



Livingin

Annual Report
to Tenants
April 2019 -
March 2020

Welcome

Welcome to the 2019/20 Annual Report to Tenants. This year's report reflects feedback from you, our tenants, and notably contains the local offers you told us were important to you. The report also sets out a clear picture of how we have performed, again with a focus on those services that matter most to you.



Colin Steel
Chief Executive

We have worked hand-in-hand with you over the year to improve services and to deliver Plan A, our strategy for further improvement. In particular, I am pleased to report back to you how your valued feedback has helped us to shape and improve services. Some snapshots of what you told us and how we responded are woven across the report in the **'We Listened, We Acted'** sections and demonstrate how valued your views are. During the year we welcomed Sheila Rooney, a Livin tenant onto our Board and Sheila has hit the ground running, directly helping us to shape and improve our services through tenant insight.

Throughout the report you will see many examples of the great work we have done in the year and I am proud of what we have achieved. We invested significantly in improving your homes, spending £9.7million on repairs, £4.6million on home improvements and £18.1million on building and buying new homes and the compliments and satisfaction levels as a result of this investment provide assurance that we are continuing to improve homes, communities and lives.

Importantly, and in response to a loud, clear and consistent message from you, our most vulnerable tenants were able to access improved housing support from our new specialised team enabling them to continue to live independently in their homes. We were able to help tenants in need of financial support with extra benefits and grants, we expanded our Livin Futures employability service and supported many tenants into jobs and we made in-roads into improving many of our open spaces.

As we look to next year we have exciting plans to develop our approach to making homes more energy efficient and to remodel many properties into future-proofed, modern and efficient homes. Next year will also see us further improving our digital services and embarking on our Planet A journey as we aim to reduce carbon consumption across our services.

As we enter what is going to be a challenging year due to Covid-19 we will strive to continue to deliver our vital services whilst also providing much needed personalised financial, employment and tenancy support to those who need it. We look forward to working with you as we continue our commitment to listen and act upon your feedback.

Performance



Performance was equal to, or higher than our target



Performance was lower than our target



Performance improved on the previous year



Performance was unchanged

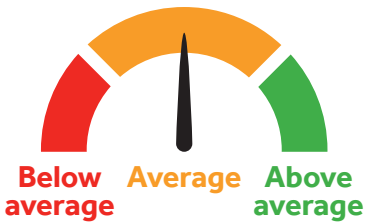


Performance was worse than the previous year



Areas of focus agreed locally with tenants

How we compare to others



*Comparisons are made with other similar housing providers for the year 2019/20.



Delivering a brilliant customer experience

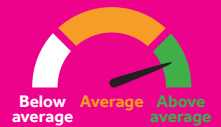
We aim to provide you with great customer service at all times. We do this by: making it as easy as possible for you to contact us; getting to know you, listening to your views and concerns and in response providing advice, support and services that meet your individual circumstances.

To improve our customer service we focused during the year on improving the information we have available at the first point of contact so we fully understand your circumstances and can deal with your issue in the best possible way. This has played a big part in the improvements we have made in overall customer satisfaction with services as shown in the performance information below, and is part of our ethos of a strong relationship and trust between us and our tenants.



92%

overall satisfaction with our services



97%

Satisfaction with the way complaints were handled



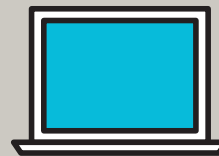
21%

of all repairs reported using our Livin app



81%

of queries dealt with at first point of contact



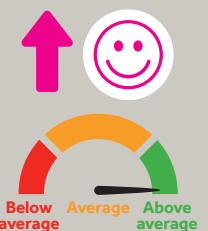
58%

of transactions done digitally



100%

Tenants satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon





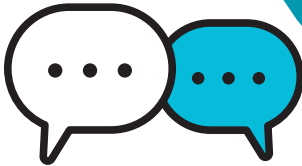
291
Complaints



215,000
Contacts



312
Compliments



277
Complaints dealt
with within 4 days



14
Formal
complaints

We listened to the views of over 6,000 tenants on a range of issues and the number of tenants volunteering to help shape our services increased from 63 to 130. In total you helped us to deliver 45 meaningful service improvements based on your voice. These included:

- ✓ being clearer on timescales for dealing with your complaints
- ✓ shaping our Plan A business strategy to ensure a focus on the importance of tenancy support
- ✓ changing repairs and maintenance policies to ensure clearer information and more convenient service



Local offer

We will:

Value what you have to say to us and we will always be polite to you. We will give you clear information about what to do if you are not happy with our services, and use your feedback to make improvements.

AND

We will always try to answer queries at the first point of contact, and when this is not possible, we will let you know who will be dealing with your query and provide updates until the query is resolved.

We listened

You said you would like to be able to carry out transactions easily on our website and to find your way around the site easier. You also said you would like it to work better on a mobile device.

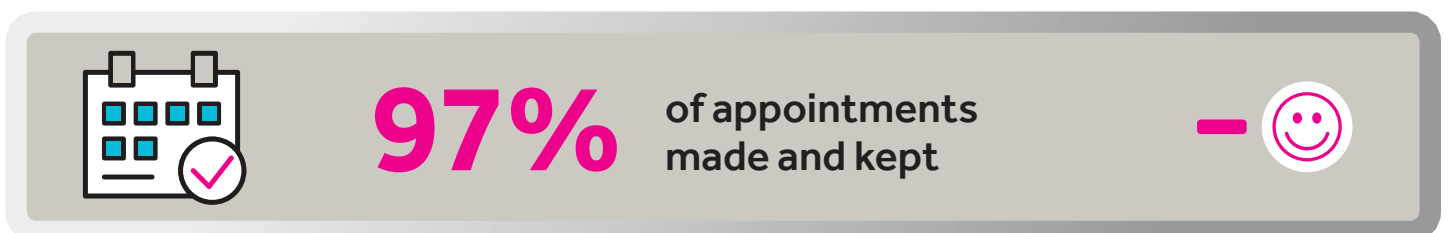
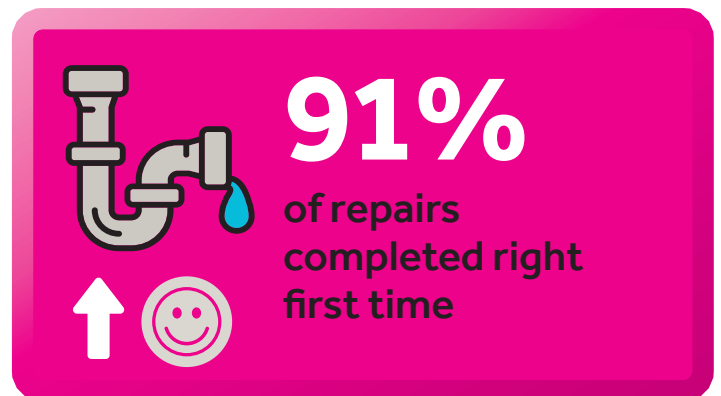
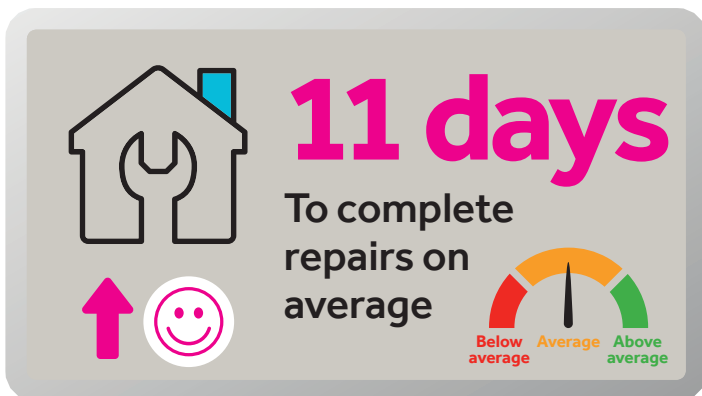
We acted

We launched our new website in December and improved these areas: paying rent, reporting a repair and finding a home, which made it easier to complete these tasks and access on your mobile device. We quickly saw a 20% increase in the number of visitors to the site and it is now easier to find what you are looking for and to do things like report a repair.

Improving Your Home

We aim to provide you with safe, warm, high-quality homes that meet you and your families' current and future needs and aspirations. We do this by: providing an easy to access responsive repairs service that is available 24/7; offering you choices when we are making improvements to your home such as kitchens and bathrooms; carrying out vital routine health and safety compliance checks on important items such as your heating systems; and through adapting homes to enable you to live independently.

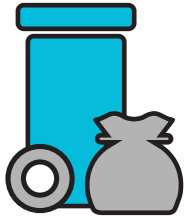
During the year we focused on improving the repairs service and getting repairs done right first time as we know convenience is important. We also started our journey to make our homes more energy efficient and less carbon hungry as part of our long-term plan to achieve carbon zero. You will see from the performance information below that we made a good start on this during the year.





100%

of homes met the latest energy efficiency target SAP62



87.6%

of waste recycled



100%

of properties fitted with smoke detectors



12,753

Safety checks carried out



78

Thermal efficiency measures delivered



3.5

Repairs per property carried out (average)



£1,017

Invested in repairs per property (average)



493

Homes improved



£850

Invested in home improvements per property (average)



Local offer

We will:

Provide you with safe, warm, high-quality and energy efficient homes.

We listened

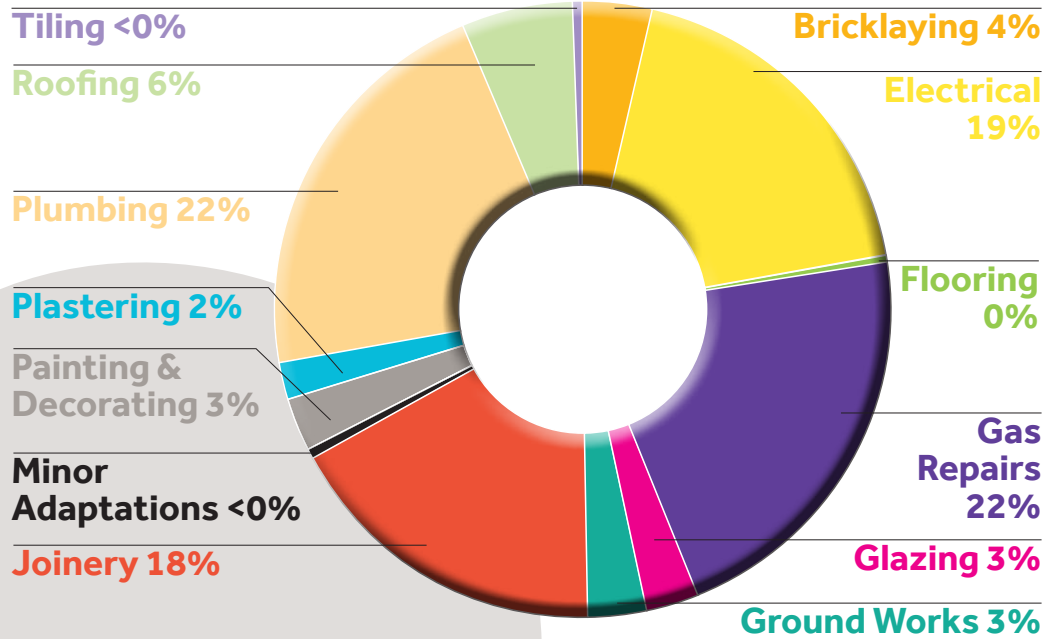
You said you wanted to continue to live independently when your current home was no longer suitable for your needs due to disability or health.

We acted

We provided 36 new homes in Ferryhill and Newton Aycliffe with disabled access and made them available to over 55's or to those in medical need.

This chart shows the type of repairs completed in 2019/20

Bricklaying	1122
Electrical	5573
Flooring	116
Gas Repairs	6468
Glazing	798
Ground Works	867
Joinery	5189
Minor Adaptations	66
Painting & Decorating	829
Plastering	474
Plumbing	6371
Roofing	1662
Tiling	70
Grand Total	29,605

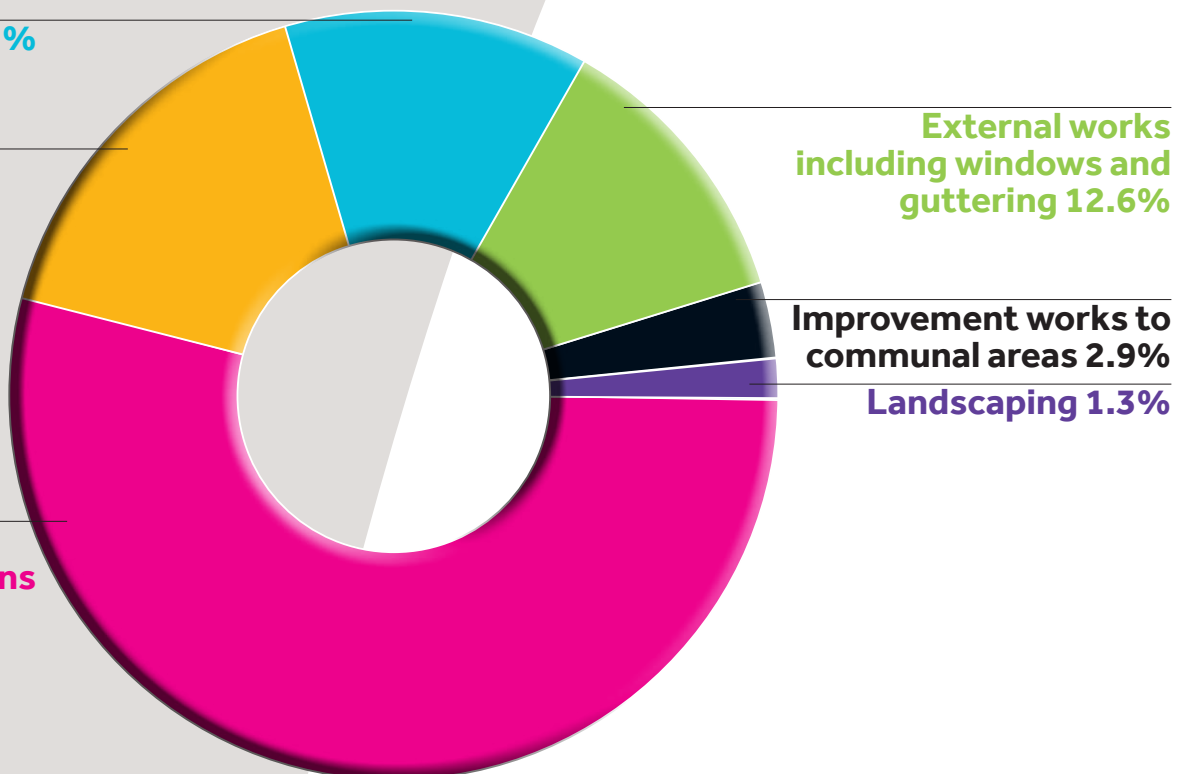


The chart shows improvement works (excluding repairs) completed in 2019/20

Roof works 13.1%

Garage improvements 16.5%

Internal works including kitchens and bathrooms 53.5%





We listened

You said you would like to see more options for older and disabled people in your home improvements.

We acted

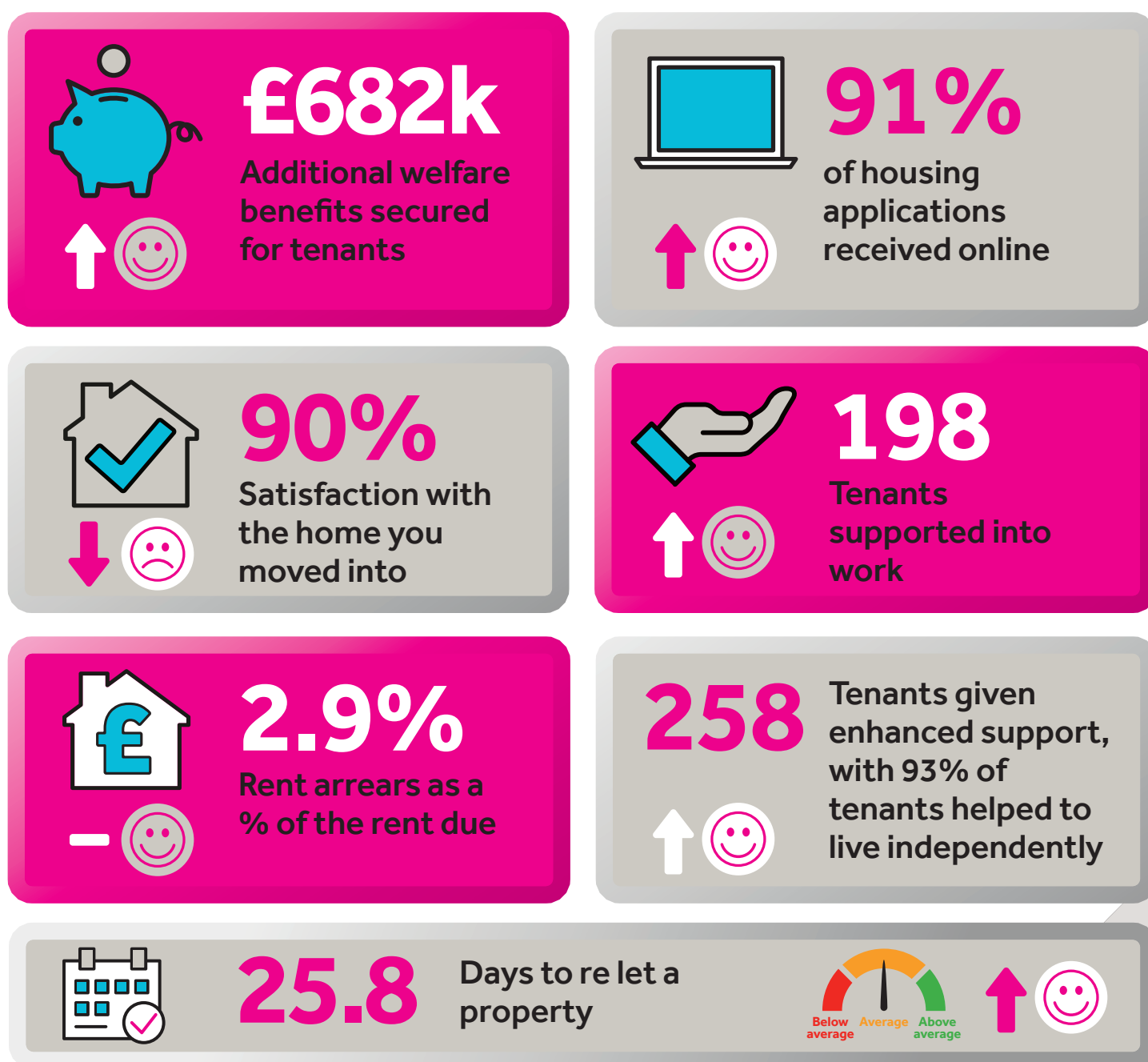
We changed our standard home improvement options to include relocation of electrical sockets, external lighting and under cupboard lighting.

Supporting Your Tenancy

We aim to make it easy to rent a home from us and ensure that once you move into your home we are on hand to provide the advice and support you might need to be able to continue to manage your home and to live happily in it.

During the year we improved the way you can search for our available homes and then apply for them. We also improved the speed at which our much-needed empty homes are made available for rent.

Once you have moved into your home we know how important having the right support is, which is why we also worked hard during the year to improve the support we offer, particularly focussing on financial assistance, helping people into jobs and offering support with health and wellbeing issues. The performance information below shows that, through this work we have significantly increased the take-up of this support and as a result helped more tenants to remain in their homes for longer.



Local offer

We will:

Carry out regular inspections of estates in our communities to make sure our homes and properties are maintained to a suitable standard.



We listened

You said that you were facing problems in your home because of a physical disability.

We acted

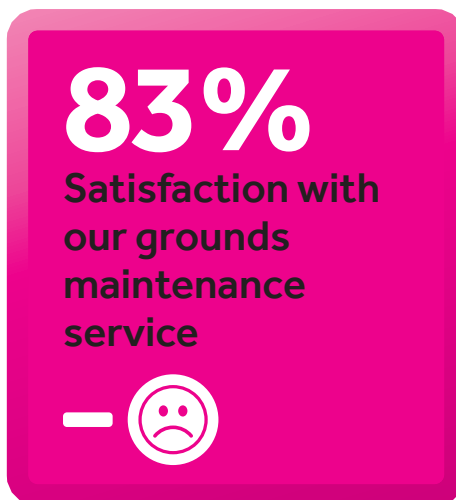
We changed the way we work with the Home Improvement Agency so that we could help more tenants and were able to install 780 adaptations during the year.

Improving Your Community

We aim to work with you, other residents and partner organisations to improve the communities in which you live to ensure they are, and continue to be places where you want to live and spend your future.

During the year we continued to work with you to find out what the problem areas and issues were and where we needed to invest. Community development is a long-term intervention and during the year we continued our work and investment in those areas struggling with high levels of unemployment and poverty; complex social problems such as mental health, social isolation and anti-social behaviour, and poor environmental design.

The performance information shows that there is still more work and further investment required to achieve our longer term aim to improve satisfaction levels in some communities.



Some of the exciting projects we worked on this year include:

- ✔ Supported Lifeline Community Action in Newton Aycliffe and helped 161 tenants to save regularly. Also helped the charity achieve Lottery Funding to sustain their services for 3 years
- ✔ Helped manage money better and support 208 tenants to save £29,000 in total on their fuel bills
- ✔ Worked with the Foundation of Light, Durham County Council and local partners we supported older residents to improve their health through exercise and improve their social connections.

We listened

You said you would like a community hub in Newton Aycliffe and would like to see it offer more to the people in and around the area.

We acted

We redesigned and renamed an existing centre with the local community and introduced a new activities programme. This included activities such as a dementia café, youth groups, a foodbank and a credit union. Over 60 people used the hub each day in its opening month.



Creating New Homes

We aim to build and buy the right new homes in the right locations in our local area to ensure we provide a mix of much needed homes designed for a range of needs.

During the year we continued to successfully acquire properties and land in communities and engage with new and prospective tenants to find out what sizes, types and designs of properties were preferred.

The performance information below shows that the satisfaction with the quality of our new homes has continued to improve as we have continued to increase the supply of much needed affordable homes in our communities.

109



New homes for rent built

73

houses

24

bungalows

12

apartments



100%

Satisfaction with the quality of new homes



15

New homes purchased for rent





We listened

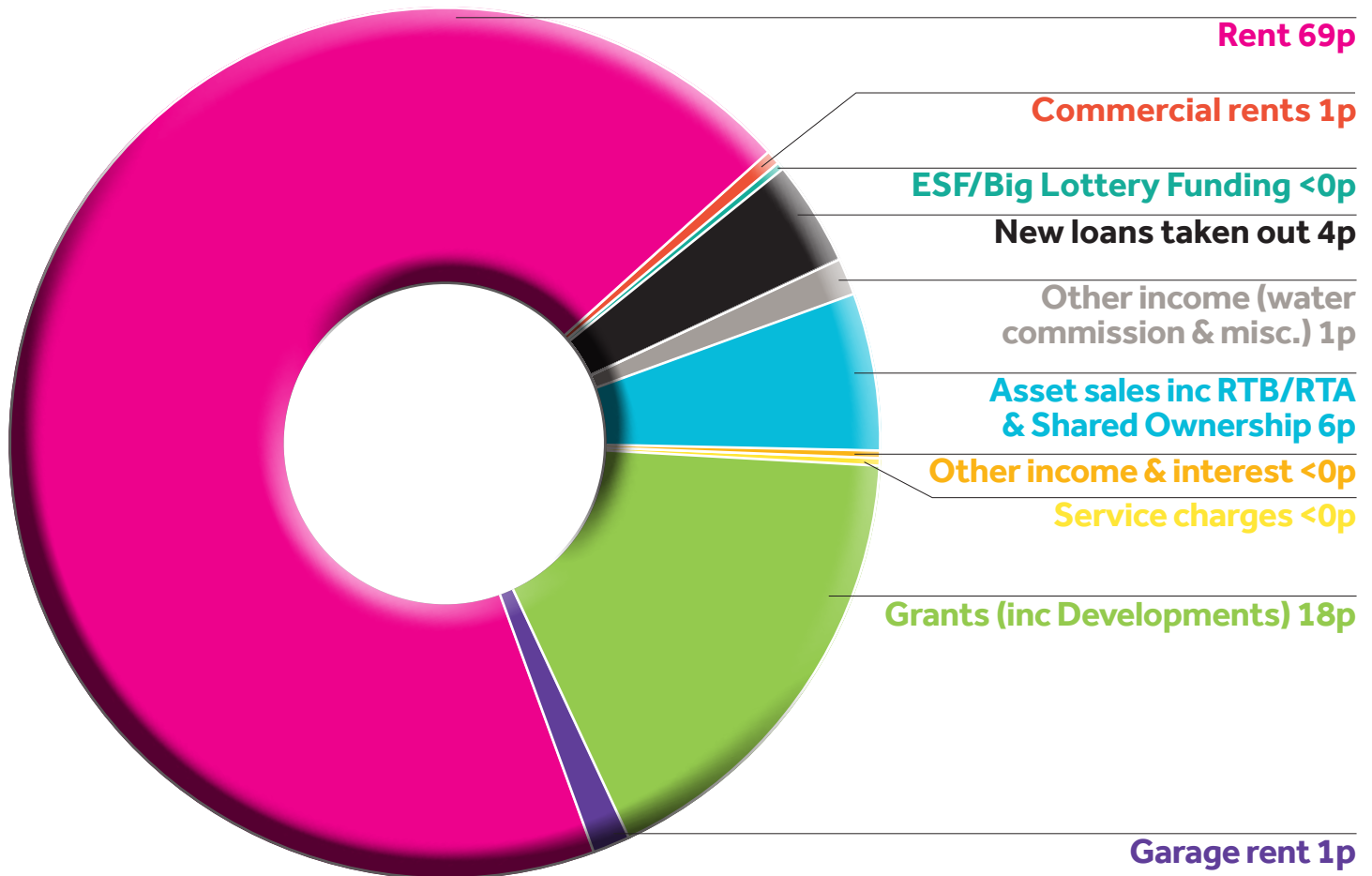
You said you would like to see improvements to open spaces and boundary fences in the next phase of regeneration at Travellers and Clarence Green, Newton Aycliffe.

We acted

We changed our plans re-sited new artwork and improved access and boundary arrangements before submitting our planning application.

Finance

Where does each £1 come from?

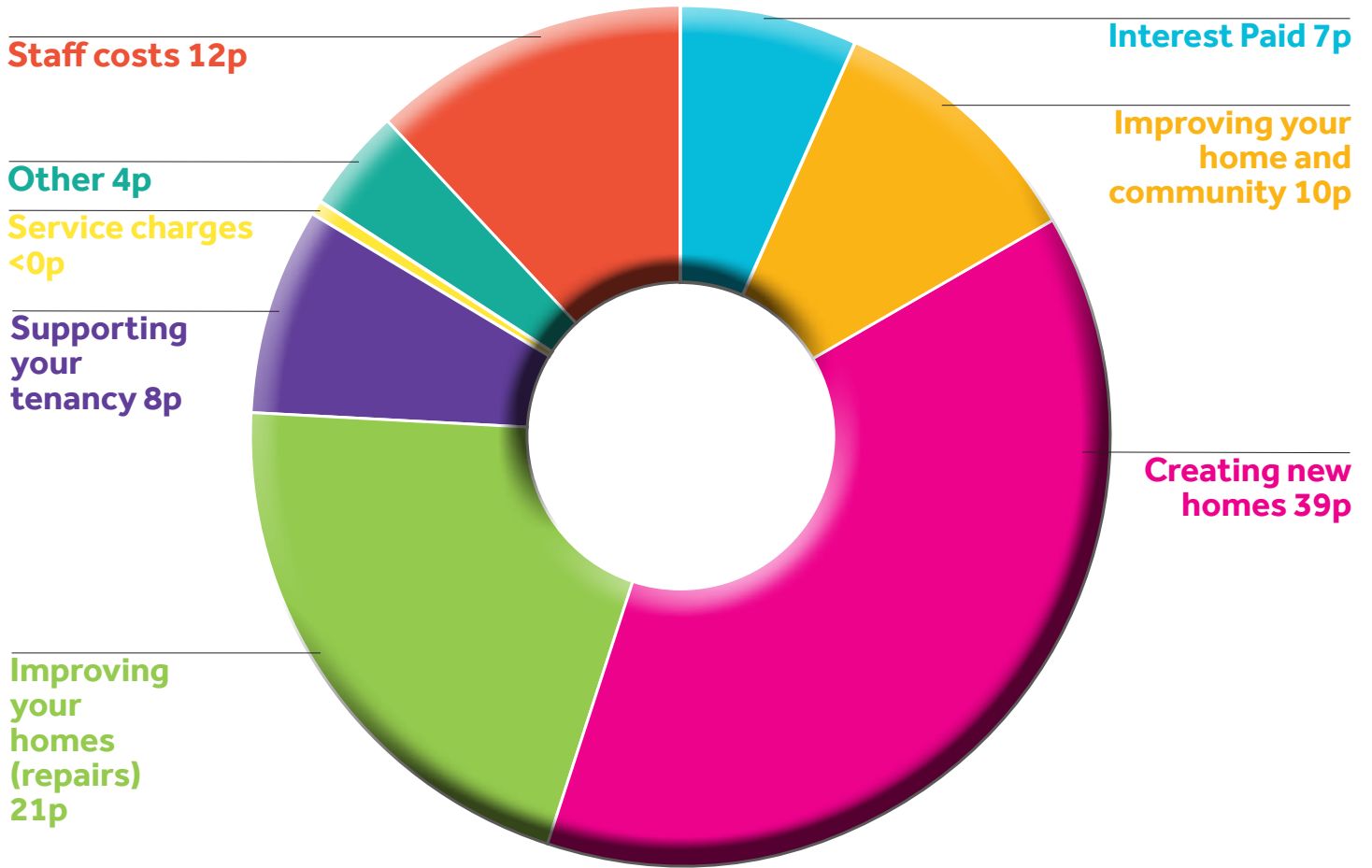


Income

	£'000	
Asset sales inc RTB/RTA & Shared Ownership	2,850	↓
Other income & interest	29	—
Service charges	70	↑
Grants (inc Developments)	8,501	↑
Garage rent	656	↑
Rent	33,082	↑
ESF/Big Lottery Funding	10	↓
Commercial rents	247	↑
New loans taken out	2,000	↓
Other income (water commission & misc.)	602	↓
Total	48,047	

↑ Increased from previous year
 — No change
 ↓ Decreased from previous year

Where does each £1 go?



Expenditure

	£'000	
Interest Paid	3,103	↓
Improving your home and community	4,622	↓
Creating new homes	18,194	↑
Improving your homes (repairs)	9,753	↑
Supporting your tenancy	3,917	↓
Service charges	86	↑
Other	1,936	↑
Staff costs	5,507	↑
	47,118	

- ↑ Increased from previous year
- No change
- ↓ Decreased from previous year

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