

**2019 -
2021**

Housing
Services
Report



City of Westminster



Contents



Foreword

Two years ago, having reacquired direct management of Westminster’s housing services, we began a journey within the council’s housing team.

A journey to deliver the highest possible standards of accommodation for our residents. A journey to ensure our homes are safe, warm and comfortable, with clean estates and thriving green areas. A journey to tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and to ensure repair work is dealt with quickly and effectively.

This report tells the story of that journey. It describes:

- The work we have done so far in improving the ways we take your needs on board.
- The improvements we continue to make to the housing services we offer.
- The investments we have made in improving our estates, providing quality, affordable housing, and ensuring our diverse communities can thrive.
- How we are making sure our estates are part of a carbon neutral future.

Our journey is ongoing and we are already reaching significant milestones. You told us

that anti-social behaviour on our estates was a real concern and so we are implementing heightened safety standards throughout our homes. As a result, more of you have told us that you’re satisfied with our handling of ASB than ever before. Our officers receive constant praise from our residents for the improvements made in estate cleaning and the work done to enhance our green areas. And we know how important it is for you to be able to speak with council officers who know and understand your local area, so we’ve reorganised our services to make sure that more than 70 officers work with you as points of contact for your estate.

We know that a journey such as this takes time and effort, and that there is much to do to achieve our aims. We also know that our residents are at the very heart of this journey, which is why our new engagement proposals put you first and foremost as we deal with issues and formulate our policies. Resident engagement plays a vital part in shaping our plans. Why? Because nobody knows your home better than you and so this is a journey we are on together.



Councillor David Harvey
Cabinet Member for Housing

You asked for improvements and we're delivering

Since regaining control of housing services from CityWest Homes in 2019, it's been key for us to learn more about what you need and expect from your council.

This has been especially true while making sure essential services were kept running and vulnerable residents were supported throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. You told us what your priorities were and we are delivering. However, we are not complacent and know we have much more to do...



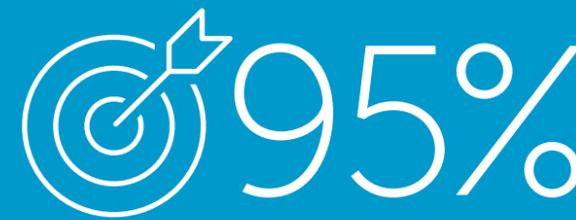
Responsiveness and quality of repairs

- Call centre improvements to resolve leaks and floods quickly.
- More checks to repairs, with 85% of residents satisfied with quality.
- 90% of repair appointments kept.



Better services for leaseholders

- Increased the speed with which we process applications for household alterations by 33%, reducing the average turnaround time to 21 days.
- Transformed handbook and bills into an easy-to-read format.
- Created videos to support leaseholders in understanding their lease and billing.
- Held our first virtual conference in September with 200 leaseholders attending to get advice and updates and to ask questions.



of all repair work undertaken is completed within the target timeframes



Parking enforcement

- Consulted with thousands of residents across our estates to introduce Traffic Management Orders (TMOs). Now wardens can issue tickets and official warning notices to ensure permitted parking for residents is protected.



Resident involvement

- Recruited more than 800 residents to Westminster Housing Online, a new online residents survey group.
- Consulted on a new approach to resident engagement with nearly 2,000 responses.



Local offer

- Set up 82 Estate Action Plans, representing 60% of homes with 318 (97%) agreed actions completed. We want your help to create more Estate Action Plans in the future.
- Increased mobile working and visibility of staff with new branded jackets and equipment to raise actions on the go.
- More walkabouts with residents, senior officers and councillors, escalating issues together.
- Reviewed local surgery hours, online one-to-one appointments and home visits for those who are less mobile.



Delivering sustainable housing

- Our ambitious regeneration and development programme is delivering modern affordable and private homes built to the highest standards.
- Tollgate Gardens is delivering 86 affordable homes, new landscaped gardens and a state-of-the-art community centre.
- We've completed work on Beachcroft House, a state-of-the-art, 84-bed, dementia-friendly care home.
- Building more than 780 high-quality, sustainable homes in Pimlico that use 90 per cent less carbon than existing estates.

Meeting your priorities

Every resident deserves a home that meets the highest possible standards, and that's the journey we've been on since 2019. That means responding to issues you raise with us quickly and efficiently, ensuring homes are safe, warm and comfortable, and that our residents are protected from health and safety risks.

These are just some of the ways we have met your priorities in 2021...



We are responsible for **21,000** homes of which **12,000** are tenanted and **9,000** are sold to lessees:

73% of you told us you are satisfied that we provide safe and secure homes (up from 71% in 2020)

65% of you told us that you are happy with our handling of anti-social behaviour cases (up from 63% in 2020)

100% of our homes have up-to-date fire risk assessments

We've taken a total of **444,947** of your calls during these two years:

89% of residents say you are satisfied with the way we handle your calls (up from 84% in 2020)

65% of your calls are answered within **30 seconds**

27,834 routine, urgent and emergency repairs have been completed:

85% of you have expressed satisfaction with the quality of our repairs (up from 83% in 2020)

87% of you are satisfied with our grounds maintenance work (up from 86%)



415 residents received employment support and advice, with **120** securing jobs

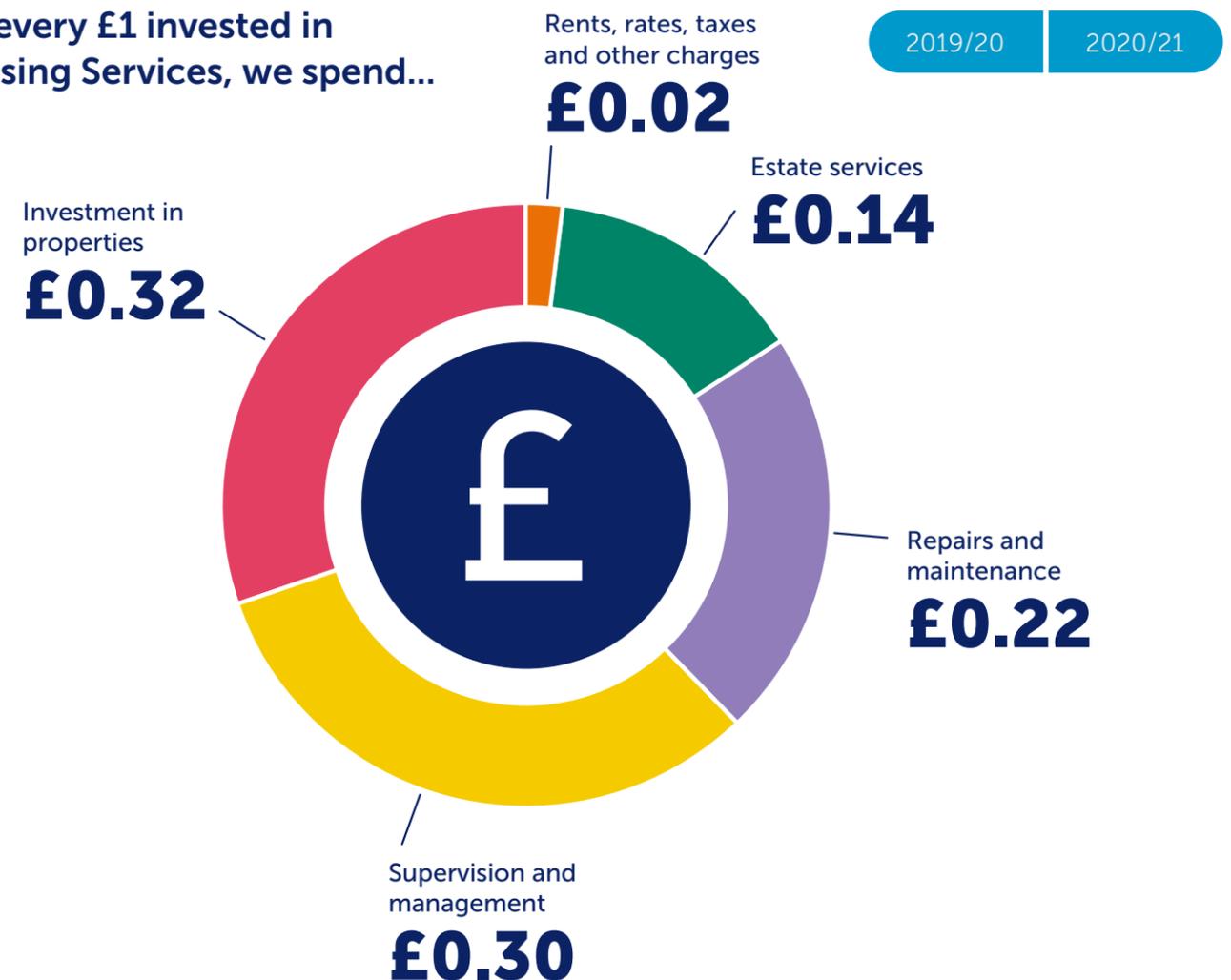
We're here to provide help and support to tenants and ensure they get the impartial advice and support they need. This includes carrying out regular tenancy checks, providing specialist financial advice and helping people through the change to Universal Credit.

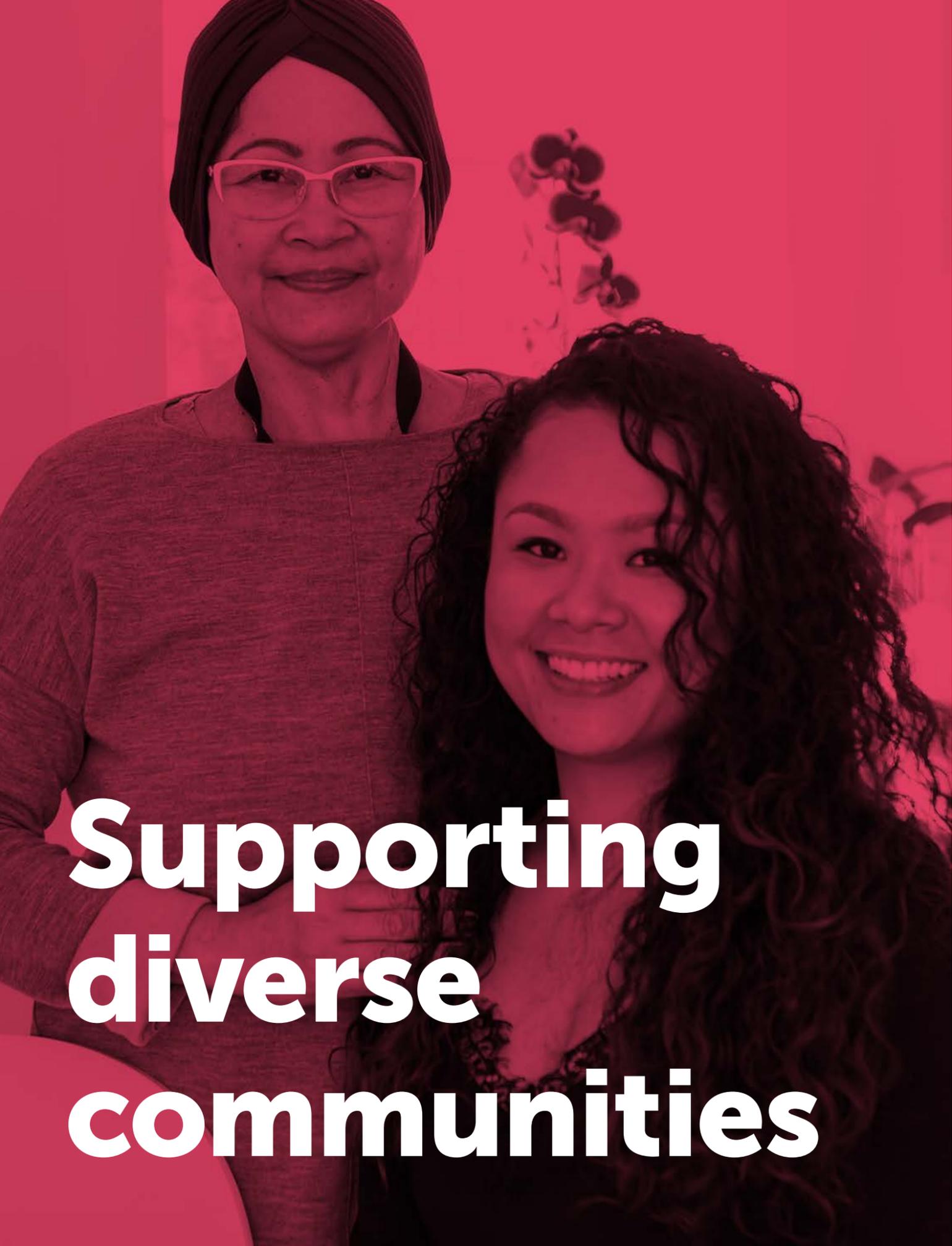
We're committed to providing excellent levels of service for all of our residents. This includes understanding the diverse

needs of our tenants, and giving everyone opportunities to have a say on how we spend money and manage services (see below).

We're also committed to ensuring that our neighbourhoods and communities are safe, clean and well maintained. This includes tackling anti-social behaviour, promoting wellbeing and providing more opportunities for recycling on our estates.

For every **£1** invested in Housing Services, we spend...





Supporting diverse communities

As your council, we remain committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, has an equal opportunity to succeed and be healthy.

If the last 18 months have proved anything, it's that our communities truly come together during challenging times. The impacts of COVID-19 highlighted and exacerbated the inequalities our communities face, particularly among minority ethnic, low-income and vulnerable groups.

We are therefore building on the community spirit we all showed, working with our communities to ensure our services are inclusive and that they enable everyone to be healthy and live well.

We are already building the homes needed to make sure Westminster remains an inclusive and vibrant place for people from every background, income level, and age.

Westminster is in safe hands as we...

Renew our focus on supporting the vulnerable and those in supported living, including becoming a leading dementia-friendly city, looking after those with autism and launching a personalised approach for people needing social care.

Assess the ways the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our residents and work to improve the resilience of our communities.

Empower our residents to access further learning opportunities.

Open a new extra care facility at Carlton Dene for up to 65 residents and explore smart care solutions that support people's independence.

Roll out a Community Health Worker scheme helping residents manage long-term conditions, provide mental health support and connect them with other council services.



Tollgate Gardens

Tollgate Gardens is the first estate renewal project that Westminster City Council has completed in nearly a generation. Residents have now all moved into their homes.

Belay Bisrat (pictured right) said: "I have such a nice flat and I love the views. The community is nice, I know quite a few people in the area and there is always a friendly face."

Christine, daughter of fellow Tollgate resident Ms Dimanaao (pictured on page 10), said "Mum is overwhelmed to be back in Tollgate Gardens. She has been really looking forward to coming back, her favourite thing is being near her friends and family."

Another resident, Josephine McLoughlin, said: "Safety is very important. This feels like a very secure building. I am grateful to be able to start new memories with my daughter without leaving Tollgate Gardens which has been my home for so long."



226 additional residents were provided with housing during the COVID-19 pandemic

Plus a further 276 who were at risk during periods of severe cold weather. As a result, most have now secured sustainable housing with ongoing support.

Delivering wraparound support

Providing our children and young people with safe environments to grow up in is vital for a thriving future. Throughout the pandemic and beyond we have provided a full range of support, from the Free School Meals scheme, to eliminating digital exclusion. We are ensuring they can participate in every opportunity available.

We are also tackling health inequalities by supporting residents to recover from the impacts of COVID-19. People will be able to retire with dignity and pride in Westminster, and residents who need care will be supported within their own community.

With our partner organisations, we have ensured that those experiencing homelessness (in hostels or by sleeping rough) had access to vaccines both for COVID-19 and the flu. To ensure balanced support, we work with health care providers and homelessness service providers from the voluntary and community sectors.

Building our community spirit

We've made sure that your voices are at the heart of every action we take...

We hosted 1,340 people at 18 community halls, listening to your needs and priorities

1,280 new individuals and families have been moved into social housing

We've held 33 hours of virtual meetings with residents' representatives since COVID-19

More than 300 questions from resident representatives have been responded to at fortnightly housing services briefings

We've supported 2,691 residents by providing temporary accommodation

82 Estate Action Plans have been co-designed with residents – with 97% of actions listed in them completed

Working within the community to deal with street-based anti-social behaviour

King's Scholars' Passage in Victoria has, over the years, been subject to large numbers of complaints regarding anti-social behaviour from rough sleepers and those who reside at Montfort House, run by The Passage.

In discussion with neighbours and residents, the north end of King's Scholars' Passage has now organically grown into a community garden project involving both Montfort House and neighbours from Carlisle Place. Complaints have turned to compliments as there has been a reduction in the number of rough sleepers and many residents are participating in something meaningful supporting community and relations with neighbours.

QUICK FACT

55% of our properties are let to a person aged 55 or older



Achievements

Improving engagement consultation

More than 1,670 residents responded to our consultation on new ways to get involved with Housing Services. We're really grateful to everybody that got involved. Half of you said the new systems mean it would not only be easier to get involved, but that you would be more likely to engage as a result. We are very much looking forward to working with residents to improve services and build a better future together.



I firmly believe any residents group is a strong platform for residents to express their views and tackle issues raised collectively. For Vale Royal House this has proved to be an effective way to engage with the community.

Ljubisa, Covent Garden



Oak Tree House is a lovely building in the heart of Maida Vale with a core of very friendly residents. Moving in, I soon realised that everyone is concerned about the security, service and maintenance of our building and by new development building work directly impacting Oak Tree House. Getting together to voice and resolve those concerns seemed to be the best way forward. I was delighted to get encouragement and help by the council to create a group. The Residents' Voice format was the simplest way to start a group and enabled us to have something up and running quickly.

Odile, Maida Vale

Beachcroft House - A caring solution

Beachcroft House is a state-of-the art, 84-bed, dementia-friendly care home. Dedicated garden space has been designed to stimulate residents suffering from dementia, and the attractive Maida Vale location provides good transport links for residents and their families.

The new facility seeks to tackle social isolation, illness and frailty and is creating homes in which people can adapt the kind of assistance they receive as their needs change, while staying in the same location and within the same community.



What's next?

With a focus on having local knowledge and making it easier and faster for residents to access services, we are increasing the number of front line staff to 70, an increase of 50%.

We will launch a new approach to resident engagement with a wider range of methods for residents to engage with us, maximising participation and involvement.

We will secure a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.

Informed by residents' perspectives and engagement, we will pilot new ways of working in Church Street and Churchill Gardens to improve residents' health and economic wellbeing.

20,000 new homes will be delivered by 2040, of which at least 35% will be affordable.

Community and environmental facilities will be enhanced in consultation with residents and Estate Action Plans.

We will continue to improve the efficiency of management of repairs and major works.

A new commissioning strategy will be published setting out a health-led partnership approach to support people sleeping rough into long-term housing solutions.

We will continue working with our partners to tackle the key anti-social issues faced by our communities.

We will introduce an additional licensing scheme raising standards in private rental housing and letting us take action against landlords that provide dangerous or substandard housing.



20,000

new homes to have been delivered by 2040, 35% of which will be affordable



Investing in the city's future

Quality homes, flourishing high streets and vibrant communities all play a vital part in a healthy and successful City. Part of our commitment to supporting these is through smart investment, both in people and technology.

We are already improving access to services and information that our customers need to live well, having listened and acted upon the issues you told us needed improvement. By working with you to target and solve challenges specific to your needs, we are creating solutions together that bring about real benefits.

Better technology enhances the ways we deliver not only our housing services but all council functions. It also means we can address your housing needs with greater efficiency than ever before, reduce our carbon emissions, and ensure none of our residents are digitally excluded.



This (community broadband) will make a big difference to us and help us with the work we do on behalf of residents who use our service. We have been using the office in the hall for 15 years and the internet we had was okay – but switching to something faster will save us money. It will mean that I can fill out residents' housing benefit and job applications quickly and not wait ages for the internet to load.

Shaista, Warwick

Smarter use of new technology means we have achieved...

5,812

inspections and 1,800 repair requests completed with mobile technology on estates

1,200

online **MyWestminsterHousing** account users

108

seconds average time to answer calls, reduced by 50%

151,800

hours of calls handled by our Housing Services staff

91,773

emails and 1,822 Twitter enquiries answered

Videos to help you

With nearly 1,000 views, we have created five animations for our residents on topics including COVID-19 safe repairs, repair responsibilities, how to sign up to **MyWestminsterHousing**, leases and bills.



80%

of our homes are now connected to full-fibre broadband

Up from just 30% connectivity in 2018/19. Westminster is now London's most connected borough.



After leaving education in July 2020, I wanted to start looking for a job but I didn't know where to begin. My father was in touch with housing staff and they asked if any of our family required support finding a job at this time. My father mentioned I was looking and I was quickly referred to a very helpful housing employment advisor.

We started by talking about myself and my ambitions. I'd never had to send out a CV before, nor had I been for a job interview, so week-by-week, we spoke in logical order from forming a CV to writing a cover letter to doing well in a

job interview. After every meeting, I felt more and more confident. Not only did my advisor guide me on where to look for a job, but he would also regularly call and email me about suitable listings and answer any questions I had.

It is safe to say that without the help I received, I would not be in the job I am in right now. I am now employed as a COVID-19 tester with Westminster City Council and started my employment on 4 January 2021. I am very happy with where I am now and I thank the employment team for their assistance.

Melcom (location withheld)



Andrea, the Resident Liaison Officer, has been the most honest, compassionate, empathetic, amazing person to help me through the recent works in my building. I have terminal cancer and due to COVID-19 have only been able to leave my house a handful of times. When I've felt quite

hopeless she has been there on the end of the phone keeping me positive! I applaud her in her work – she is a magnificent member of staff on your team! The other workers, including Richard (the snag guy), Peter the painter and Miles (the window fixer) have also been amazing!

Lindsay, Queen's Park

Your home at your fingertips

It's not only your homes that we've been working to improve, we've also been busy revolutionising our digital systems as well. After taking on board your feedback, we upgraded the **MyWestminsterHousing website** – the home of everything to do with managing your tenancy or lease online.

Accessing your housing services has never been quicker, safer or more convenient. Plus, you can use any digital device of your choice. From requesting repairs to reporting anti-social behaviour, everything is now at the touch of a button – safe and secure.



We had problems with both condensation and mould at the same time. So the Mould Busters service put in new extractor fans, and even though you can't really see them they bring so many benefits. The guys who carried out the works were amazing too, I really was impressed by their service. They helped us to decide what to do about the problem and I have never regretted it. Our life is much healthier, and I wish more people would use the service.

Samra, Westbourne Park

What's next?

We will facilitate full-fibre broadband to our social housing properties by the end of 2021 and ensure all new affordable housing is built with access to this.

We are further upgrading our MyWestminsterHousing website so you can manage repair appointments online.

We are trialling smart homes technologies including sensors to detect water leaks, fire door issues and dampness, drones to inspect roofs, digital noticeboards and smart tagging for monitoring repairs and assets.

We will be producing more even video content to help residents with repairs, anti-social behaviour and safety.

We will ensure our residents have access to and can easily understand how to use our digital services.

We will explore innovative care solutions that deliver the best outcomes for service users such as Alexa and cobots that can support people to be independent in their homes.

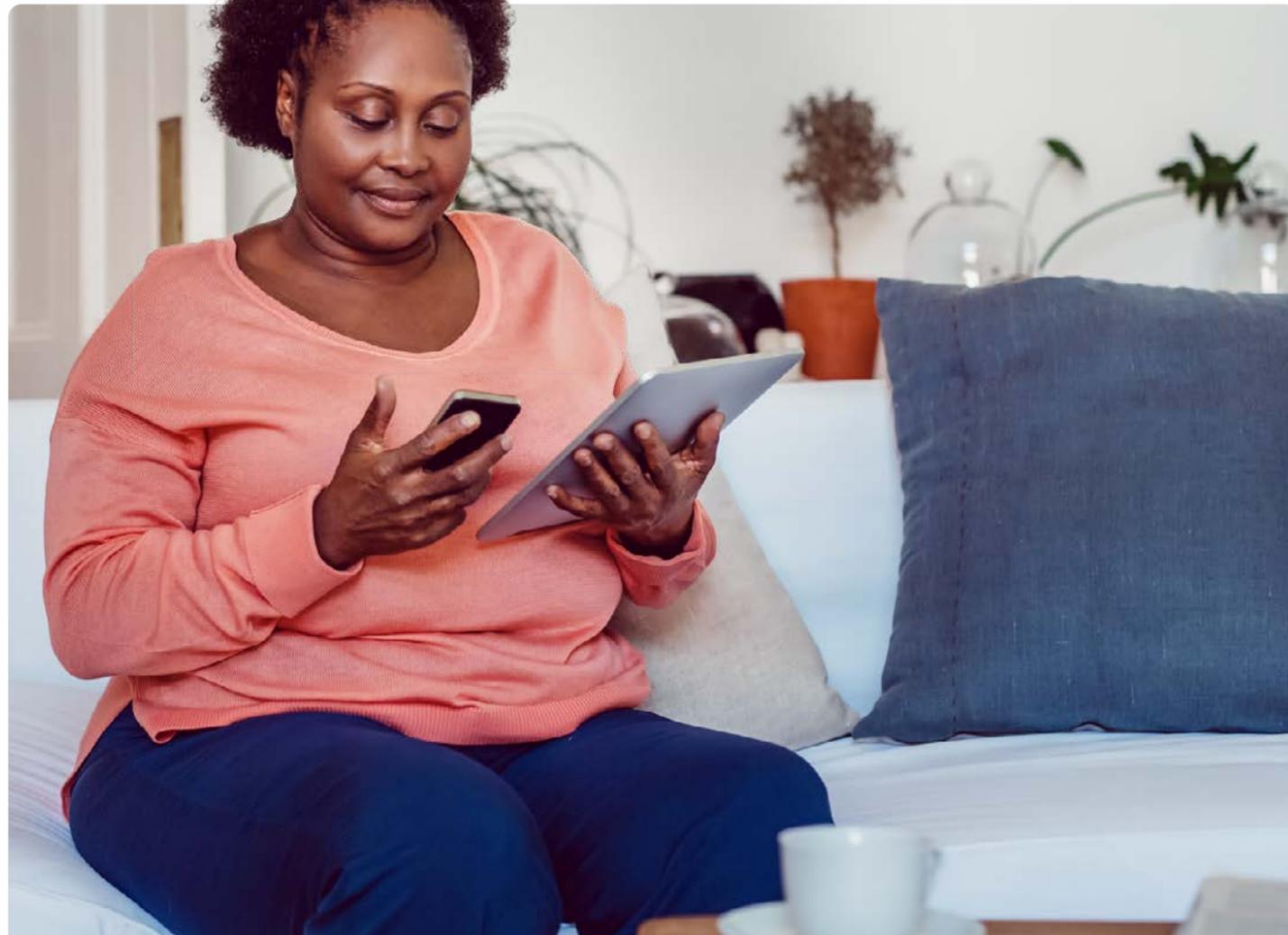
We are creating innovative digital solutions that make transacting easier with online applications and forms.

We are equipping our frontline officers with digital tools that facilitate their engagement with our communities to keep our city safe and healthy.



10,000

communal lights on our estates replaced with LED bulbs, reducing carbon emissions and saving money



Creating a zero carbon future



Our commitment is for Westminster to lead the UK in tackling the climate emergency by becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and carbon neutral city by 2040.

Urgent action is needed to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5° Celsius to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. There are more than 125,000 homes in Westminster and the energy used in these accounts for 15% of the city's emissions.

Our Climate Action Plan has been created to help everyone play their part in cutting these emissions, including in our buildings and housing projects. Our vision is for all new developments to achieve net zero emissions and that our energy supply comes from affordable, low carbon sources.

A cleaner city

You've told us that living in a clean City and on clean estates is another key priority. Our bin crews make more than a million individual waste and recycling collections every week, and they do so in a fleet that is 40% electric (with more on the way). Keeping our streets clean is as much about removing waste as it is about protecting the environment.

We put in **6,000** hours of communal area cleaning every week leading to **87%** satisfaction rates with how we look after gardens and grounds

1,180 'mould buster' referrals led to **656** properties upgraded with improved ventilation

360 repair issues have been resolved ranging from leaks to dripping taps

457 cases of fly-tipping have been cleared by our teams resulting in **79%** of our residents being satisfied with the cleaning work



We would really like to express our appreciation for all of your hard work continuing to keep the borough clean and lovely for all of the residents. Huge thank you from both of us in Soho!

Alice and Nick, Soho

How we're redeveloping your homes

We are developing more than 780 high-quality, sustainable homes at the Ebury Bridge estate in Pimlico. This ambitious low-carbon scheme will use 90 per cent less carbon than the existing estate, while 'greywater' recycling (using wastewater from showers, baths and sinks) will be used to supply water for everyday household functions.

The development will also be almost entirely car-free (with disabled car parking only and 2,000 cycle spaces), in order to encourage walking and cycling, while reducing air and noise pollution in the area. It will also see the planting of 270 new trees, flowerbeds and plants, to help increase biodiversity throughout the area.



Churchill Gardens is a very large green estate in the middle of London. We have numerous wonderful trees and shrubs as well as green areas too. The residents of the estate are always commenting on how the estate environment is so well looked after. We have many garden areas, including the Millennium Garden, the Riverside Garden and the Meadow Garden. We also have a central square where residents can meet for a chat with their neighbours. Due to our estate being well maintained, we have been very fortunate in receiving the merit of the Green Flag award for some years now. The residents were very pleased that Churchill Gardens was awarded the Green Flag again for 2020.

Iris, Churchill Gardens estate



QUICK FACT

Together with residents, we planted 37,500 bulbs in 2019, seeing them bloom in spring 2020. We have since run 26 community gardening sessions organised across four estates, plus we are working towards a new community gardening project at Churchill Gardens.



As well as the **existing nine cycle stores** on estates with a total of 57 spaces, we have provided an **additional 16 cycle stores to house up to 110 bicycles**. At least 36 new developments between now and 2038 will have additional cycle storage provision.

Local green energy

For 70 years, our Pimlico District Heating Undertaking has been using waste heat from Battersea Power Station, underneath the Thames, to provide heating and hot water to over **3,200 homes**. In 2005, to generate more energy, we added engines and boilers to the plant. This year, we upgraded one of the three (enormous) boilers to ensure we can continue providing local renewable energy.



Our Climate Action Plan recommends...

- Supporting improvements to energy efficiency and renewable energy supply such as solar panels on our buildings
- Supporting landlords and homeowners to improve minimum energy efficiency standards, prioritising improvements to those with the lowest energy performance ratings
- Retrofitting buildings to improve their energy performance
- Ensuring new developments minimise their whole life carbon impact, reducing emissions on site in line with industry best practice standards, and relying less on carbon offsetting
- Maximising generation, distribution and use of renewable and low-carbon energy (such as biogas) across the city

Achievements

Green Flag award winning gardens

We retained our Green Flag status in 2020 for Churchill Gardens, Lillington and Longmoore Gardens estates in Pimlico and Lisson Green in Marylebone. Lillington and Longmoore Gardens received its 14th award in a row, while Churchill received the award for the eighth and Lisson Green in Marylebone for the fifth time.

This is an outstanding achievement for our staff that work hard to keep our estate gardens clean, green and well maintained for everyone. Parks and open spaces have become more important than ever for our communities, with residents using them to relax and exercise during lockdown. As well as our housing estate Green Flags, we also have another 25 Green Flags at our quality parks across the city.



Solar power

124 solar power systems across 65 sites in Westminster are harbouring sustainable energy for our homes. Last year, these solar power systems saved 91 tonnes of carbon – equivalent to driving a car more than a dozen times around the world!



What's next?

By 2040, we will have upgraded the heating and internal wall insulation for 3,000 of our homes in order to receive higher Energy Performance Certificates.

We will improve the way we handle incidents of fly-tipping and will work with our residents on ways to help keep our estates clean.

We are ensuring our suppliers and supply chains adhere to strict environmentally friendly standards, such as making sure all electricity we purchase comes from 100% renewable sources.

We will be adopting an Environment Supplementary Planning Document that details how the environmental policies in our City Plan can be implemented, including supporting the retrofitting of listed buildings with secondary or new energy efficient glazing, where appropriate.

We will pursue partnership funding to improve our tenants' homes' energy efficiency, along with the decarbonisation and modernisation of the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking, currently generating nearly 37% of our emissions.

We will respond quickly to our residents' increasing demand for sustainable transport modes, including consulting on our approach to parking policy, expanding our car-sharing scheme, and rolling out electric vehicle charging points across all our developments. We will install 500 more electric vehicle charging points and 24 more places for bikes across Churchill Gardens and Blandford Estates.

We will develop a new approach to waste management, designed to reduce waste, recycle more, boost food waste recycling and minimise emissions from our collection services.

1,000
electrical vehicle charging points have already been installed across the city, with a further 500 on course for the end of 2021

Keeping your bills down

Reducing our climate footprint and helping our residents save money on their energy bills is a key focus.

One initiative underway is the installation of revolutionary heating panels in residents' homes. The 'Matilda's Sunshine' programme will reduce fuel bills and carbon emissions in the coldest of homes.



