

Building

Annual Report 2019

connect
housing 



Building;
an obvious title
for a housing
association
annual report?

Yes but!

We are
building more
than homes.



2019 will go down in history as a turbulent year for our country. The implications of Brexit and the widespread declaration of a climate emergency have caused divisions in our communities and anxiety for people, falling, as they do, on top of existing crises of homelessness, adult social care and health. Connect's strong social purpose keeps us anchored in such turbulence.

It draws people to work with Connect, as Board members, employees, involved tenants or partners, who share our hope and optimism that, in our modest way, we can continue to **build a better society**.

In the following pages we share how we are:

Building trust



Building relationships



Building partnerships



Building a future together



Building our capabilities





Building trust

INVESTING IN SAFETY

A new dedicated team to ensure we are providing our customers with safe homes.

An extra

£360,000

invested on enhanced safety measures in tenants' homes.

A new safety 'dashboard' so we can see at a glance up to date performance on gas servicing, fire safety, electrical testing, and lift, asbestos and legionella inspections.

2020 Focus

Enhance data capture and reporting.



LISTENING AND LEARNING

330
tenants

were involved in helping develop Connect's brand, I.T services and offer to tenants.

The results show that tenants value our support, advice and advocacy roles – both to individuals and local communities.

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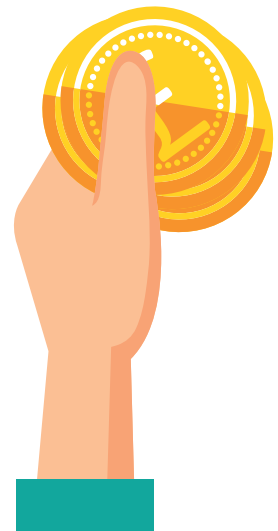
Members of **Connects Residents Federation** (CRF) form the **Service Improvement Forum** (SIF) with staff and Board representation and now approve changes to customer related policies.

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The CRF inspection of landlord services made recommendations approved by the **Audit and Risk Management Committee** (ARMC), balancing level of service required with cost. ARMC are tracking the implementation.



A new complaints system focussed on correcting any failures in service early has seen complaints fall.



Satisfaction with

Value for Money

has increased to:

89%

Satisfaction that views are taken into account has increased to:

83%



The new measure of **'Net Promoter Score'** (would you recommend Connect to friends and family) is showing an encouraging:

plus 49 result



2020 Focus

Broader mix of involvement options to reflect diversity and lifestyles, including digital tools and local and flexible opportunities.

New transactional website.

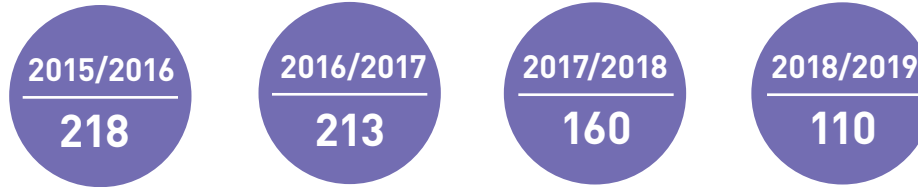


New Customer Insight Manager and customer relationship software to enhance data capture and reporting.

IMPROVING

Anti-social behaviour trends

Total reports of anti-social behaviour



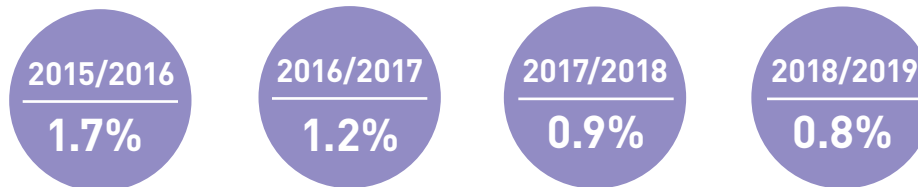
Lettings

GN and HOP. Average relet time - days.



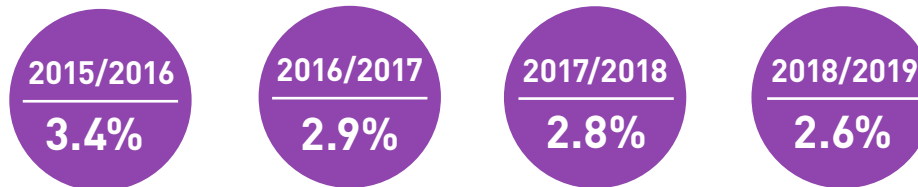
Trends in void loss

GN and Supported Housing (SH). Percentage of void loss.



Arrears performance

GN, SH and HOP. Total arrears.



2020 Focus



New integrated housing and property I.T system to streamline systems and provide more 'real-time' information, accessible wherever our staff team is.



Building
relationships

BRANDING

'Creative Bridge', branding agency, carried out a stakeholder survey as part of their work to help us refresh our brand. The wordcloud they produced reflects the positive results. We thank our generous partners for their comments.



2020 Focus

Launch a new visual identity.



CONNECTING PEOPLE



MEET | CAFÉ | CREATE

We welcomed just under

1400 visitors

to our event space during
the year. They came to...

... enjoy the work of local artists such as Artist WOZ (pictured), Natalie Bruce and Malcolm East. Malcolm (73), born and bred in Dewsbury, has been painting the changes in Dewsbury for over 50 years. Sales of his books and art work generated £770 for Martin House Hospice, Malcolm's chosen charity.



... celebrate the things that we have in common rather than what divides us at our annual **'Great Get Together'** in memory of the late Jo Cox, MP.

... join in with regular sessions run by local people covering a breadth of interests.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Thrive also hosts:



Pain Peers

Crafting and company to distract from chronic pain which can be a very isolating condition.



Craft and Laughter

Fun with fabric and friends.



Dewsbury Memories

Stimulating memory and conversation for people with dementia and offers respite to carers.



English Heritage

For teachers working with students on Dewsbury heritage sites, of which our office is one.



Survivors Group

Peer social group for those suffering with mental health issues.



BBest

Created by the 20 schools in Batley and Birstall – working together to support the families of the children in their care.



Kirklees Visual Impairment Network

Music sessions delivered by HOOT.



Hearing Voices

Peer-led group for people with experience of hearing voices.



Paddock Community Trust (Step By Step)

Job search and employment support.



2020 Focus

Art Therapy programme including sessions with local primary schools using The Big Draw Festival as a launch pad, part funded by a 'Do Something Now' Grant of £4500 from Kirklees Council.

Hosting the Dewsbury Business Network as part of Dewsbury Chamber of Trade.

NEIGHBOURLY PLACES

Our six **Community Housing Officers** work with tenants and people in their neighbourhoods to strengthen neighbourliness. They should really be called conversation officers as talking and listening takes up a lot of their day.

Those conversations have resulted in 16 tenant-led projects during the year.



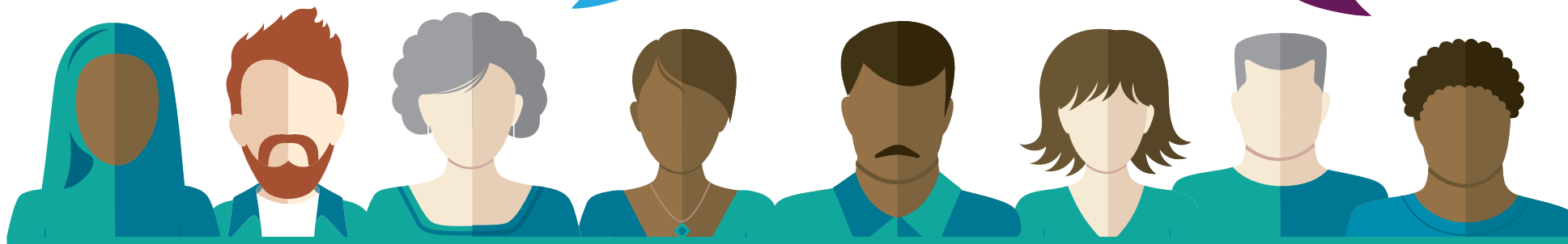
2020 Focus

More talking – building on what is strong rather than what is wrong in neighbourhoods, encouraging more residents to get involved in shaping their communities.

Talking...

... helped residents living at the Raynviles in Leeds secure grants from Tescos and the Connect Residents Federation Community Priority Fund to improve the environment with community planters and fencing.

... lead to tenants at Peace Place in Halifax to hold a summer party which generated more conversations about working together on the environment.





Building partnerships

LEEDS CITY REGION HOUSING ASSOCIATION PARTNERSHIP (LCR HAP)

We cannot achieve our objectives in isolation. Partnerships are an important part of our strategy.

We have co-founded and now chair Leeds City Region Housing Association Partnership, involving over 18 housing associations, West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Homes England (H.E). It aims to provide a single voice for local associations to support WYCA and H.E. in delivering their economic and housing strategies.



2020 Focus

Agree and deliver two year action plan as partners.

Raise the profile of social housing in the region.



NATIONAL HOUSING FEDERATION'S GREAT PLACE COMMISSION

Our Chief Executive was a Commissioner with the National Housing Federation's Great Places Commission.

The commission focussed on urban areas in the Midlands and the North of England exploring the characteristics that contribute to resilient communities and identifying how housing associations, national and local government and other key partners can collaborate to support those communities.

The final report, including recommendations, is available at:

www.connecthousing.org.uk/greatplacescommission



“ We firmly believe now is the time to bring together the wealth of research and experience in community development, placemaking, economic development and regeneration, in order to build a new consensus for the 21st century. Our society remains unequal, and there are moral, social, economic and political imperatives to exploring new solutions and challenging established assumptions ”

Great Places report



2020 Focus

Embed the recommendations into the work of LCCR HAP.

Agree an ethical disposals strategy.

Agree a long term plan to contribute to the regeneration of Dewsbury.

KIRKLEES BETTER OUTCOMES PARTNERSHIP - KBOP

We are pleased that our support services in Kirklees have joined KBOP, led by a social investor – Bridges Outcomes Partnerships. We will continue our work to help people sustain accommodation, improve their well-being and enter training or employment, with greater opportunity to focus on the support that makes a difference and achieves outcomes. It is one of the largest such programmes in UK and promises to be an innovative model for future services.



2020 Focus

Achieve year 1 outcomes and use the learning to adapt the model for future years.

Take the learning to explore future social investment opportunities.

SUPPORTING THE NHS AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

We directly supported

1503 people

from all tenures during the year.



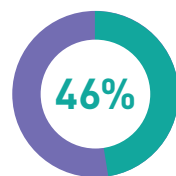
This includes providing visiting housing support to:

1220 people

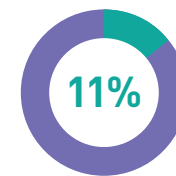
during the second year of our award-winning **Engage Leeds** partnership.



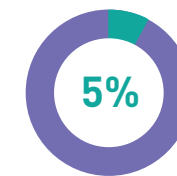
Of the 1220:



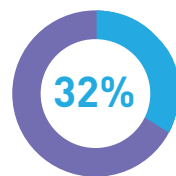
experienced mental health issues



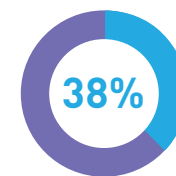
had a physical disability



experienced domestic abuse



were local authority tenants



were private rented tenants



were housing association tenants



2020 Focus

Strengthen our work with the third sector partners who manage some of our supported accommodation.

Deliver new 'move-on' schemes in Leeds and Kirklees.

New support services strategy maximising innovation in delivery models.

Strengthen our relationship with the NHS.



SUPPORTING THE NHS AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Our Dementia Team delivered 'Dementia Friends' sessions to 86 people as part of the Alzheimers Society's National programme to raise awareness of people living with Dementia and transform the way the nation thinks, acts and talks about the condition.

Their Reminiscence Pod provides a backdrop of a 'seaside scene' to strengthen the cognitive memory (thinking, reasoning or remembering) of people living with Dementia. The groups are proving to be great fun.

“It was a right good afternoon - I really enjoyed it”

Reminiscence Pod User

Alongside Wakefield and District Housing, we are leading the Health and Housing workstream for LCR HAP.



Building a
future together

ACTING ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Two years on from delivering the first low-energy Passivhaus development for social housing in the region, we are turning our attention to the impact of Connect as a whole and the housing association sector in our region.

We are co-ordinating the Climate Emergency workstream for Leeds City Region Housing Partnership, focussed on how we can make a bigger impact together, whilst developing a partnership with the National Union of Students to bring about grassroots change within Connect, supporting our staff teams to drive change within the business to reduce our carbon footprint.



2020 Focus

Working with the National Union of Students, sponsored by and involving our IT partners, Castleton, implementing a Green Impact action plan for Connect.



RESPONDING TO THE HOUSING CRISIS



NEW HOMES TO RENT AND BUY

In December 2018 we completed **21 new family homes** at Bridge Street, Birstall; **10** for rent and **11** for shared ownership, supported by Homes England grant funding. All 11 homes for sale were reserved 'off plan' and the new owners were able to move in just in time for Christmas.

These were amongst **78** new homes delivered during the year:



for social rent



for affordable rent



for intermediate market rent



for shared ownership



2020 Focus

Deliver a further 50 new homes for rent and sale.

We will deliver a new supported housing scheme in Mirfield for people with a range of complex support needs.

In the light of the Climate Emergency, we will review and update the standards to which our new homes are designed and built.

This was an encouraging start to our ambitions to grow our housing stock by an average of 2% per annum.

SWAN LANE TENDER SUCCESS

We were delighted that Kirklees Council chose to award Connect a new contract for our Swan Lane housing project. It means that over 90 homeless young people, including those leaving care, will have access to safe and secure accommodation during the next three years. Our support will help them build on their strengths to enter training and employment. Our overnight 'crashpad', including food, clothing and toiletries will help young people needing immediate shelter.

.....

“Being at Swan Lane has given me the opportunity to learn skills such as cooking, budgeting/paying bills and has helped me address my anger issues. I loved learning these skills as I know I will have them for life and my confidence has grown and I don't feel scared anymore. I now have a full time job as an Apprentice Barista. I love my job it makes me feel so independent and I love earning my own money ” *Swan Lane tenant*

Develop and launch new lifeskills toolkit.

Remodel the accommodation to provide one additional space to help more homeless young people.



2020 Focus

TACKLING POVERTY

Our 5-strong Money Matters team are vital to our ability to help tenants on low incomes and subject to benefit changes, including the transition to Universal Credit.

Their work has gained

£654,768

in additional benefits, grant applications, and debt reductions for the **211 tenants** they helped in the year.

They saved Connect

£298,408

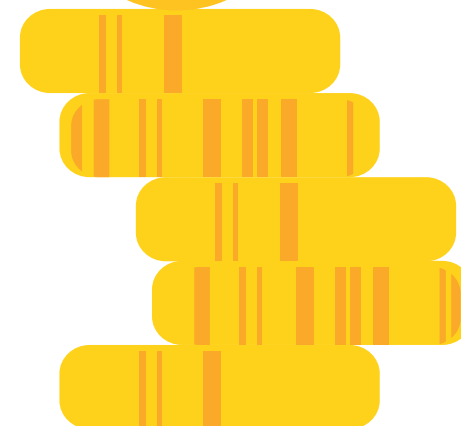
by reducing lost rental income and the prevention of court action or eviction.



It's important how people feel. On a scale where 1 means feeling low / unconfident and 10 means feeling happy / confident, the average score before Money Matters support was 1.2.

By the end, this had risen to 9.7 on average.

100% reported reduced stress levels



In total, using the HACT Social impact calculator, for each £1 invested in the service, **£11.15** has been generated in social value in the community.



“I hope Connect Housing, as an organisation realise that providing the means of support to the Money Matters team, has so many positive influences, that it's impossible to name them all here. So once again from the bottom of my heart thank you so much for your continued support and thank you Connect for having the foresight to make this help available to tenants”

Money Matters user



2020 Focus

Supporting an anticipated 360 tenants moving to Universal Credit.



Building our
capabilities

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We have been delighted to welcome three new Board members and a new member of Audit and Risk Management Committee to strengthen our governance. We thank our outgoing Board member Jubar Miah for his long years of service.

Alicia Ridout brings experience from the health sector and digitisation.

Hasan Karolia has expertise in asset management.

Joe Bradley adds to this years of experience in I.T.

Complemented by Joel Owen who brings asset management and development skills.

They join a strong team, all of whom give their time on an unpaid basis.



2020 Focus

Build the tenant's voice on the Board.

Recruit a strategic finance member.

PEOPLE POSITIVE

Learning and organisational development is core to our business transformation strategy. We are proud that in the first year of our People Strategy, 26% of all job vacancies were filled by internal staff. This is a great sign that our people are committed to developing their careers at Connect and crucially, we're helping to make sure they have the right skills to successfully move around the organisation.

We have strengthened our Human Resources team welcoming a new HR and Organisational Development lead, Louise Handley and a new Learning and Development Officer, Tori Murie. Together they will engage our teams in adapting to technological changes and new ways of working.



To get us 'match-fit', they persuaded 105 of us to sign-up to an international health and fitness 'Global Challenge' for 100 days in the summer of 2019. It unearthed hidden talents and some healthy competition with positive results for those involved:

- 74%** now meet the recommendation of 10,000 steps per day
- 73%** now meet the recommended amount of sleep
- 85%** are now very aware of their physical activity levels



**2020
Focus**

Redesign recruitment and induction processes to promote diversity throughout all levels of Connect, ensure values-alignment, and meet resource gaps effectively and efficiently.

Deliver comprehensive programme of business transformation training.

TOOLS TO DO THE JOB

NEW I.T PLATFORM

In 2017 we started our business transformation programme; a key strand of which was to bring our systems up to date in line with the digital experience our team members and customers get elsewhere. Much of 2018 was taken up with finding a fully integrated I.T. solution that would be truly transformational, allowing customers to meet their needs in a way that suits them and our teams to become fully connected with each other enabling them to work as efficiently as possible.

We are pleased to have chosen Castelton as our new software provider and have been working with them since January 2019 to implement their broad suite of products in an innovative end-to-end approach. This is a big project led by our Business Transformation team but involving everyone across Connect, all keen to get their hands on the new system.



**2020
Focus**

Go live with an integrated housing, finance and asset management system.

STAFF AND CUSTOMER WEBSITES

Good communication is fundamental in a people-business like ours. Our 170 employees need quick and easy access to information without being overwhelmed by emails. Our customers want mobile-friendly, simple, clear content and the ability to contact us conveniently.

During the year we have launched two websites; an internal site for our teams to get up to date news and share information and a new interim, mobile-friendly website for customers containing the content they most use.



2020 Focus

Launch transactional customer website.

REFURBISHMENT OF THE LEEDS OFFICE

Our office on Roundhay Road had started to show its age and was not the welcoming and productive environment we wanted it to be for visitors or our team. A working group of staff, the Business Transformation team, in-house maintenance team and FSH contractors meticulously planned the refurbishment and miraculously executed a top-to-tail makeover in three

weeks. To meet this remarkable timetable, we closed the office and everyone decanted across Leeds and Dewsbury with good grace and minimal disruption to our services. The results are a brighter, clutter-free environment; a better use of space and greater collaboration between teams.

REFINANCING

To enable us to deliver our development ambitions, we are delighted to have completed a refinancing exercise during the year, securing two facilities totalling £30 million from Yorkshire Bank and Santander.

Thank you

To the guardians of our social purpose and values, our Board.

To the committed tenants of Connect's Residents Federation who give huge amounts of time to making Connect a better landlord.

To our talented, flexible and hard-working employees only some of whose achievements have been outlined in this report.

To tenants and support clients for giving us feedback to help us work on improving our services .

To our partners for working with us to make a difference to the lives of people in West Yorkshire.

To you for taking the time to read this.

A more equal society where a good home, a good neighbourhood, good health and good prospects are within everyone's reach.

Connect Housing Association Limited is a charitable housing organisation registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (No. IP17445R) and with the Regulator of Social Housing. (No. L2285).

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