

Customer

connect

Keeping **Platform Housing Customers** in the know

Delivering For You!

Delivering the right service to our customers is and always has been important to us, but if Covid taught us anything it was about how important maintaining open channels with you was. To facilitate this we increased the number of ways and opportunities for us to hear from you and use your insight and feedback to review our existing services as well as develop new products and services.

The growth in online engagement is good and as we move forward we are investing to make more and more of our services available to you on our customer portal. We have also developed a new survey tool to help us get your immediate feedback on the service you have received from us. This enables us to know what has gone well but also to really understand what needs to be improved when we don't get things right - you can read more about this further in the newsletter.

The suppliers that we rely on to support the investment and repairs to our homes remains stretched and this is still slowing down our ability to carry out your repairs as quickly as we would like. We are however increasing our range of suppliers to try and improve this situation and deliver the repairs service, whilst continuing to improve standards and the energy efficiency of our homes.

The story later in the newsletter about our investment at deMontfort House is a good example of where we worked to deliver all of these things which improved the warmth for our residents, whilst reducing their individual heating costs.

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Customer Connect and specifically about some of the activities and improvements that are happening across our organisation. Hopefully we have highlighted how your feedback and input really helps us to improve and deliver customer centred services to you. I look forward to sharing further progress with you in future editions of this newsletter.



Elizabeth Froude,
Group Chief Executive

Listening To You!

In 2021 we launched our new Corporate Strategy, which very clearly demonstrated our commitment that our customers will be at the heart of everything we do.

Here at Platform we are all continually striving for excellence in customer related activities.

We have embedded transparent processes that use the most up to date and relevant intelligence and put the Customer Voice at the heart of the design, delivery and continuous review of our services. It is by coming together and really listening to our Customer Experience Panel, our Scrutiny Panel and all of our involved customers that we can ensure that we develop and deliver customer focussed services.

Our new customer surveys have had a great response from you and we have appreciated your feedback, and where we can, we will incorporate your suggestions in our plans.

We have also received lots of compliments about our colleagues here at Platform and the services they have been providing for you - thank you, it is always appreciated and good to know when we are getting things right.

Also in 2021, we launched our Wellbeing Fund of £1.4 million to support our customers who were finding it difficult to cope financially. We were able to support over 4,300 of our customers in many different ways, from providing food vouchers, school uniforms, beds, support to return to employment through training and learning new skills and you can read more about this and how we may be able to support you later in this newsletter.

We will continue to work with all our customers and colleagues to bring our very best and become a Truly Modern Housing Association.



Marion Duffy,
Chief Operations Officer.

Customer Experience Panel Update

The Customer Experience Panel are at the heart of our customer involvement framework and are key in reviewing our performance and contributing to our policies and strategies.

They meet with Platform colleagues and Board members to ensure that the Customer Voice is heard and acted on.

The panel has recently grown in membership with the welcome addition of five new customers. The customers who make up the panel are all passionate about ensuring that Platform performs for all customers and that we are developing services with a customer's perspective in mind.

The panel receive a range of training to support them, their current focus is equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure they are representing all our customers.

They will be sharing more information and updates about what they have been doing on their dedicated area on the Group website, so keep a look out for more information coming soon!



New Customer & Community Engagement Strategy

We have recently launched our new Customer and Community Engagement Strategy for 2022-2026 which sets out our plans to ensure that our customers are at the centre of everything we do.

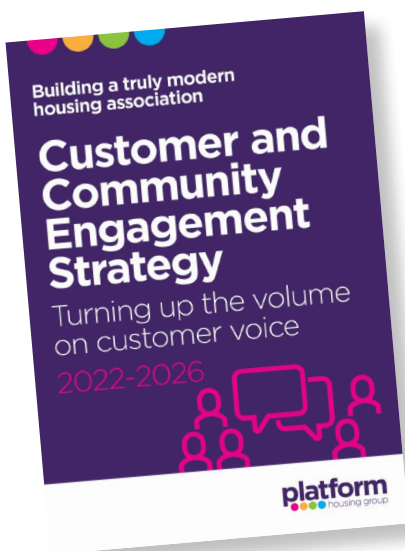
There will be more opportunities for our customers to feedback their opinions and experiences as well as getting involved developing new services and reviewing and improving existing ones.

Lisa Fairlie, Director of Housing Operations, said:

"The vision for our engagement strategy is simple: to put our customers and the communities they live in, front and centre in all we think, feel and do. We want to collaborate with our customers to truly co-create services; we want to encourage them to analyse how we do things and we want them to suggest changes to the way we work that will help us to get better."

"We know we have work to do to transform our services, our customers have told us that. This strategy clearly shows we are listening to their feedback and want to hear more! We want every interaction they have and every service they experience to be a positive one."

We have a range of ways to get involved to suit all levels of commitment, from the Customer Sounding Board or Mystery Shopper roles that can be undertaken online at any time, to the Scrutiny Panel that takes a more in-depth role interrogating our services and our locally focussed roles and activities in the community. To find out more please visit our website or email involved@platformhg.com



Scrutiny Panel

What have they been doing?

Our customer Scrutiny Panel is a group of customers who take an in-depth role in reviewing our services and helping shape how we work.

They make a real difference for all our customers and challenge how we operate and hold the organisation to account

The Panel are currently working on the **'Customer Experience of Reporting Responsive Repairs'**, evaluating the customer journey from reporting a repair to having the repair completed. They gather a range of evidence from staff interviews, our policies, performance data and customer surveys etc. which all feed into their findings.

The Panel report the outcomes of their reviews, together with any recommendations for improvements, to the Customer Experience Panel and to the Board, who then consider how these suggested improvements to services can be made.

Eileen Fox, Scrutiny Panel member, said:

"I'm passionate about the customers I represent, and since being involved I've been able to make a real difference where I live. Despite the challenges along the way, I have given a customer perspective on Platform's services and found it rewarding to assist in improving the relationship between the customers and their landlord."



Customer Satisfaction New Survey System



In October 2021 we introduced a new system for completing satisfaction surveys with customers.

Surveys are now completed as soon as possible after you have received a service from us. Surveys are sent out via text message or e-mail.

All surveys ask customers to score the service they have received out of 5 and also to tell us why. When you tell us the reason for your score, this is giving us really useful information that we can use to improve our services going forwards.

The surveys that we are now using are:-

- Satisfaction with completed repairs.
- Satisfaction with gas servicing.
- Satisfaction with the way an ASB case has been handled.
- Satisfaction with our customer portal.
- Satisfaction with our Contact Centre.
- Satisfaction with the process of purchasing a home from us.

We have plans in place to extend our surveys over the next 12 months and will be adding:-

- Satisfaction with the way your complaint case has been handled.
- Satisfaction when you move into a Platform home.
- Satisfaction with improvement works.
- Satisfaction with new build homes.

Please do complete these surveys when you get them, we are listening to your views and using what you tell us to improve our services to all our customers.



Have your say...help shape Platform Retirement Housing Strategy

Platform provides over **3,500 Retirement Housing properties** which also offer access to additional retirement housing services spread across the country.

There are different types of properties and services, some are Retirement Villages, some are Retirement Living flats and some are bungalows, all offering different levels of additional service and support.

We are in the process of thinking about what customers and potential customers would want from any Platform Retirement Housing property and services and will be developing a 5 year strategy and plan.



We have asked our existing Retirement Housing customers for their views and ideas on a whole range of subjects including:-

- Satisfaction with existing services
- Customer priorities.
- Must haves.
- Nice to haves.
- What services are not needed any more.
- We asked about challenges to managing health and wellbeing to inform how property design and refining services could better support independent living with confidence.
- We asked for views on the use of technology.

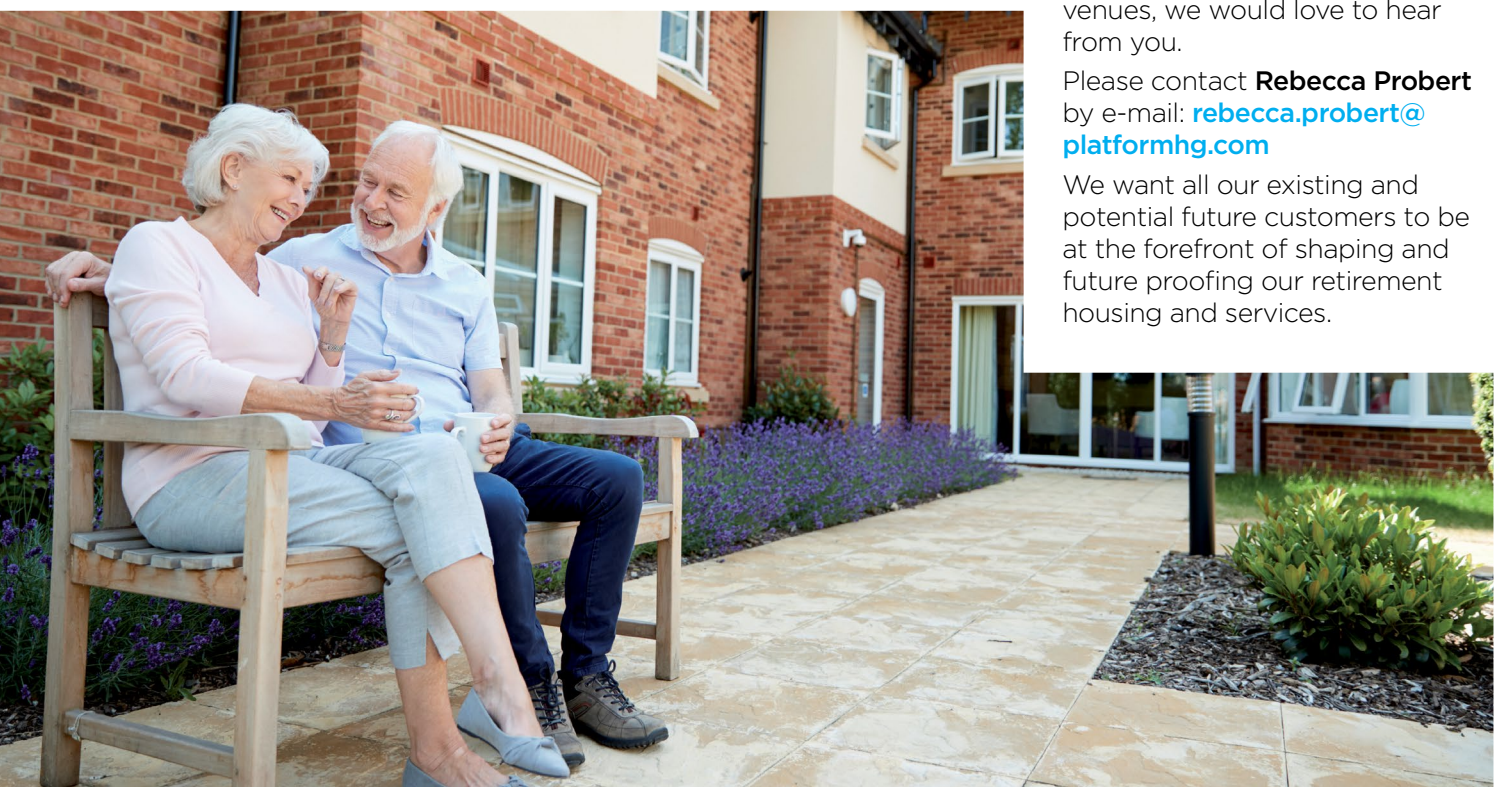
All of this valuable customer feedback will help shape our future retirement housing services and properties, to ensure that we provide customers with homes and services that meet both their current and future needs for as long as possible.

However we also want to capture the views and ideas of any potential future customers. Are you a customer who might be considering moving to a retirement property? Would this type of property be something that your friends or family might consider? Then we would very much like your views and suggestions to feed into our Retirement Housing Strategy and plan.

If you would like to get involved or join one of the focus groups we are planning at a number of venues, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact **Rebecca Probert** by e-mail: rebecca.probert@platformhg.com

We want all our existing and potential future customers to be at the forefront of shaping and future proofing our retirement housing and services.



A little insight into why **Retirement Living accommodation** might be the perfect home for you...

Platform Housing Group are delighted to offer **Retirement Living** and **Retirement Village** accommodation across the Midlands.

Our customers living in the schemes benefit from having access to communal facilities such as; communal lounges where many activities take place, laundry facilities, hairdressing salons, beautifully landscaped gardens and much more.

Here's what some of our customers have said about why they enjoy our Retirement Living accommodation.

"I'm am very happy living here and it's like winning the pools."

Retirement Living Resident at **Town Head Court Retirement Living**.

"It has a community feeling and it's a friendly place, it's great to have the staff at Platform to be able to talk to if there are any problems."

Retirement Living Resident at **Knight Court Retirement Living**.

"I have lived here for 11 years and I have lovely neighbours."

Retirement Living Resident at **Denefields Court**.

"I enjoy so many of the facilities that the retirement village has to offer including the restaurant, library, salon and the activities the staff provide to us, which helps us come together as a community."

Retirement Village Resident **Clarence Park Village**.

"I like living at Henwick House because we are close town. My neighbours are friendly and there is always someone to help out in an emergency. Platform staff are never too busy to talk to you and they take time to make everyone welcome no matter what their situation or disability is."

Retirement Living Resident **Henwick House**.



Knights Court.



Clarence Park.

We recognise that it is important for customers to feel safe in their home and our customers can be rest assured that the place they live in is within a secure environment.

Our apartments benefit from their own kitchen, living area, wet room or level access shower, have one or two bedrooms with have access to the communal facilities and landscaped gardens.

If this sounds like the perfect home for you, visit our website or scan our QR code to register your interest today!

www.platformhg.com/rent



Responsive Repairs – Return To Business As Usual



“During the pandemic Platform Property Care followed all the Government guidelines with respect to social distancing and this of course effected our ability to attend to complete routine repairs for our customers.

As a responsible landlord, throughout this period we continued to log all the routine repair jobs that were reported to us, but the reality was that we were only able to physically attend and complete emergency repairs.

I am sure you will appreciate that this has created a huge backlog of repairs for Platform Property Care to complete and this may have impacted on the time it is taking us to reach you to carry out the repairs.

This has been the same for all Housing providers across the country who are also trying to catch up with their repairs service at the same time as the construction of new homes is booming. What this means is this is putting pressure on the availability of resources such as plumbers, electricians, carpenters etc. to carry out the works. Staff absence due to self isolation is another issue further impacting the shortage of colleagues to complete our repairs.

In order to help us and speed things up for our customers, we have provided additional funding and are continuing to get external trade providers to help us return our repairs services to pre-pandemic levels.

Thank you for your continued support and patience. We are confident our customers will very soon start to see the benefits from the hard work being put in by the team at Property Care to get us back on track.”

Duncan Palmer, Head of Responsive Repairs.

Although last year was still a very difficult year, Property Care did complete over 100,000 responsive repairs to your homes,

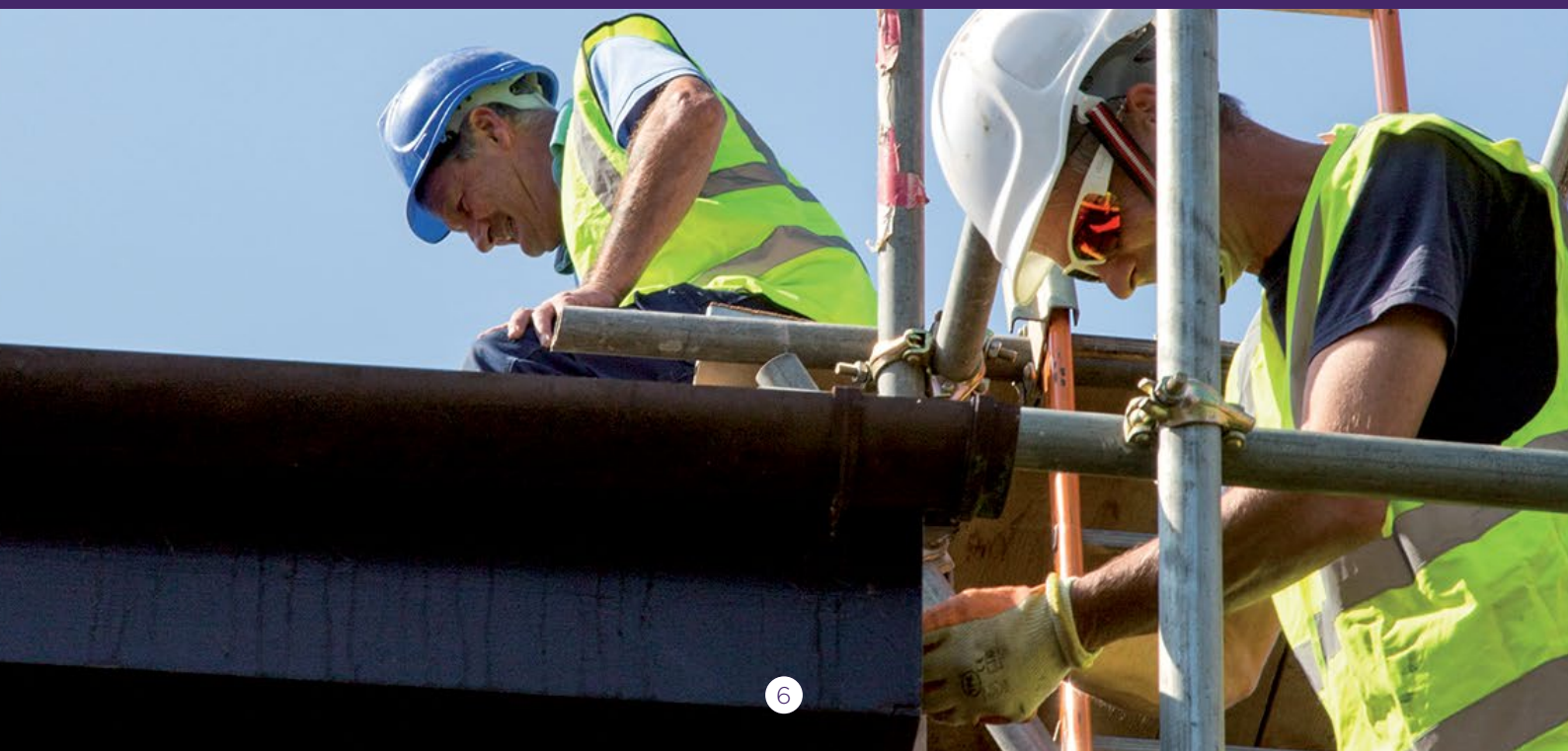
89.47% of these were completed at the first visit and overall customer satisfaction with repairs was

86.2%.

We are recruiting!

Are you a tradesperson looking for a new opportunity or challenge, why not come and join our team here at Platform. For all our latest vacancies visit our website at

www.platformhousinggroup.current-vacancies.com



Get Ready for our Platform Communities Connected: Spring 2022 Programme of Events

Following a successful programme of events through October 2021, Platform Communities Connected is returning in 2022 over two separate fortnights.

Our first fortnight of events kicked off on **Monday, 23rd May**, with a range of activities across platform neighbourhoods.

All Platform staff are encouraged to get out and about, working alongside customers and local partners on projects which make a positive difference in at least one of these ways:

- Community Cohesion.
- Community Safety.
- Digital Inclusion.
- Environmental Sustainability.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.
- Health & Wellbeing.
- Skills & Employability.

Keep a look out for full details of what's happening in the next Communities Connect programme for October and how you can get involved. The full programme of events will be published in the next edition of Customer Connect due in September and will be available on Platform's website:

www.platformhg.com/community



Diversity Champions

Do you have a passion for highlighting inequalities, celebrating our differences and trying to make life fairer and better for all?

If so, our Customer Diversity Champion role may be right for you. We can work with you to develop projects and campaigns. We're keen to make sure that we're hearing the voices of all of our customers to make sure that our services are working for everyone.

We're keen to hear from anyone who has an interest in any of the nine protected characteristics identified by law:

- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion and belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.
- Age.

Diversity Champions will be offered training, have the chance to meet others and will be able to access a pot of funding to support community initiatives and campaigns.

If you think you might be interested, please drop us an email to communities@platformhg.com to tell us a bit about yourself and we'll get back to you to tell you more.



Supporting Diversity in our Communities

We have launched our highly successful programme of issuing small grants to celebrate diversity among our customers and in our communities.

We strongly believe that diversity adds to the strength and resilience of communities and the process to apply for help is simple.

Those who think they can make a difference in their community by highlighting its diversity, breaking down barriers, and including residents in activities are encouraged to apply for support giving the details of their project.

Applications can be made by community groups and charities that work towards benefiting our residents, especially those who we seldom hear from, e.g. ethnic minorities, people with visible or invisible disabilities or lifelong conditions, or people on lower incomes and therefore socially excluded.

Here are some examples of the successful projects that we have supported:-

- **Direct Deafness** provided assistive technology for 42 of their customers, many of them also our customers with hearing impairment issues.

- Our customers were able to socialise on one of our estates after a long period of lockdowns and more than 100 of them enjoyed a **band in the park**.
- **Expressions Coffee Morning** allowed isolated families to connect with other members of their community in the middle of one of our estates which experienced some inner-city challenges. On average 60 people from our estate came to those weekly sessions and benefited from all sorts of useful connections.
- **Marathon Kids** got together families and younger people from our estates that would benefit from physical activity to improve their well-being and sense of confidence. At least 50 youngsters each week and their families enjoyed activities for an entire month last year. They want to engage again and bring their friends too.

- Our **Perryfields Community Project** gathered at least 200 people who often had very little connection with wider communities and they enjoyed themselves immensely. Lots of food, laughter and humour and even Spiderman made a surprise appearance.

- **Rowan Court Friendship Tea Parties** attracted lovers of music and gardening. Our residents enjoyed both activities immensely.

As you can see, all you need to do is have an idea to celebrate your community's diversity and break the barriers that often prevent those on the margins from enjoying it more.

We are not experts in all fields of diversity, that's why we want to ask those of you who are experts to come and deliver your dream project where you live and work.

So please do get in touch and let us know about your ideas.

Here is the website <https://www.platformhg.com/diversity-champions>.





platform
COMMUNITY
HEROES



Awards Winners

The first virtual Platform Community Heroes Awards took place in February, celebrating the outstanding contributions of unsung heroes across our communities.

Meet this year's winners:

Communities Together



This award is for bringing communities together, ensuring no-one is excluded.

Nothing brings a community together better than food, and this year's winner **Roxy Leonard** has been feeding people in her local area for years!

From volunteering to run free food shops, cooking meals for families over winter to distributing meat on Christmas Eve, she's brought people together like no one else. Most recently she's taken on a local breakfast club when the nearby church were unable to carry it on.

Digital



The Digital Award is all about someone going that extra mile in helping themselves or others improve their digital skills.

This year's winner **Liz Jauncey** started out when she found her interest in family history was a great way to connect with residents at her retirement living scheme. Showing the residents their family past and helping them explore their family tree provided great comfort over a very tough time. In the process, she's helped develop their IT skills and made some fascinating discoveries about the place she volunteers in.

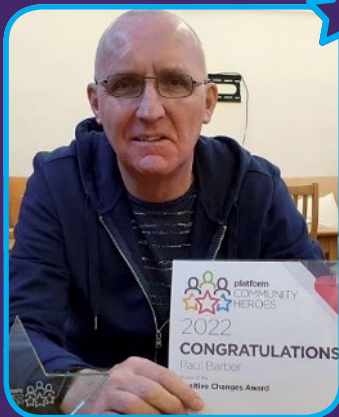
Outstanding Contribution to Customer Involvement



This award which recognises Outstanding Contribution to Customer Involvement, awarded for commitment as involved Platform customers to improving services.

Our winner of this award, **Jon Piggott**, dedicates almost all of his spare time to just this. His mission has seen him sit on various panels and lead various groups in making sure everyone's voice is heard.

He continues to stack up achievements and what's best of all, his motivation for doing so comes purely from the desire to give something back to those who helped him when he needed it most.



Positive Changes

This award is for making Positive Changes and taking big steps to improve lives.

Our winner, **Paul Barber**, is someone who showed spirit and determination to make changes to his and more importantly others lives, despite a lot of things going against him.

A back problem means he was on crutches for our Communities Week BE ACTIVE project, but that didn't stop him covering over 3 miles a day to get involved. His volunteer work has a massive impact on his community.



Outstanding Platform Volunteer

This award is to honour our Outstanding Platform Volunteer.

When the project you're passionate about involves being outside in all weathers, it takes a certain type of dedication to stick to the cause.

This year's winner, **Liz Pettican**, volunteers her time and effort into making her local community garden the best it can be - because she knows how much good it does for her local community to have something like that on their doorstep.



Environmental Award

Our Environmental Award is for improving the world around us.

This year's winner, **Melvin Mundon**, has thrown himself into volunteering at his community centre and when he discovered the garden project, he found his happy place.

He spends hours each week renovating and improving the space so others can enjoy it. What is there now is a flourishing garden, complete with plants, benches and wildlife. Coming from an environment of social isolation was hard at first, but through his new found love for the garden, his confidence has grown. He takes pride in his work and revels in the enjoyment others get from it.



Going the Extra Mile in Exceptional Times

This award is for someone who's really risen to the challenge to help others.

Our winner, **Claire Hardcastle**, is a working mum, volunteer at the local community cafe and coach of two girls football teams.

But it's her work with young women, empowering them to stay fit and achieve things that she is most proud of.

The Awards broadcast received some very positive feedback.

Eileen commented *"Congratulations to all concerned - what a lovely event. Look forward to the next one,"* while Phillip told us *"it just goes to show that when people work together amazing things can be achieved, well done to everybody who takes the time to think about others, you should be proud."*

A recording of the broadcast is still available on the Platform website, along with information about how you can nominate an unsung hero you know for the recognition they deserve:

www.platformmhg.com/platform-community-heroes



platform community chest

Groups of customers, charities, clubs and other not-for-profit organisations can apply to Platform's Community Chest for funding to support projects that benefit our communities.

During the year April 2021 – March 2022, we received 115 applications, totalling nearly **£267,000**. Applications were assessed by members of our Customer Experience Panel – Platform customers themselves – who awarded a total of just under **£150,000**.

For more information and to make an application, visit:
www.platformhg.com/community-funding

Below are some of our funded projects:

Malvern Town FC – Women's Team:

Kit, registration and other costs

"The team is creating a buzz which will ensure that it motivates all the young girls in the area that they have something special they can join, right on their doorstep."

Brian C.



Ledbury Carnival:

Contribution towards costs

"We are very pleased to have been able to hold a Fun Day and to have promoted the activities Ledbury has to offer. Platform's generous donation has contributed to this successful event."

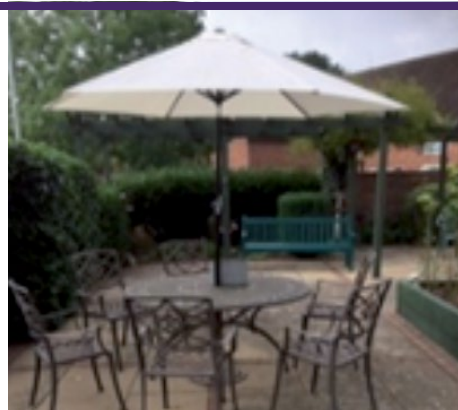
Janet M.



Chelmsford Court, Worcester

"This funding has helped to improve wellbeing of tenants by bringing them back together. Extra seats mean we can sit and chat and eat in hot weather and families can visit in a Covid-safe way"

Bryn R.



Westlands Community Pantry, Droitwich

“This funding has helped the pantry to continue to supply fresh food to families that need it.”

Chris C.



MacGregor-Tithe, Tamworth

“Residents have really enjoyed getting the courtyard ready for the new garden furniture.”

Tracey A.



Hurst Farm Community Pantry, Matlock

“Hurst Farm residents join the scheme for a few pounds per week and can choose about £35 worth of food from what’s on offer at the pantry. Community Chest funding helped to set up this service, which will make a big difference for local residents.”

Tracey S.



13 Plus Gardening Project, Louth

“Friendships are formed in the garden and are strengthening bonds in the community.”

“It gets me out, I can meet other people and can have conversation. It’s really good – my bit of therapy 100/100!”

Garden Club Report 2021.



Broughton Alive Family Fund

“The project brought the Broughton Astley community Alive again after Covid-19.”

Julie W.





deMontfort House, Leicester

deMontfort House in Leicester has undergone a complete central heating upgrade.

In January this year all 272 flats in the 15-story high rise building had their inefficient and expensive storage heaters replaced with a new Heat Interface Units (HIU's) that are connected to a communal heat network system.

This cutting-edge technology not only delivers heat and hot water to our customers, but also produces enough electricity to power the communal areas and office space. As part of this modernisation, bathrooms have been upgraded with showers, high gloss panelling and new shower screens.

All of this has been achieved whilst our amazing customers have been living in their homes. You have all been so patient and helpful in allowing frequent access and for putting up with construction site surroundings whilst the installation has taken place.

So here's **One Big Thank You** to each and every one of you from everyone involved in the project.

What can our customers expect next?

- We now have plans to **install automatic opening vents** in the communal corridors to replace the cold and permanently open louvres. This improvement will help to keep communal areas warmer and allow adequate ventilation in the event of a fire.
- The **roof is due to be upgraded**.... Not an easy task when you're 15 storeys high!
- Individual flats will be having their **extractor fans replaced** with a more industrial ventilation system to prevent the likely hood of damp and mould from occurring.

Platform Home Ownership

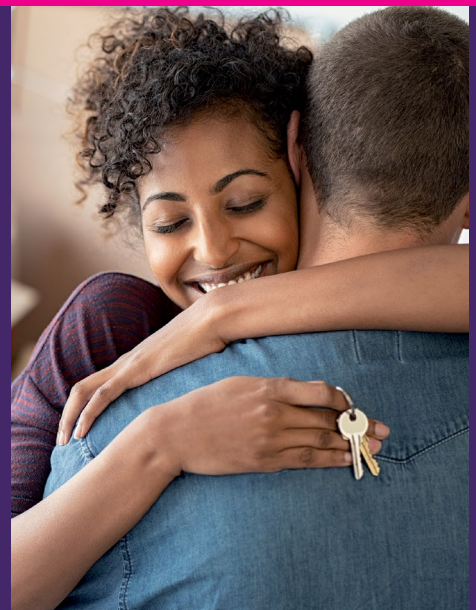
During the last year (21/22) Platform has helped **563** customers to purchase their home through the Shared Ownership Scheme, and take their first steps into home ownership.

How does **Shared Ownership** work?

Shared Ownership offers the opportunity to purchase between 25% and 75% of a property. You simply buy the share amount that suits your affordability and circumstances and then pay rent on the remaining share that you don't yet own. As Platform are a housing association, the subsidised rent will be considerably lower than privately renting in the same area.

Typically you only need a deposit of as little as 5% of the value of the share you wish to buy, meaning you could get on the property ladder much quicker than you thought. If you want to know more about Shared Ownership and if this may be an option for you, please click the following link to our website at <https://www.platformhomeownership.com/ways-to-buy/what-is-shared-ownership/>

or telephone us at **0345 450 3995** where one of our Sales Advisors will be happy to help you.





Office Update

Following on from the pandemic where we had to deliver our services to you in a very different way than we had previously done, we have been reviewing how we do this going forward.

Do we go back to the old ways or do we move with the times and do things differently?

The thinking behind our review is very much linked to how we continually improve and provide more tailored services for all our customers.

We have now taken the decision to have our staff and teams working directly out in the community, making a difference and visiting customers in their own homes.

This delivers a more timely, efficient and bespoke service to our customers and communities. As a result of this, all of our remaining offices are now closed to the public and will be used for other purposes.

There are still lots of different ways in which you can contact us as follows:-

Our Customer Portal [click here](#)

Website: [Online web chat](#)

By telephone on [0333 200 7304](#)

Email: info@platformhg.com

By Post: Platform Housing Group, 1700 Solihull Parkway, Birmingham Business Park, Solihull B37 7YD.

To make sure that we are providing you with the best service we can, we are working with our involved customers to develop a new set of service standards that monitor how we respond when you contact us.

Once these standards have been agreed, we will let you know what they are and how we are performing. This will help us see what is working well but also identify areas where we need to improve.

Localities Update

Over the past year we have redesigned our Localities team to ensure we deliver tenancy and neighbourhood management services more efficiently by directing our resources where they are needed most.

We have three new Localities Teams, **Severn, Tame** and **Witham**, each working in a distinct area of our geography.

Localities teams is where you will find our Neighbourhood Officers, delivering local services such as signing up our new customers for their new home, to helping our existing customers manage their tenancies well and ensuring our neighbourhoods are places where people want to live.

Our Neighbourhood Officers will also be delivering some services to our shared owners and leaseholders. This is a more efficient way of working and gives us a better understanding of any issues which may be impacting all customers in a neighbourhood.

We know that dealing with anti-social behaviour is very important to you and that the impact of anti-social behaviour on individuals and communities can be very damaging.

That is why we have determined that the way we manage our anti-social behaviour cases is a key priority for Localities teams this year.

We have brought together a team of Specialist Case Officers to work with a new Community Safety Manager. This team brings specialist knowledge on tenancy enforcement, to support our Neighbourhood Officers to manage complex situations of anti-social behaviour. We will work together with our partners in local authorities and the police to keep our neighbourhoods safe. Our processes will be reviewed and our teams will be upskilled to help us deliver best practice services which are supported by the law.

We want to be more visible in our communities, our Neighbourhood Officers will be carrying out regular neighbourhood

walkabouts, inviting partners and customers to join us, listening to our customers, and working together to deliver solutions where needed.

We are also committed to carrying out Tenancy Health Checks. This is where our Neighbourhood Officers will carry out home visits to check on how well our customers are managing in their home, make sure we have the correct information about the household and where appropriate support our customers to get any help and guidance that may be needed, such as a referral to our Successful Tenancies Team.

It may take us some time to get around to all of our customers so please bear with us. However, if you feel like you would benefit from a Tenancy Health Check sooner rather than later then please do contact us.

If you need to speak to us the best way to do this is through our contact centre or through your portal account. Our contact centre will be able to deal with most situations and will pass on information to your neighbourhood officer. Alternatively, you can report some things to us through your portal account or by completing an enquiry form on the Platform website.

Platform Hub

Customers Service Advisors in Platform Hub are responsible for managing all customer contact into the Group.

Along with responding to incoming calls the teams also manage; webchat, customer portal contact, social media, emails and website enquiries.

Our digital options are becoming increasingly popular with customers, with 40% of all contact via our customer portal, webchat or email. However, we do recognise that there are times when customers will need to speak to us and we are working hard to reduce wait times where possible during busier periods.

If your call does not relate to an emergency or the need to a cancel a repair, the best time to call us is between 1-4pm in the afternoons, with Wednesday through to Friday being the quieter days for inbound calls. Alternatively, you can request a same day call back to save waiting in a queue to speak to an advisor. Between January-March 2022, Platform Hub completed over 21,000 same day call-backs!

There are 13,000 registered users of the customer portal, you can register online today using your tenancy reference number. This can be located on your most recent rent review letter or any correspondence from Platform. The customer portal enables you to;

- Report a Repair.
- Report anti social behaviour.
- Review your rent balance and transaction history.
- Make a payment or setup/amend your direct debit.
- Share feedback.

Over the next 12 months, we aim to ensure that even more customers can contact us at a time and place that is convenient to them. We want to ensure that customers can choose their preferred method of contact and receive a consistent level of service with regular progress updates.

Our customers will be at the heart of ongoing service improvements, and we have valued the Scrutiny Panels recent feedback on their experience of reporting repairs. Their recommendations along with wider customer feedback will be implemented to help improve our services further.



Aqua Boards instead of Tiles in Bathroom Refurbishment Programme

Since the beginning of this year we have been trialling fitting Aqua Boards instead of tiles in our bathrooms refurbishments in our Severn locality.

Aqua Boards are a new product recently come onto the market and are intended to improve the overall look and quality of bathrooms for our customers.

This trial has been very successful and adopted in the Severn locality and we will be starting to roll this product out to our homes in the Witham and Tame localities which are in our 2022/2023 bathroom replacement programmes. There are currently 3 choices of board for our customers to choose from and this will hopefully increase as we start to receive valuable feedback on this product from our customers.

The boards are easier to clean and wipe down, they do not discolour as happens with traditional grout and tiles, they help to reduce the potential of damp in bathrooms and are easier to install which makes the installation quicker and more efficient.

Platform are always looking at new ways and products that come available and which improve what we install in our customers' homes.

Platform's Wellbeing Fund



As the pandemic took hold, it became obvious the impact it was going to have on many people's lives and to try and help combat this, Platform Housing Group's Board committed **£1.4million** for 2021 to a special fund that gives fast and flexible support to customers and communities during these challenging times.

Over the last 12 months, the group spent **£1,544,452** to meet the huge demand for our support. We helped customers, partners and other organisations to make applications for support from our fund which in many cases, also benefitted the wider Platform communities.



Wellbeing Fund 2021 Overview

We made **4,438** awards with our **£1.4million** Wellbeing Fund

This supported **2,328** households to buy their essential shopping, and to heat their homes.

We also supported **2,110** customers with carpets in their homes, beds to sleep on, and white goods to support day to day living.



"Hi I'm Anthony Rooney, and may I thank the Platform/Wellbeing team for their help and understanding, and especially Sammie for her help and guiding me through. I badly needed cooker and food voucher and her friendly way's made me feel at ease, life at the moment is hard with the cost of living and gas and electric it been a godsend ,and given me a bridge with my money to put more money to gas and electric so from my son Kyle and me a big thanks.

Awards

Essential Application Award:
£200 Morrisons Vouchers

Support Package Award:
£350 Argos Vouchers for Beds

Application Statement:

“Partner is on sick and I’m on maternity leave so my pay has gone down.

If possible I would like help with 2 single mattresses for my kids as they have small mattresses on the floor, and a bunk bed so that my 3 eldest can share a room as its not fair one of them on sofa being kept up all hours because of my new baby its not good for them physically and mentally they need there sleep and if possible some help with gas, electric and food.

Since being on maternity leave my money has gone down 600 pound a month and struggling to pay bills without extra costs for new uniform and school shoes and other essentials.”

“Thank you very much for everything it really does make a difference, thank you from the bottom of my heart you have no idea how much this has improved my children’s lives”

Essential Application Award:
£150 Tesco Vouchers

Application Statement:

“I have fallen behind on my rent as I’m currently off sick from work.

I am running low on food and electric and gas. My wages will be back to normal end of February as I’ll be back at work. This is just short term but I am struggling

I am off sick from work

The doctors have given me new medication to try but until that works I feel so low.”

“I wanted to say a massive thank you for our food shopping gift card. I can’t express how much this will help in a time of need. I am so thankful for your support”



Money Matters

Making every pound count

None of us can get away from the increased cost of living.

Whether it's heating our homes, putting fuel in the car or food on the table, it's taking more out of our pockets. The increases in energy costs have come about because the price caps on what energy companies can charge consumers has been raised and means that if you're on a standard variable tariff, your energy costs will have risen.

This has also meant that we're not seeing many options on price comparison sites. Whether or not you pay by direct debit or you're on a pre-payment meter, the difference is very real and for a lot of us, is understandably worrying.

Things to look at:

- If you're looking at fixed tariffs, check details such as standing charges and make sure the fixed rate isn't actually more than the standard variable price. If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, you need to speak to your energy provider. There are support options that they can offer.
- If you're choosing between heating and eating you can get help. Councils have just been given funding of £500 million for the Household Support Fund, to help provide support to people with their essential costs. Speak to your local council to check if you can get help. We have put some further information on our website about other financial support and advice <https://www.platformhg.com/hot-topics/top-tips-rising-energy-prices-and-suppliers-going-bust-2721>.
- Check your entitlements to benefits. It's always worth checking that you're not missing out on unclaimed benefits, especially if you have children. Even if it's a small amount of entitlements it could open up eligibility for further help. We have a self-serve Benefits Calculator on our website or if you'd rather speak to someone, one of our Successful Tenancies Team can help. You can call **0333 200 7304** or complete the referral form on our website <https://www.platformhg.com/our-team-can-help> and our friendly team will be in touch.
- Healthy start vouchers for families on low incomes. If you're pregnant, or have children under the age of four you may be able to get help with essential food items such as milk, fruit and veg. To find out if you qualify go to <https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-for-healthy-start/>.
- Could you be getting Pension Credit? Pension Credit Pension credit is a tax-free, means-tested benefit aimed at retired people on low incomes. It's also a gateway benefit that may make you eligible for council tax discounts, free TV licences for over-75s and more.

- From April 2022, households in bands A-D will be due a government rebate of £150 to help with energy costs. You will need to contact your council to find out more about how this will be paid. If you're not in bands A-D but are struggling, speak to your council as the government has set aside a discretionary fund to help vulnerable households.
- The government has pledged a £200 rebate on household energy bills this coming October. The scheme is currently being developed but it is worth bearing in mind that this rebate will be reclaimed over time.

If you're worried about money, get in touch with Platform's Successful Tenancies Team who can help with checking benefit entitlements and budgets, as well as giving support with applications for welfare assistance schemes and onward referrals for debt advice. You can call **0333 200 7304** or complete the referral form on our website <https://www.platformhg.com/our-team-can-help> and one of our friendly team will be in touch.

Platform has partnered with Stay Nimble and we can offer our customers **FREE** support with all manner of work-related challenges. You will get to talk with a qualified friend and consider your options, gain confidence and find direction! Given all our other current challenges, this is a great opportunity to take control and take positive action. To find out more or register visit <https://www.platformhg.com/stay-nimble-on-line-coaching> or call on **0333 200 7304**.

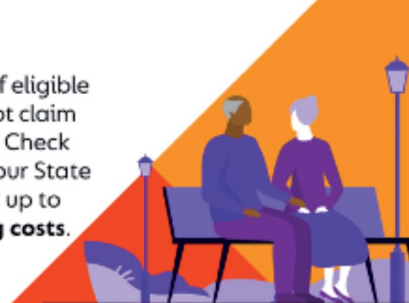



Wellbeing Fund
emerge better

The **Successful Tenancies Team**

Stay Nimble Career Coaching for everyone
Change your future with career coaching

New Year, New Job
www.platformhg.com/stay-nimble-on-line-coaching



Around a third of eligible pensioners do not claim **Pension Credit**. Check if you can get your State Pension topped up to **help with living costs**.

Fire Safety and Home Contents Insurance

Every home and the way we all live our lives creates potential fire hazards. Have you ever really thought about what it would actually cost you to replace all of your possessions should you ever be in the horrific situation of suffering a fire at your home?

We know that things may be tight for people at the moment in terms of stretching their money as far as possible but we also know that some of our customers have suffered from serious fires in their homes and have not had any basic home contents insurance to help them start to rebuild their lives.

We would like to remind you that the National Housing Federation has teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks to provide the My Home Contents Insurance scheme for customers of Housing Providers like Platform.

If this is something that you want to consider and would like further information on what the scheme offers including cover types, costs and payment options etc. please visit their website myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk or call **0345 450 7288**. (Please note that other providers of Home Contents Insurance are available).

My Homes Contents Insurance have also produced the factsheet below full of safety tips and advice on how to help prevent fires in your home.

Fires and protecting your home contents and belongings



We hope that you will never have to experience a fire or smoke damage, but these things do happen. That is why your Landlord and the National Housing Federation suggests all tenants and leaseholders take out home contents either through the special My Home scheme or by making your own arrangements. Please remember you are responsible for replacing your home contents and belongings. Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions and personal belongings.

It is a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for, in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one.

Listed below are safety tips and advice on how to help prevent fires in your home:

- Make sure that you have a working smoke alarm on each floor of your property, and if a fire does start, this should give you a chance to get out safely and call 999 for help. (It is your responsibility to regularly clean and test your smoke/carbon monoxide alarms).
- Chip pan fires and what you should do
 - Turn off the heat under the pan (if it's safe to do so) and allow it to cool completely.
 - Do not move the pan.
 - Never throw water over the pan, as the effects can be devastating.
 - Do not use a fire extinguisher on a pan of oil as the force of the extinguisher can spread the fire.
 - Do not tackle the fire yourself, leave the room, close the door, get everyone out of your home and call 999.
- Make sure to clean all cooking surfaces regularly. Leftover food and grease can become a common ignition source for a kitchen fire. Don't focus exclusively on the stovetop and oven though. Make sure to empty the crumb tray on a toaster and to wipe down the inside of your microwave as well.

- Do not overload electrical adaptors by plugging too many appliances into one socket, especially those with a high electrical current rating, such as kettles, irons and heaters.
- If you are using a portable heater to keep warm, keep it away from flammable materials like papers, curtains and furniture and never use one to dry your clothes. Turn off any electrical appliances that you are not using, particularly at night, when a fire can quickly spread unnoticed and cause more danger damage.
- Hand-held electrical appliances, such as hair dryers and straighteners, get very hot in normal use. Make sure that when you have finished using them, you switch them off, unplug them and put them away, preferably storing hair straighteners and similar beauty products in heat-proof pouches.
- Never leave candles burning unattended, and be sure to place them on a heat-resistance surface, away from upholstery, linens and curtains.
- Do not smoke in bed or near upholstered furniture, curtains and fabrics, as these can quickly catch fire due to stray ash.

The My Home scheme was designed for tenants in social housing, where you can pay premiums cash fortnightly or monthly, monthly by direct debit or annually. (Fortnightly and monthly premiums include a transaction charge).

Contact us

For more information or to apply for cover, please call My Home on:

Phone: **0345 450 7288**
Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm
Visit: www.thistlemyhome.co.uk



My Home
Contents Insurance



The National Housing Federation My Home Contents Insurance Scheme is a product name arranged and administered on behalf of the National Housing Federation by Thistle Tenant Risks a trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338845. Registered office: Rosington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. The National Housing Federation is an Appointed Representative of Thistle Insurance Services Limited. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is part of the PIB Group. For information about what we do with personal data please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

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