

Suffolk
Housing

Annual Report for Residents

2019/20





Hello

Chair's message

Welcome to our 2019-20 annual report. I hope you find it both informative and helpful.

For Suffolk Housing, 2019 was a year in which it had to tackle some major challenges but in the latter part of the year opportunities arose which led to a transition, which I believe will bring benefits for our staff, residents and their communities.

It was clear that change was needed, and following merger talks, Suffolk Housing joined Flagship Group on 1 February this year. This marked a positive milestone and bodes well for the future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, who throughout this period of challenge and change, worked incredibly hard to maintain our services for our residents.

Flagship Group is now the largest housing provider in the East of England, owning and managing over 31,500 homes. Our new partnership with the Group allows us to focus on our local presence and engaging with our residents and communities, to provide the very best homes and services we can. Our residents must be at the heart of all we do, and as part of Flagship Group we have the opportunity to achieve that.

We have welcomed Marie-Claire Delbrouque as Managing Director, who will lead Suffolk in offering a truly local service, which benefits from the Group's regional strength. Marie-Claire will work closely with Helen Marjoram, Head of Housing, and staff to provide a modern and responsive service that our residents value and helps to create thriving communities and great places to live.

Despite the challenges we have faced this year, particularly Covid-19 which has caused a significant impact on our business and all our lives, our priority remains the safety and wellbeing of our staff, residents and communities. And my thoughts are with everyone affected by the pandemic.

Listening to and working with residents and communities is key to ensuring Suffolk's place within the Flagship family delivers change for the better. Suffolk has benefited from having Resident Observers attend and contribute to Board and Committee meetings, alongside the important work undertaken by the Resident Scrutiny Panel. We will now take that a step further.

In the coming months we will be seeking residents to become full Board Members, to help make sure we are accountable, open, and keep residents involved at all levels of our decision making. Together, as part of Flagship Group, we now have more resources to further improve our services and to allow us to build and maintain quality, affordable homes.

Change and improvement will take time and there is a lot of work to do to bring together the services we provide but I am confident that by working together we can provide services that our residents value, and ensure that we all emerge from our recent challenges, stronger and more inclusive than before.

Steve Cook
Chair, Suffolk Housing

Our priority remains the safety and wellbeing of our staff, residents and communities



A message from the Resident Scrutiny Panel

Being the Chair of the panel since 2018, I have seen the challenges Suffolk Housing has faced over recent years and have also seen our partnership with Flagship Group form. I must say that the change is like chalk and cheese. The Group's professionalism is encouraging and a pleasure to see after the negativity of some of our past experiences.

I am proud to be Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Panel, and I say this with great pleasure – I am looking forward to working with Flagship for the benefit of all our residents and communities.

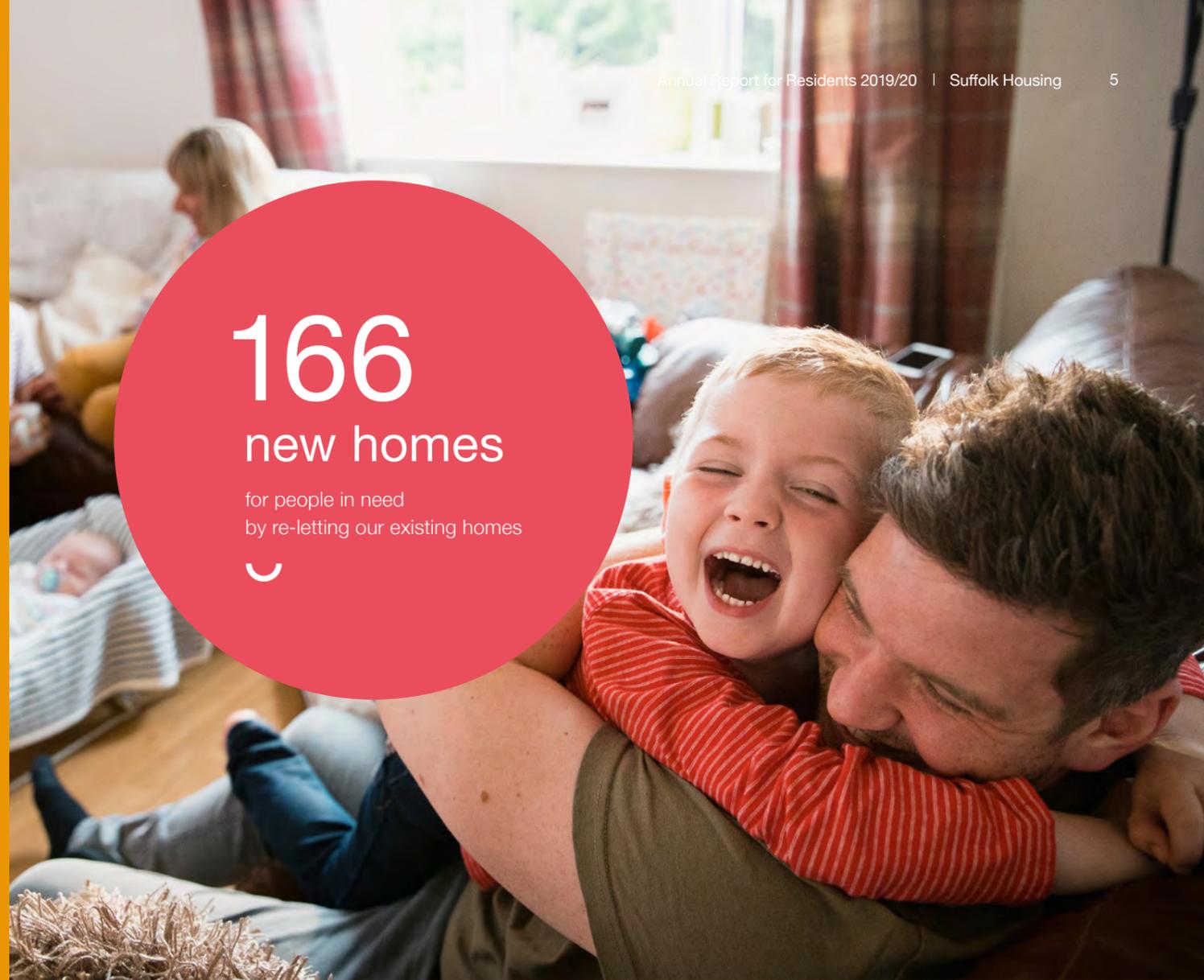
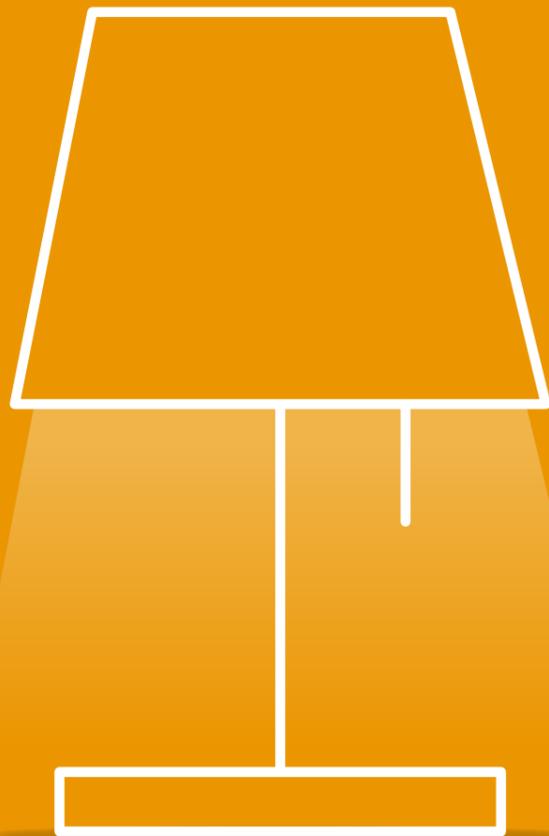
Johnnie Walker
Chair, Resident Scrutiny Panel



The year in highlights

We provide thousands of people from every walk of life with a place they can call home. A home that is affordable, safe and part of a community that thrives. The work we do matters, because having a home is vital and as part of Flagship Group, we are solving the housing crisis in the East of England.

Since joining Flagship Group, we are already starting to see improvements, and we look forward to working with our residents to further improve our services and build more homes for people in need.



166
new homes

for people in need
by re-letting our existing homes



We've increased our resident satisfaction from 72% to

74%

demonstrating improvements in the services we provide



Our rent arrears were just

3.07%

of our total rental income

Our residents and communities

We are committed to providing you with an outstanding customer service, and we recognise the simple but important behaviours which really matter to you – such as provide a smile; listening to understand; providing and taking ownership.

We strive towards delivering an outstanding service at every interaction, and here is what some of our residents have said who have received an outstanding service from our staff:

Maia our lettings administrator checked on a new resident who had recently moved in:

Trish one of our Income Officers received this feedback from a resident shortly before she ended her tenancy with us:

“Many thanks for all the help and support that you have given me during my tenancy with Suffolk Housing.”

Here’s a compliment from another resident before they bought their own home:

“I wanted to express my sincere gratitude to Suffolk Housing Society for my tenancy over the past eight years. Our home has been wonderful and changed my life. With the help of affordable housing I have been able to raise a family, pay for university fees, graduate and save up to apply for a mortgage and buy my own home. Thank you.”

“I am getting on very well thank you. The property was in great condition, the neighbours are friendly. I don’t think I could be any happier. I don’t have enough words in my vocabulary to properly express my gratitude. Thank you so much.”



Allison from our Resident Service team received this great feedback:

“I would like to commend and thank Allison from resident services; she helped me greatly yesterday and more so today, with three or four phone calls this morning at the allotted promised time, walking me through a debilitating situation and making a follow up call for me to help. Nothing was too much trouble for Allison, and I thank her greatly.”



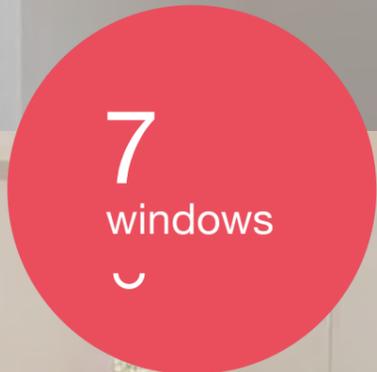
Maintaining your home

Making sure your homes are safe, secure and well-maintained matters. We are dedicated to providing quality repairs and we continue to invest in your homes and giving you an outstanding customer service.

We know how important it is for you to have a speedy and reliable repairs service when something goes wrong. Our new contract with MCP for repairs started in September 2019, replacing our previous repair contract with Fosters. And this year our service achieved over 71% satisfaction from our residents, an increase of 7% from January 2019.

Maintaining and improving homes is an important part of our commitment to you. We carry out regular maintenance activities associated with your home, focusing on safety, planned investment, repairs and maintenance.

Since joining Flagship Group, we have already started to increase the amount of upgrades and improvements we are carrying out, such as kitchens and bathrooms. With an additional £2 million dedicated improvement budget in place, we are on track to further improve the overall standard of our homes. Ensuring your homes are safe, secure and well-maintained.



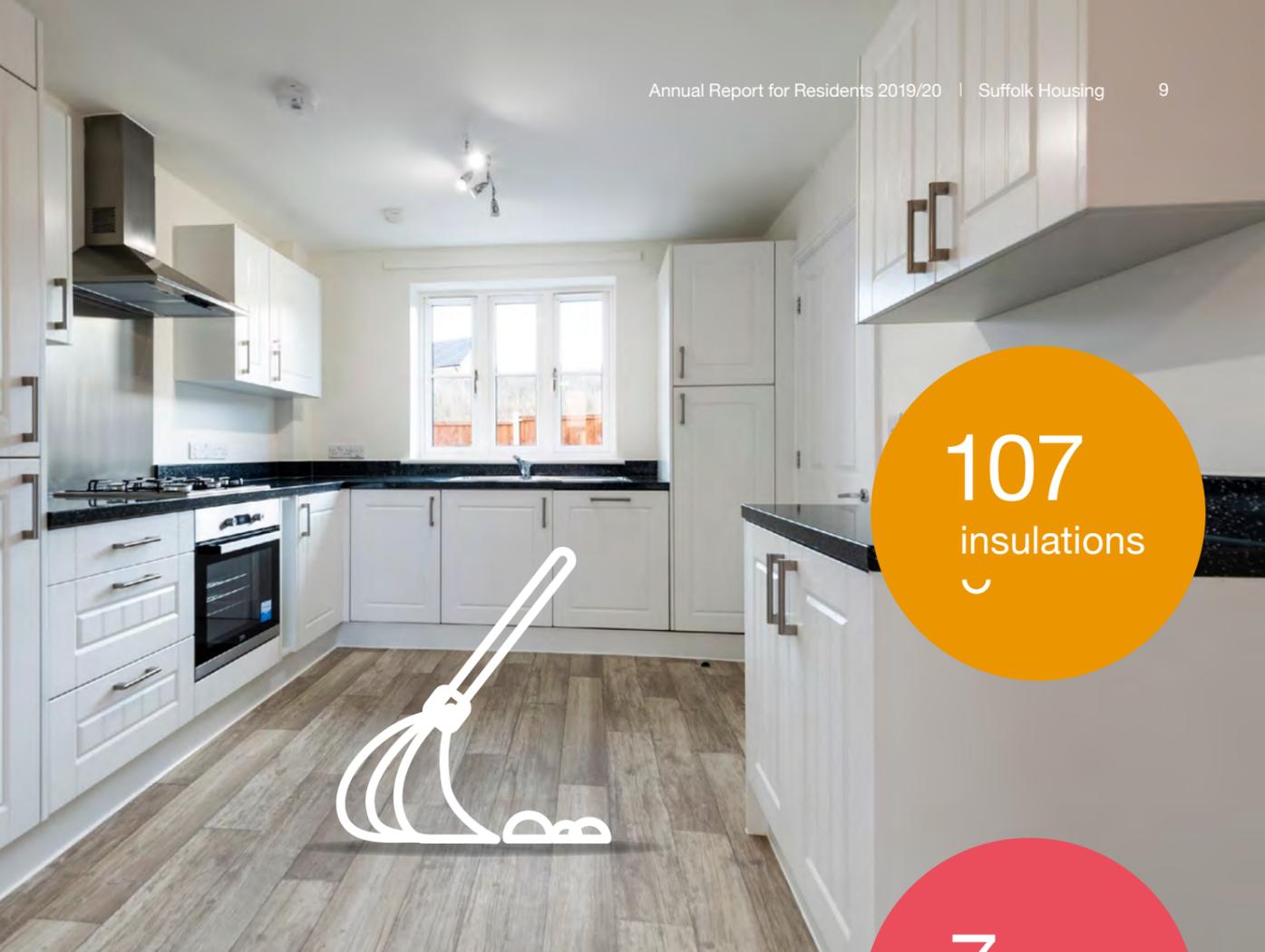
During 2019/20 we completed:



71%

satisfaction from our residents

(+7% increase from January 2019)



Keeping you safe



Our priority is the safety and wellbeing of our residents. This year we made extra efforts to help protect you. Making sure we comply with regulatory standards is critical, and we continue to invest in our buildings for your safety.

At Suffolk Housing we also have a dedicated team of Scheme Managers who support our older residents, within our Sheltered Accommodation. The team look after 278 homes and carry out weekly health, safety and fire checks to keep residents safe.

In January we were directly able to save one of our residents' lives, after finding them very unwell and confused. Had this resident not received the medical intervention they needed within a few hours; it is likely that she would not have survived. Thankfully after a brief spell in hospital, the resident made a full recovery.

Weekly health, safety and fire checks on

278
homes



407

were called to make life more bearable through lockdown



In March 2020, as a result of Covid-19, we identified our most vulnerable residents and contacted them to make sure they are OK and check they had everything they needed.

We called 407 residents to identify ways we could help and make life more bearable as we proceeded through lockdown, making referrals for support, food banks and medical supplies.



Involving you



Involving our residents in what we do is really important to us. We aim to make it quick and easy for you to have your say on what matters most. As the ones who receive our services, you are best placed to help us improve and develop them. As we worked towards setting up our partnership with Flagship Group, our main focus was on consulting with you, for example:

- Every resident and leaseholder were sent a letter outlining the transfer of engagement together with a booklet explaining our proposal to become part of Flagship Group. We let you know how you could get in touch with us to give your comments or feedback
- All **1,500 residents** who have registered their email address received a link to the information held on our website and to an online survey. The score for the partnership was **32% positive, 45% neutral and 23% negative**
- We held face-to-face meetings with residents about the partnership with Flagship at eight locations across Suffolk and Norfolk



1,500
residents registered



Residents and communities are at the heart of what we do



Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP)

The Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP) is made up of nine residents who meet regularly and scrutinise how our services are being delivered and identify areas that could benefit from an in-depth review.

During 2019/20 the RSP were involved in the procurement and selection process for our new repairs contractor MCP.

We are working with staff and residents to develop the Suffolk Housing Customer Charter which will set the standard of service that you can expect to receive.

The RSP was also involved with the consultation process with residents prior to the partnership with Flagship. This included reviewing and commenting on the consultation documents, attending meetings, and receiving feedback from other residents on the proposals.

Since the partnership, the RSP has been involved in reviewing and approving a new Flagship Group Complaints Policy. It is also working with other involved residents across the Group to review the opportunities residents have to get involved and look at how we can improve the way our services are delivered.

*Now disbanded

Performance and Quality Committee*

In 2019/20, residents were involved in the Performance and Quality Committee with three resident members on the committee alongside three Board members. The Performance and Quality Committee was given responsibility by the Board to review Suffolk Housing's performance and standards and where needed made recommendations for improvement.

Community Neighbours

At Suffolk Housing, over the last year, we have seen an increase in our community neighbours and now have 70 residents signed up. A community neighbour is someone within the local community who is a point of contact for other residents, who can help with things such as reporting repairs or highlighting any concerns within the community.



70
residents
signed up

Community Neighbour Inspection Form (CNIF) initiative

During 2019/20, our 'Community Neighbour Inspection Form' initiative saw community neighbours carrying out inspections of communal areas. This was a really simple scheme which saw some of our community neighbours completing an assessment form and reporting back to us. The scheme has helped us to ensure our communal areas – inside and outside - look the best they can. We have 12 residents registered for this scheme, and we will continue to run our community neighbours' scheme to help make a difference for both our residents and communities.



12
residents
registered



Putting things right



Service with a smile from MCP, our repairs contractor



Complaints

Sometimes, we don't get it right, but if this happens, we now have a dedicated team of specialist staff to make things better or simply say sorry.

During 2019/20, we received 34 complaints in total. 11 complaints were escalated to stage two of our complaints process, and we received one formal investigation by the Housing Ombudsman Service, which was withdrawn before an outcome was reached.

Here is how the Group performed:

722
complaints
(518 complaints 2018-2019)



9 days
average time to resolve
(Increased by 2 days from 2018-2019)

→ Please note: Statistics are across the Group (added to show potential of improvement).



Themes

Repair wait time

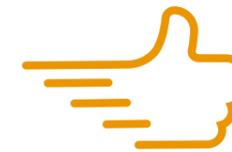
238

Communication

187

Failed to attend as agreed

104



97%

satisfaction with resolution
(95% in 2018-2019)

Assuring you of value for money

As a Group, Value for Money is reflected in all we do, and is an important part of our culture. It sets the tone for doing the best for our residents and is one of our fundamental values – to spend money wisely. Our Group performance is presented opposite.

We've built more new homes in 2020 than in 2019

We use a colour coding system to highlight our VfM performance:

● Good ● Okay ● Requires improvement

	2020 Actual	2019 Actual	2019 Peer Group	2019 Actual	2019 Peer Group
Reinvestment percentage	5.9%	5.8%	6.2%	●	●
New supply delivered (Social housing units) New social homes etc.	1.9%	1.6%	1.6%	●	●
New supply delivered (Non-social housing units)	0.07%	0.03%	0.3%	●	●
Headline social housing cost per unit	£2,691	£2,300	£3,460	●	●
Operating margin (overall)	33.6%	34.8%	28.0%	●	●
Operating margin (social housing lettings only)	40.0%	40.3%	30.9%	●	●

Re-investment percentage highlights how much money we are investing in our homes. We have invested more in 2020 than we did in 2019 and our investment is broadly comparable with other housing associations similar to ourselves.

New supply delivered percentage highlights how many new homes we are building compared to the number of existing homes we own. We built more homes in 2020 than we did in 2019 and are building more homes than other housing associations similar to ourselves helping us solve the housing crisis in the East of England.

Headline social housing cost per unit is an indication of the cost to manage, maintain and improve your home. The increase in 2020 against 2019 is primarily driven by an increase in improvement works to our properties. Compared to housing associations similar to ourselves our cost per unit is considerably lower despite our re-investment being broadly the same and therefore we are delivering value for money in the services we offer.

Operating margin measures how efficiently we are delivering our services. Our operating margin remains broadly consistent in 2020 compared to 2019 and is significantly higher than housing associations similar to ourselves indicating that we are delivering our services in an efficient manner.

Part of the



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