%
Said they were satisfied with their neighborhoods

81.4%
Said they were satisfied with their homes

We pride ourselves on moving residents in efficiently and taking care of them while they're with us

Of **84** customers surveyed while moving in,

91% were satisfied with the process.

When things go wrong (need repairs)

88% were satisfied.

82% said they were satisfied with their new home when they move in.

96.7% felt our colleagues were courteous and knowledgeable.

herefordshire housing

Stay informed. Follow us on: ABC123

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> Registered Charity Number 1105907 > Registered with the Homes and Communities Agency Number LH4353 > Registered in England Number 4221567

business for neighbourhoods

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE