



Environmental, social and
governance report / 2021

Building a better future





“Social housing begins with social justice.”

Chan Kataria OBE
Group Chief Executive, emh



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“We are a values based business with an ambition to make positive change for good.”

Professor David Russell
Chair, emh

In a world of constant change and challenge we take our values and responsibilities very seriously. This means taking the right decisions and bold steps to build a fairer, greener and better future.



Change for good

Emh has a clear vision of its purpose and obligations, and a long-term approach to business that's firmly rooted in its values. Established measures of financial viability, performance and customer satisfaction remain important, but sustainability, diversity, community impact, social justice and good governance are equally central to measuring and determining our success in making a positive contribution to society.

In this, our first comprehensive, groupwide environmental, social and governance (ESG) report, we set out our philosophy, strategy and plan to deliver on all these priorities. Setting ambitious targets and publishing regular evidence-based reports provides assurance to our customers, partners, colleagues, investors and regulators that we're on the right track. Through ESG reporting we can hold ourselves to account and enable others to do the same, by measuring our performance, impact and progress against our mission.

We are proud to champion and promote diversity across our services for housing, communities, care and support and as an employer. As part of the national PlaceShapers alliance of housing associations we campaign and

lead the way in demonstrating our ambitions and potential to achieve wider social and environmental advances.

Decarbonising our homes, services and working practices demands urgent action, some of which is complex and costly. This represents a different and more sustainable future – one that aligns with our values, and to which we are absolutely committed. Recent revolutions in awareness and attitudes towards race, gender, sexuality and other differences have changed things forever. These are changes for the better, which we also wholeheartedly embrace.

Our 75th anniversary is a time to reflect on our past achievements and consider the legacy we're building through investment, transformation and partnerships. We remain focused on and true to our core purpose of listening to and supporting customers and communities. The examples and information included here reflect this and convey the values that continue to drive everything we do. Our business is about making change for good.

Professor David Russell
Chair, emh

75 years' service to the East Midlands

In 2021 we marked 75 years of providing homes, support and care to the east midlands, and embarked on our biggest ever building programme to deliver 3,850 new homes by 2028. The way we achieve this and other objectives is as important as the outcomes themselves.

Emh began its life and work in 1946 as East Midlands Housing Association, a small charity led by a determined band of volunteers seeking to provide homes in Leicestershire for ex-servicemen and their families. Starting with development capital of just £39.50 the organisation has grown and diversified ever since to become the significant profit-for-purpose business we are today.



Important milestones in our history include:

1997 – creating Midlands Rural Housing to help small, independent housing associations build and manage homes in rural areas

2005 – 2013 – strategic mergers and acquisitions with Foundation Housing Association, Three Oaks Homes, Three Valleys Housing to extend our development programme, range of services and area of operation

2013 – diversified our services to include care and support and Sharpes, our landscape maintenance service

2018 – selected as one of Homes England's first strategic partners, with £30.5 million of long-term funding to boost our homebuilding capacity.

In 2021, we:

- ▶ Provide more than 20,000 homes for almost 33,000 people across 49 local authorities
- ▶ Own and control net assets worth £902 million, with an annual turnover of £123 million
- ▶ Employ 1,170 full-time equivalent colleagues, including 124 apprentices.
- ▶ Reduced office running costs and mileage from commuting by moving to hybrid working
- ▶ Benefit from strong partnerships with Homes England, private funders such as Barclays, Lloyds, NatWest and Santander, the Pension Insurance Corporation, county and district councils, health commissioners, the East Midlands Chamber and an array of other regional and local agencies
- ▶ Beginning to develop homes using modern off site methods of construction to reduce carbon emissions
- ▶ Won the Insider Media East Midlands Residential Property Award for social housing.

These are the resources, raw materials and reputation with which we're building a better future.

Our values-driven vision and mission

We are a strongly values-driven organisation that's committed to long-term investment and success in achieving greater fairness, environmental sustainability and the highest standards of business practice.

Emh's mission remains true to the spirit and principle of our founders. We exist to provide housing and care to improve opportunities for people.

In pursuit of this we're not content to be average or unremarkable. Our vision, set out in the group's business plan up to 2023, is to be the best social housing and care business in the country.

Our values capture what we see as the four essential ingredients of social justice: access, equity, participation and diversity. Each is crucial in its own right, but it's their combined effect that really counts and which we aim to demonstrate in this report.

Emh's values are the touchstone for our approach to behaviours, action and transparency on ESG. They secure our commitment to long-term, positive change and safeguard the culture and systems to achieve it. Each year, we recognise and reward colleagues' individual contribution to these values through the mnemonic-branded 'I DO ACE' awards.

The values that underpin our mission and vision are:

- ▶ **Integrity** – working to the highest ethical standards
- ▶ **Diversity** – respecting everyone for who they are
- ▶ **Openness** – being honest and straightforward
- ▶ **Accountability** – being accountable to and influenced by our customers
- ▶ **Clarity** – being clear about what we do, why and how
- ▶ **Excellence** – striving to be the best in everything we do.

Our ESG approach and objectives

We've developed our approach to ESG reporting to match the particular nature of our group, the region we serve and the priorities of our customers, service users and stakeholders.

We're aware of and applaud the work undertaken by other leading organisations to develop ESG reporting for the social housing sector, in particular the Sustainability Reporting Standard. For the moment though, we've decided not to adopt an external model but develop and follow our own, bespoke approach to suit the characteristics of our business. We are flexible though and will closely watch the emerging law, regulation and best practice to continuously refine our plans and response.

Our primary objective in reporting our ESG related activities and outcomes is to demonstrate our long-held values of integrity, diversity, openness, accountability, clarity and excellence to our customers, service users and wider stakeholders. In line with the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance 2020, our Board considers

value for money, financial sustainability, carbon neutrality and environmental sustainability, and social sustainability to be central to their strategic planning and purpose. ESG reporting gives us a valuable channel through which to be held to account for the delivery of these strategic priorities.

We also believe that the sorts of housing, care and support we provide represent the very best opportunity for ethical, pro-social investment. As such, our strategy for and reporting of ESG must show evidence of integrated investment to:

- ▶ Sustain and increase private and public capital to support our objectives
- ▶ Measure, manage and report on impact
- ▶ Account for positive social and environmental outcomes.



We welcome partners' and other readers' feedback on this first ESG report. From building homes to social enterprise and personal care, most aspects of our work depend on and are delivered through partnership or collaboration. Nowhere is this truer than in the biggest ticket priorities reflected within ESG.

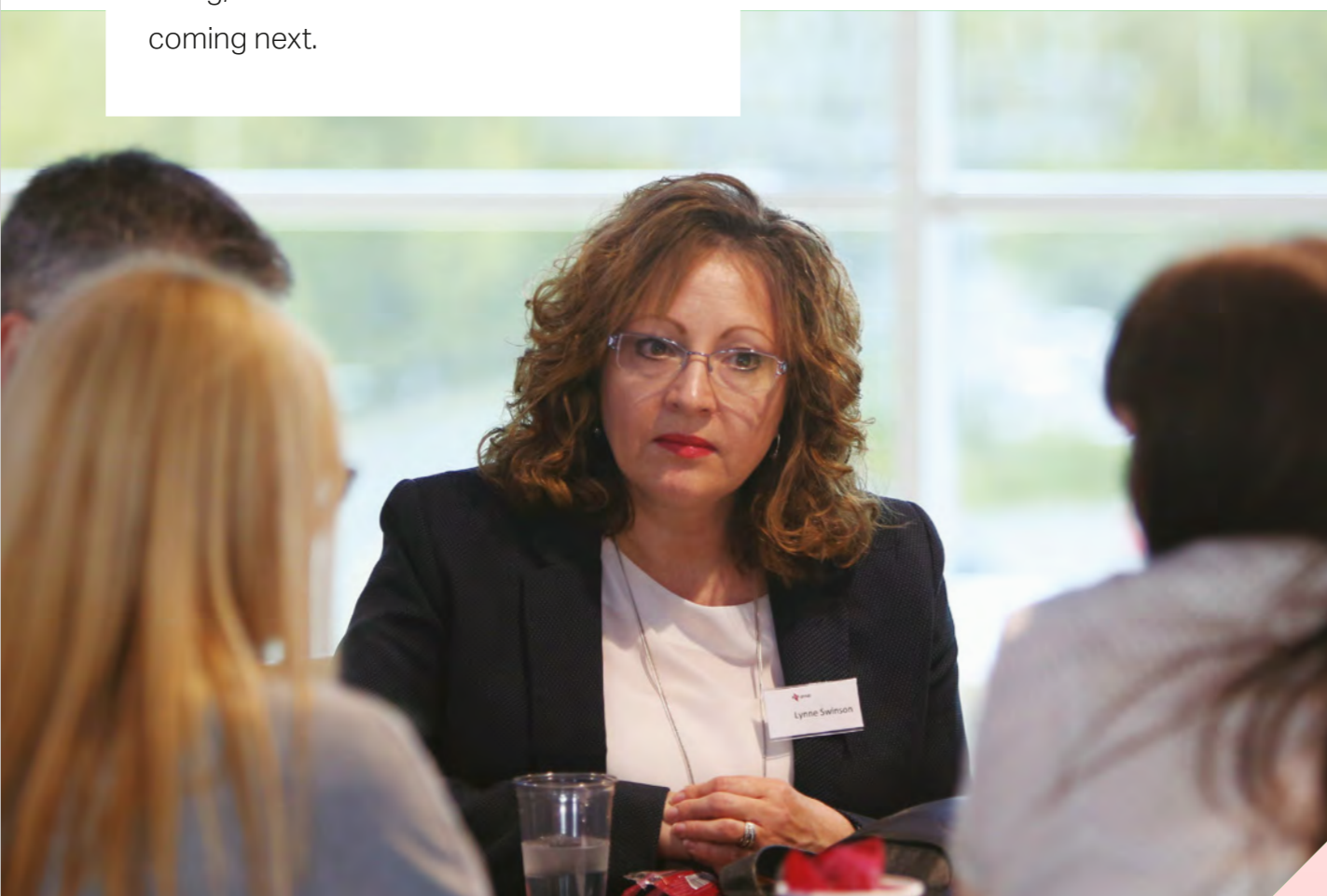
Standards and principles

Our strategies to deliver and report on ESG comply with all of the current and anticipated industry, national and international standards.



With new accords, protocols and technologies emerging all the time, compliance with the highest standards and best practice is, quite rightly, a moving target. Our strategy keeps us abreast of what other high-performing organisations and sectors are doing, and looks outward to what's coming next.



International

At the global level, we've assessed our business against the relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Codified in 2015, the 17 goals are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with action on economic growth, education, health, social protection, job opportunities, climate change and environmental protection. The goals now also provide a framework for recovery from the worldwide effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.




The following table shows how we're promoting and pursuing the UN goals.

UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 1. No poverty	<p>Providing affordable homes</p> <p>Financial inclusion service and affordability assessments</p> <p>Support for digital skills and inclusion</p> <p>Reducing fuel poverty</p>	<p>In 2020/1, 754 tenancies were let to people under retirement age who needed a home they can afford and who get all or some of their income from benefits – this is nearly half (47%) of our lettings to people of that age group</p> <p>Residents helped to claim over £2.2 million of extra income 2020/21</p> <p>Partnership with NHS and local voluntary organisations to provide 30 tablet computers and 'digital buddy' learning support</p> <p>Investing in renewable home energy and efficiency (see goal 7)</p>
 3. Good health and wellbeing	<p>Supporting Active Lives programmes for people with learning disabilities, including tennis, karate, dancing, walking football, arts and crafts</p> <p>Developing Extra Care Schemes to offer flexibility, choice and community cohesion</p> <p>Employee Assistance Programme, Wellbeing Group and initiatives</p>	<p>120 people joined activity days organised with Derbyshire Dales and Chesterfield District, August - September 2021</p> <p>Springfields, our fourth and latest Extra Care scheme opened in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire in autumn 2021, providing state-of-the-art homes and care for 65 residents, with restaurant and other facilities open to the local community</p> <p>Colleagues walked over 21,000 miles during the Step Out for September campaign in 2021</p>

UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <p>4. Quality education</p>	<p>Employing and training apprentices</p> <p>Back to work partnerships</p>	<p>181 apprenticeships begun since 2018</p> <p>September 2021 Loughborough Jobs Fair supported by 20 businesses</p>
 <p>5. Gender equality</p>	<p>Targeting equal representation of men and women across our leaders and board</p> <p>Annual gender pay-gap reporting</p> <p>Trans and non-binary awareness and support</p>	<p>63.5% of our leaders are women</p> <p>50% of our board members are women</p> <p>Mean gender pay-gap of 10.5% in favour of male colleagues (compared to 10.9% sector average)</p> <p>Mean hourly rates: Male £15.03 Female £13.45</p> <p>Training for People Team and diversity leads</p> <p>Gender-neutral toilets in refurbished office hub</p>

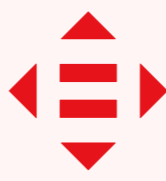


UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <p>7. Affordable and clean energy</p>	<p>Solar panels and feed-in tariffs for homes and offices</p> <p>Renewable energy</p> <p>Installing air/ground source heat pumps</p> <p>Building low-carbon Passivhaus homes</p> <p>Decarbonising existing homes</p> <p>2020 East Midlands Energy Efficiency Awards</p>	<p>18 domestic sites and 16 commercial installations generating over 370kWh of electricity in 2020/21, saving 204.5 tonnes of carbon emissions</p> <p>All office and landlord electricity supplies are green sourced</p> <p>1030 domestic air source heat pumps installed saving each household around £250 per year and 1.9 tonnes of carbon emissions</p> <p>68 Passivhaus homes built with typical 80% reduction in carbon emissions and energy bills cut by up to £50 per month</p> <p>All emh homes to have a minimum C rated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) by 2030, to emit 75% less carbon</p> <p>Winner: Housing association/ landlord of the year</p>




UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <h2>8. Decent work and economic growth</h2>	Large regional employer	Employing over 1,000 people from within the East Midlands
	Workforce policies and practices that support the success of the organisation and reflect its values	Investors in People Gold and Silver accreditations and values based employee engagement programmes; union recognition and active employee consultative committees
	Employing and training apprentices	90% of apprentices enrolled since 2018 remain employed by us
	Back to work partnerships	See goal 4
	Annual ethnicity and gender pay gap reporting	8.7% mean pay gap in favour of colleagues from black and other ethnic minorities
	Annual 'I DO ACE' colleague values awards	See Governance
	Groupwide commitment to ISO 45001 to keep people safe at work	Air-filtration at Memorial House to reduce risks of disease
Expanded Health and Safety team	Newly created head of department post recruited 2021	



UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <h2>10. Reduced inequalities</h2>	Equality and diversity partnership with East Midlands Chamber	See Governance case study
	Target for at least 11% of our workforce to be from ethnic minorities	9.3% of colleagues from ethnic minorities
	Homes and support for people sleeping rough and refugees	Six one-bedroom homes for homeless people in Leicestershire and Rutland
		Six one-bedroom homes for homeless people in Leicestershire and Rutland
		Six homes with three-year support packages for Afghan refugees
	Homes and support for ethnic minority communities	Four sheltered housing schemes for people from black and other ethnic minorities
	Specialist supported housing for vulnerable people	Six hostels providing 24 hour support
	Annual ethnicity and gender pay gap reporting	See goals 5 and 8
	'Rooney Rule' for senior appointments	We guarantee at least one applicant from an ethnic minority is shortlisted for every leadership role
	Board lead for equality, diversity and inclusion	Patricia McCabe champions diversity across the group, advising on best practice, awareness and compliance
Adopting and annual assessment against the 2020 Race Equality Code	Three-year plan in place to strengthen compliance	
Black and ethnic minority colleagues group and listening teams	Sharing experiences and ideas	

UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <h2>11. Sustainable cities and communities</h2>	<p>Building new homes to reduce housing need and homelessness</p> <p>Investing in existing homes</p> <p>Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Partnerships with Blaby and Erewash Local Authorities</p> <p>Target of 90% customer satisfaction with services, home condition and neighbourhood</p> <p>Sustainable rates of tenancy turnover</p>	<p>356 new homes completed in 2020/21</p> <p>Target of 3,850 further new homes by 2028, with a minimum 'B' EPC rating</p> <p>Target of £12 million annual investment in existing homes up to 2028</p> <p>Successful bids via Midlands Energy Hub for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund enabling £1,551,210 of worst first/fabric first improvements to bring 103 homes to Energy Performance Certification (EPC) ratings C rating or above, with an average investment cost of C.£15,000 per property.</p> <p>91.7% overall satisfaction</p> <p>92.6% satisfaction with home condition</p> <p>88.9% neighbourhood satisfaction</p> <p>6.74% of tenancies changed in 2020/21 compared to 7.7%*** <u>HouseMark</u> peer group average</p>
 <h2>12. Responsible consumption and production</h2>	<p>Procurement strategy and practice</p> <p>Modern methods of construction and business operations</p> <p>Construction waste disposal and management partnership with Travis Perkins</p>	<p>Comprehensive ESG guidance and expectations issued for all contracts and suppliers</p> <p>Target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030</p> <p>97% of construction waste recycled, with only 3% to landfill</p>

UN goal*	What we're doing	Evidence**
 <h2>13. Climate action</h2>	<p>Our Workspace Project to repurpose and refurbish emh's head office, Memorial House</p>	<p>Creating a low-carbon hub to support agile and flexible working, promote engagement and improve wellbeing</p>

*** UN Goals not currently covered are 2 Zero Hunger; 6 Clean Water and Sanitation; 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 14 Life Below Water; 15 Life on Land; 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; and 17 Partnership for the Goals
 *** Figures shown are correct at November 2021 or for the year ending 31 March 2021
 *** Peer group figure is for 2019/20

National

The UK Government has signalled its emphasis on social impact by redesignating the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We hope that this presages a move towards the Scottish Government's Housing and Social Justice Directorate approach, which puts secure, affordable homes at the heart of fairness and wider life-chances. We welcome these initiatives and the plans to reinvigorate consumer regulation by learning lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire and inquiry.

We have the highest 'G1/V1' rating for compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's economic standards, and all but two of our care homes are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission. The A+ Standard & Poor's long-term credit rating demonstrates the strength of emh's financial base and performance.

Emh's company secretary co-chairs the National Housing Federation governance forum, and we took part in the advisory group to review and update the Code of Governance for housing associations. By April 2022 (when all of its provisions of the become due) we will be fully compliant with the new 2020 Code. The four areas where we are currently working towards the revised, full standard are **Resident Focus, Culture, Integrity** and **Strategy, Resources and Plans**.

Strong connections

In February 2021 emh's community engagement team launched a digital inclusion project to help people using our care and support services to access the internet and gain greater confidence with technology.

In partnership with Derbyshire Voluntary Action, Monkey Park, Derbyshire Dales Community Voluntary Services and Rural Action Derbyshire we secured funding

to buy 27 tablet computers and create a 'digital buddy' learning support pack. Working 1:1 with participants, the project boosts digital skills and enables people to take part in online exercise, dancing, games and Zoom catch-ups with friends and family.

The National Health Service has provided three further iPads for residents of registered nursing care homes to use, and we're also setting up a Facebook group for those who've taken part in the project to keep in touch with each other.



Kevin White from Chesterfield took part in the project. He has a learning disability and lives independently. Kevin said: "It's made a lot of difference being able to go on Zoom. It's helped me communicate with a lot more people in the community and I now feel more confident using technology."



Environmental

We pledge to contribute to national and global strategies to protect the environment through sustainable development and decarbonising our homes and working practices.

Our work to build and maintain homes and provide personal care has a substantial environmental impact. We use natural materials, energy and water in construction, and we deliver our services through a dispersed, mobile workforce.

Our green strategy focuses on:

- ▶ Avoiding emissions, pollution and waste wherever possible
- ▶ Reducing the amounts of harmful materials and substances we use
- ▶ Finding environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional materials and practices
- ▶ Maximising reuse and recycling of resources.



New homes

We are a Homes England strategic partner and take a 'fabric first' approach to minimising the harmful environmental effects of our housebuilding. This encompasses new build designs, standards, materials, fittings, modern methods of construction and waste disposal – all anticipating and preparing for the Future Homes Standard changes to Building Regulations, which will come into force from 2025.

This transition takes place against rising inflation in utilities, materials and overall build costs. We expect the latter to increase by at least 3.6% over the next year. Apart from the well-proven need for energy efficiency, weather patterns in recent years have also highlighted the need to avoid homes that overheat in summer.

By no later than 2025 we will no longer install fossil fuel heating and hot water systems, and we'll provide electric vehicle charging points for all suitable homes. We assess the impact of each development on the local environment and include appropriate landscaping, circulation routes and cycle storage to encourage low-carbon transport.



Existing homes

More than a third (35.4%) of our existing homes have an EPC rating below C, and we estimate that the cost of bringing all of these homes up to that minimum standard is £109 million. The group's 30-year asset management strategy explains and commits us to a package of investment, disinvestment and divestment decisions to make this happen. This is an essential part of keeping us on track to making all social housing carbon neutral by 2050.

In partnership with Blaby and Erewash Councils we've already secured 'LAD 2' funding to improve the energy efficiency of 85 homes. We're also bidding for the first wave of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to bring more homes up to the C rating.

Our strategic alliance for building materials with Travis Perkins Group makes a significant contribution to meeting environmental targets. Travis Perkins is accredited to ISO 14001 and has reduced its carbon emissions by 45 per cent over the past seven years. The company obtains 98 per cent of its timber and timber products from certified sustainably sources meeting Forest Stewardship Council or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification standards.

Our Asset Management Strategy sets out our five year priorities and is our framework for making decisions about investment, disinvestment and divestment. These include:

- ▶ Increased investment in existing stock to address net carbon zero
- ▶ Improving 5,600 homes to achieve Energy Performance Certificate C energy efficiency rating by 2030, the estimated cost of which is £80m net
- ▶ Digital technology to manage stock
- ▶ Future proofing our supported housing
- ▶ Addressing Building Safety – although we have no High Risk Blocks
- ▶ A continued focus on achieving value for money through procurement



Work and transformation

The enforced changes in working arrangements triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated our plans to transform the way we operate and provide services. Investment in digital services through our [myhomeonline](#) portal continues, with 63 per cent of customers now registered to use it. But this year it's the reimagining and renovation of our head office at Memorial House in Coalville, Leicestershire that takes centre stage.

During 2020/21, the move to hybrid working saved around £30,000 per month in fuel costs. The office changes aim to consolidate these savings by creating a flexible hub from which colleagues can operate part-time according to their preference, backed up by robust home systems and access to other amenities for the essentials of working life.

Physical changes to the building (including flexible collaboration spaces, solar panels, low-energy lighting, renewable energy heating, air filtration, noise insulation and extra electric vehicle charging points) are the catalyst for a much broader environmental management plan for its future use.



With our contractors [Overbury](#) and environmental consultants [Encore](#), the project has enabled us to make whole lifecycle decisions – investing now to save in the future. This includes choices of materials and future office supplies – for example, all the internal signage is made from 70% recycled cardboard weatherboard, with wooden cutlery and paper cups in catering areas to eliminate single-use plastics. We are also working with our supply chain to avoid plastic packaging and find easily recyclable alternatives.

Grounds maintenance

The group's social enterprise, emh's garden services team, maintains shared green and planted areas for all emh's homes as well as a number of local businesses (for example, a factory and doctor's surgery in Coalville). The enterprise recruits and trains people who have been long-term unemployed to gain new skills, qualifications and career opportunities.

Waste management is a vital part of the garden services at emh and it is done through a contract with Wilshee's Waste & Recycling. They separate green and other waste to maximise composting and energy recovery. In 2020/21 less than one per cent of the garden services team's waste went to landfill, saving over 127,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Other key changes that the garden services team is introducing include electric powered machinery and vehicles, natural herbicides, accredited insect-friendly planting and new grass cutting specifications to create meadow-style habitats for wildlife.

We calculate that emh's garden services team generated over £600,000 worth of return on social investment in 2020/21.



Neighbourhood initiatives

We've recruited more than 300 estate champions so that we get proactive feedback from customers about their neighbourhoods. They've helped us to improve cleaning and gardening services, deal with low level nuisance and remove rubbish quickly. This means cleaner and safer estates, and shows that we're a listening organisation.

At Mastin Moor in Derbyshire, some of our Care and Support service users have created a nature walk in woodland surrounding their homes. From the fully-accessible portacabin and greenhouse, they have been growing fruit and vegetables and wildflowers from seed. Taking advantage of the expansive outdoor area the people we support have been shelter-building, bug hunting and learning how to cook outdoors. These activities get people outdoors, enable them to learn new skills, make friends and give a massive boost to their self-confidence and sense of purpose.



Quicker, cleaner, greener homes

Completing in late 2022, the 42 new homes at Station Road in Beeston, Nottinghamshire are emh's first development built using pure modular methods. This involves whole-storey sections being manufactured in a factory then assembled on site. Delivered with modular specialists [ilke Homes](#), the scheme was made possible by £1.7 million of Homes England funding, to provide 24 two- and three-bedroom properties for affordable rent and 18 for shared ownership.

Modular construction is an important part of our strategy to decarbonise our development process and work towards zero carbon homes. The key benefits are much faster build times and lower labour costs, with better quality control and reduced waste and disturbance. The new homes have an EPC rating of B.



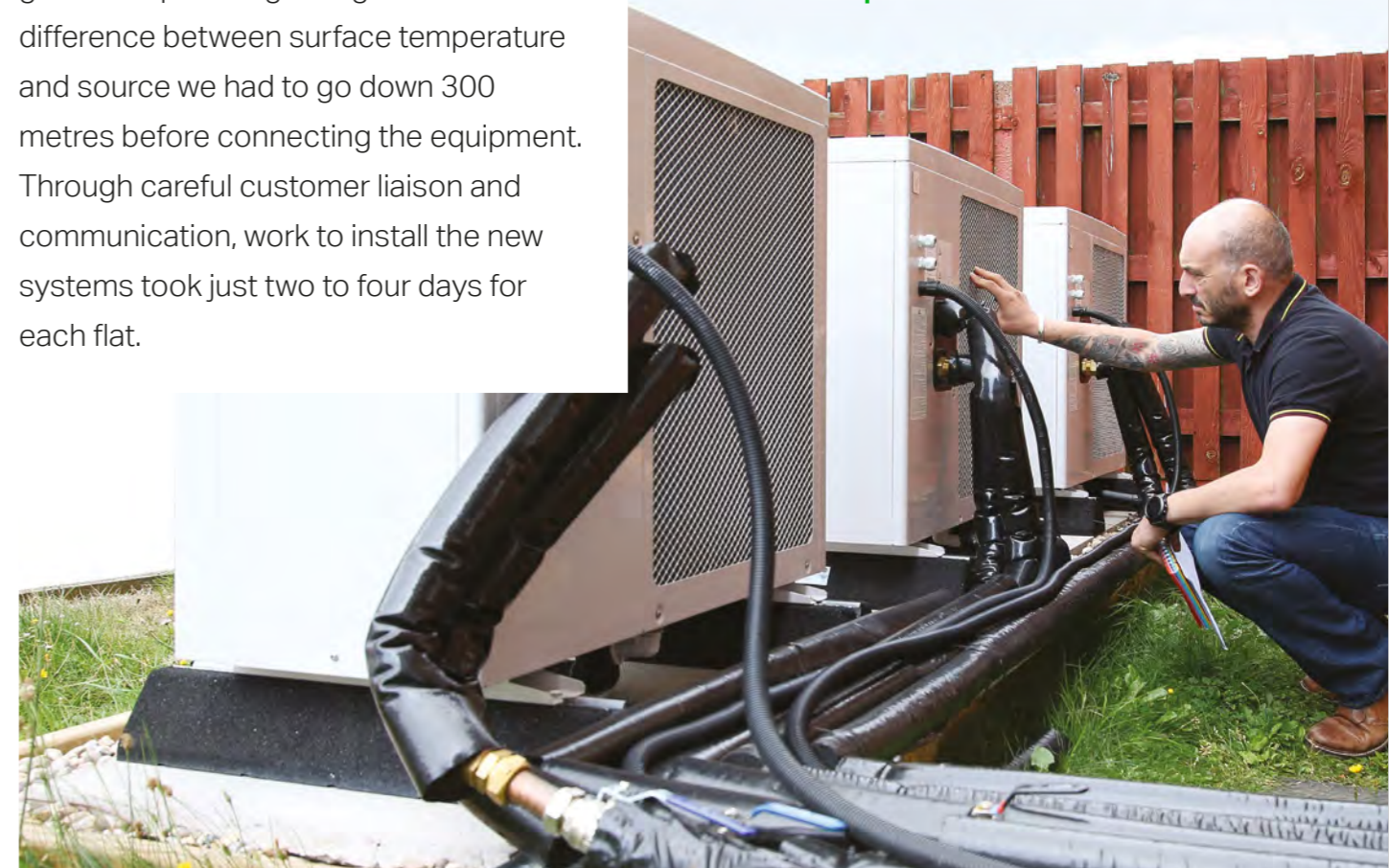
Digging deep for affordable warmth

Until 2020 the 18 flats at Tresham Street in Kettering, Northamptonshire, were heated by outdated and expensive Economy 7 storage heaters. These were ill-suited to the converted factory building, leaving residents with little control over their living environment and electricity bills that were well above average.

Following a detailed survey of the site, which is tightly restricted by surrounding roads and other buildings, we chose to install a ground source heat pump by drilling 15 bore holes into the car park. To get the required eight degrees Celsius difference between surface temperature and source we had to go down 300 metres before connecting the equipment. Through careful customer liaison and communication, work to install the new systems took just two to four days for each flat.

We self-funded the £450,000 scheme but hope to recover around £200,000 over seven years through the Government's [Renewable Heat Initiative](#). The project was delivered by a specialist heat pump contractor, [Kensa Group](#), and our advisers [Qore Energy](#). In the first year, residents have saved around £440 each on energy bills and reduced carbon emissions by 1.7 tonnes per home.

The Tresham Street project was Highly Commended in the 2021 East Midlands Energy Efficiency Awards for the quality of installation and customer experience.





Social

We're proud to be a PlaceShaper – a longstanding and active member of the national network of community-based housing associations committed to a wider role for housing in health, wellbeing, education, skills, employment, financial and digital inclusion. We are a long-term stakeholder and partner across the east midlands and in local communities.



Integrated impact

The depth and breadth of social impact we aim to achieve means that it cannot be contained within a single strategy or part of the group. Rather, it's the combined and aggregate effect of practice across all our activity that makes the difference.

So, our approaches to tackling homelessness, tenancy sustainment, customer engagement, community development and back to work partnerships come together to achieve positive local outcomes.

With the local authorities in Leicester City, Blaby and Erewash we've submitted a joint, three-year bid to provide extra properties based on the Housing First model. This will build on our experience of converting six, one-bedroom flats to take homeless people off the street, with an attached support worker funded through the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative.



Customer voice

Our customers are the reason we exist and are crucial partners in helping us prioritise the things that matter most (for example, building quality, safety and security, affordability, empty homes and financial wellbeing). We're early adopters of the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter.



We have a highly skilled and experienced Scrutiny Panel of six customers, who can conduct an in-depth assessment of any service area they choose, with recommendations reported direct to the emh board. The Panel has completed an independent assessment of the group's performance against the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. We also have Service Improvement Groups focusing specifically on Customer Experience, Engagement and Communications, Housing and Neighbourhoods and Property Services. These groups help us produce the Annual Report to Residents and improve the way we handle customer complaints.

It's partly in response to customer feedback that we offer the diversity of tenure choices in our housebuilding, with new homes for affordable rent, market rent, shared ownership and outright sale. Locally expressed needs also lie behind our investment in apprenticeships, employment, training and enterprise (for example, the emh garden services company) and our emphasis on regional procurement. The property care partnership with Travis Perkins Group generates a corporate social responsibility rebate (worth £40,000 in 2020/21) to invest in local community projects.



Regenerating communities

We have a business plan pledge to breathe new life and opportunities into disadvantaged neighbourhoods through comprehensive, area-based regeneration. These schemes are not just about the physical condition of buildings and the local environment but also the social fabric of schools, colleges, shops, jobs, skills and other local services.

At Victoria Street in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire we've begun an £8.3m redevelopment project to bring a former factory and warehouse site back into use. The fire-damaged buildings there were demolished in 2007, since when the land has been vacant and neglected.



We're building 56 new two- and three-bedroom, energy-efficient homes to match the surrounding terraced street pattern. This will remove an eyesore and anti-social behaviour hot-spot from the area and bring new economic activity to nearby shops and leisure facilities.

In Long Eaton, Derbyshire we worked in partnership with Erewash Borough Council and [United Living](#) to refurbish the derelict, four-storey block of 29 bedsit flats at Romorantin Place. The 16 new family homes we provided there won a project of the year prize at the [2020 Efficiency East Midlands Building Communities Awards](#).

We are also passionate about investing in sustainable rural communities. Engaging with 42 district councils on rural housing, we work with a range of other partners to help build and support rural communities across the Midlands. Through Midlands Rural Housing, our aim is to make sure there is access to affordable homes in the towns and villages of the Midlands for people who live or work in the region. In 2021 we completed 18 new homes in villages across Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the Peak District.

Individual wellbeing

The early stages of the pandemic provided an acute real-life stress test of our values, preparedness, people and ambitions. This period put our responsibility for people's personal welfare (both customers and colleagues) into sharp relief and demanded urgent action to support vulnerable individuals and households.

To help prevent homelessness we've signed up to the [National Housing Federation's Commitment to Refer](#). This voluntary code means that whenever one of our customers becomes homeless or is threatened with homelessness, we refer them to the relevant local authority. Together, we identify any extra support or measures to prevent someone losing their home, even in cases where we're taking court action to evict them.



Safeguarding

We have important safeguarding responsibilities for customers, particularly care and support service users. Our safeguarding lead works across the group to ensure that colleagues are trained in how to respond to any safeguarding issues that they become aware of (for example, people threatened with homelessness, or financial, physical, psychological and emotional abuse. Each operating board receives regular reports on safeguarding, and we recently received a green internal audit rating for safeguarding compliance.

Healthy and engaged

The people who use our care and support services want and need the same opportunities as everyone else, including the chance to live healthy, active lives and to play a part in their local communities.

We work in partnership with a range of organisations and businesses across the East Midlands to make this possible, especially to help people with learning disabilities to volunteer, be outdoors for exercise, gain skills and make new friends. With partners including The National Trust, [Peak Rail](#), Matlock Farm

Park, Ashfield District Council, Peak Park, the Eco Centre and Derbyshire Dales District Council we arrange regular placements, activities and events for environmental work, gardening, maintenance and care for animals.

Disabled people in the UK are generally less likely to lead active, healthy lives, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made things more difficult for many. So the day services and community volunteering programmes we run make a big difference to individuals' confidence and quality of life.



Richard Hill who volunteers at the Peak Rail heritage railway in Matlock, Derbyshire said: "Today I've been smashing up pallets! It was hard work but I enjoyed it and all the banter with the other volunteers."



Governance

We're a well-run, open and inclusive organisation that looks after its people, partners and assets. We promote diversity and opportunity, and are committed to tackling inequality or unfairness wherever it occurs. In 2021 our governance arrangements were independently reviewed by [Anthony Collins Solicitors](#) and the [David Tolson Partnership](#).

In Spring 2022 we were pleased to learn that following an in depth assessment by the Regulator of Social Housing, we retained their highest G1/V1 ratings for governance and viability.



ESG by design

The standards, achievements and compliance detailed elsewhere in this report don't happen by accident. They're the product of a clear vision and determined leadership from our founders in 1946 right up to the present day. Within our group structure we operate as one emh, harnessing the different talents and resources of our teams and partnerships to fulfil our mission. We remain focused on our core social purpose at a time when it's never been more relevant or important.

Our board and committees act as trustees of our values, culture and strategy, working with the executive and wider leadership team to guide our strategic direction and decisions. Every member of our leadership team has been trained as a coach to encourage the right behaviours across the whole workforce.



We measure this regularly using the Barrett Values – a simple but powerful model that enables people to assess and align their personal values with those of the organisation. This means colleagues can bring their whole selves to work, and in 2020/21 91.3 per cent of colleagues said they shared emh's values. The annual 'I DO ACE' awards recognise exceptional commitments and achievements with almost a hundred individual winners in 2021, plus a special community contribution category and overall winner.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE® We invest in people Gold

We are a Gold Investor in People with a strong learning and development Academy dedicated to helping every person realise their full potential and ambitions. From apprentices to the executive we have a good record of growing from within, supplemented by our ability to attract and compete for the best professionals in the market.

Partnerships and procurement

We make it our business to influence and support the work of others. The ripples created by housing, care and support spread throughout communities we serve and beyond – so it's vital that we have a voice in these wider spheres. Our involvement with the East Midlands Chamber, local authorities and clinical commissioners is especially valuable, fortified by hundreds of connections with other statutory services, voluntary organisations, charities, providers and community groups. These are our extra eyes and ears in the region and the arterial system through which we achieve our mission.

We work hard to choose local contractors and suppliers and help them to match our own standards of probity, resilience and social impact. When procuring contracts we seek more than just the best price: we need everyone who works with us to understand ESG and play their part in improving communities and opportunities. The guidance we issue to all prospective partners spells out our expectations, from sustainable sourcing to modern slavery, workforce safety and ethics.



Diversity in business

We've developed a strategic partnership with East Midlands Chamber to promote joint research and raise diversity awareness in the business community across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire. This particularly focuses on the equality and inclusion of post-covid economic recovery in the region.

The project was kickstarted by sending every Chambers member a detailed questionnaire with follow-up discussion groups to share good practice and learning between commercial, public sector and voluntary organisations.

In 2021, for the second year running, we also collaborated with the Chamber during Black History Month as joint sponsors of its Culture and Communities event. The campaign reached more than 60,000 people to celebrate diversity in the East Midlands business community.



Next steps on ESG

We expect our approach to ESG reporting to develop rapidly in the coming years. We invite feedback on this report and are committed to helping lead best practice for the housing and care sectors.

Strategic stories

We see this and future reports as a strategic storytelling tool – accounting to the investors and stakeholders who place their trust in us with clear, full information about the real-life impact and influence we achieve.

We showcase what we're proud of and are open about any shortcomings or lack of compliance.

Through our membership of the National Housing Federation, PlaceShapers and other housing networks, we'll keep up to date with emerging practice, including sector standards and technology options to develop meaningful indicators and dashboards of ESG performance.

Sustainable finance

To prepare for future borrowing and bond issues, by 2023 we will develop and adopt a detailed framework for sustainable finance. This will cover the latest Green Bond and Social Bond Principles and be the basis for reporting to financial partners about our use and management of their investments.



If you have any feedback on this report
or thoughts about how we can extend our
ESG approach, please contact:

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