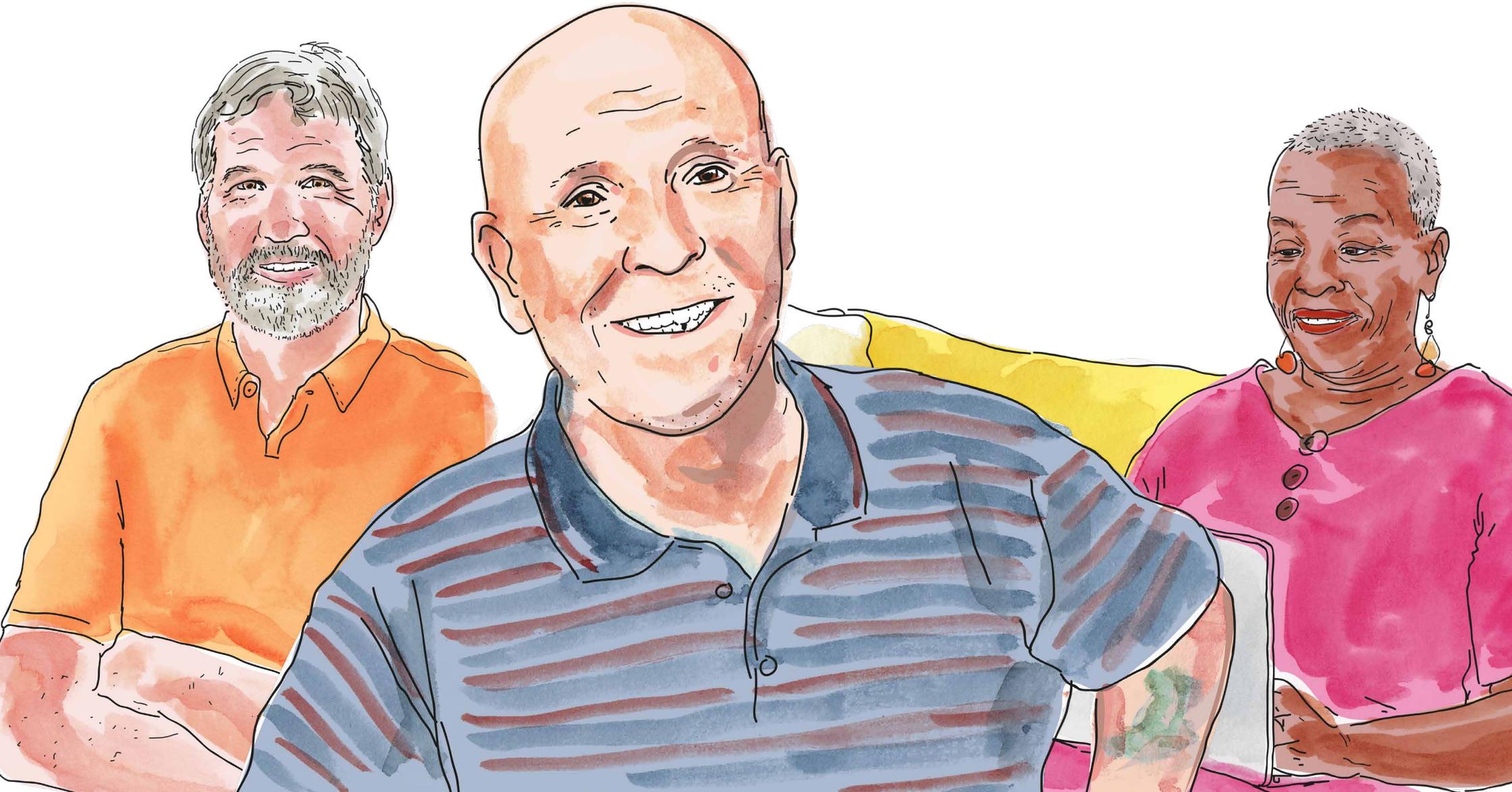


# Customer Annual Review 2019/20





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# Hello and welcome



I find it hard to believe that only a few months ago we had never heard of social distancing and lockdown was something more relevant to films than life.

What I do know is that Covid-19 has affected jobs and the economy, and that this has had an impact on our communities more than most. During these extraordinary events, we've all had time to reflect on what is important.



#### Our health

– so a huge shout out to all of you who are key workers who have kept the country running!



#### Our homes

– our sanctuary and our safe place.



#### Our wellbeing

– whether that is money matters, practical support or social activity.

I am hugely proud of what our communities have delivered – volunteering, caring and helping us all stay safe. We've seen immense kindness and have been humbled by the dedication of our NHS and key workers.

Stonewater's fundamental purpose is to provide homes and services for those who need them most. We all want services that are effective, efficient, easy to access and, above all, meet your needs. Before Covid hit, we had already invested heavily in technology to give you faster and more accessible routes to help manage your tenancy. Things like MyHome, our online portal where you can pay rent and report repairs, our virtual hubb where you can give feedback and share ideas with other customers in your area, our Facebook community for all the

latest news and service updates, and the provision of Wi-Fi across all our retirement and supported housing, to help keep people connected.

Even through lockdown, we continued to deliver vital frontline services and I'm immensely thankful for the commitment of all my colleagues who worked tirelessly to ensure our services – although different – were delivered. From 30,000 contacts to support people with managing their income to 2,517 welfare and reassurance calls – I hope that by stepping up and embracing our responsibility as a social business we managed to make things just that bit easier.

I think we all agree there are still lots of challenges ahead and you have my promise that we'll continue to listen and build on our learning so we get more things right first time. Fine words, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so watch this space. I truly believe that with courage, ambition and honest conversations, we'll have homes and services we can all be proud of.

I hope you find this annual review interesting and that you'll all continue looking after yourselves, your families and each other.

### Sue Shirt

Executive Director Customer Experience

– despite lockdown, still a wife, proud mum of two kids and Rufus the dog (who I've talked to a lot more than is probably healthy, because he's far cheaper than a therapist!).

# What's new?

## Introducing... our Customer Promise

Our customers must be at the heart of everything we do. We'd love to get everything perfect first time but sometimes we know we don't so we're committed to putting things right when we need to.

That's why we've been working on our Customer Promise:

We are proud to make things personal. If it matters to our customers, it matters to us.

This isn't just some nice words or something we came up with on our own: customers were key to helping us develop this. We had some great feedback from customers, including:



Stonewater generally responds effectively to issues, particularly repairs



Customer service is good, staff are generally 'polite', 'understanding', 'listen well' and are 'friendly'



Rent is considered affordable and Stonewater a 'fair' landlord

Some customers told us we need to listen more, while others raised issues with their home or felt that contractors could sometimes do better. All of the feedback from the sessions – good and bad – has helped shape our Customer Promise.

### So what does this mean for you?

It's still early days with this but our Customer Promise aims to make sure we're always doing the best we can for you. Whether we're planning a project, thinking up a new process, or helping you with a query or issue, our Customer Promise will help us to do the right thing.



## Some customer feedback



Stonewater generally responds effectively to issues, particularly repairs



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## Voice of the customer

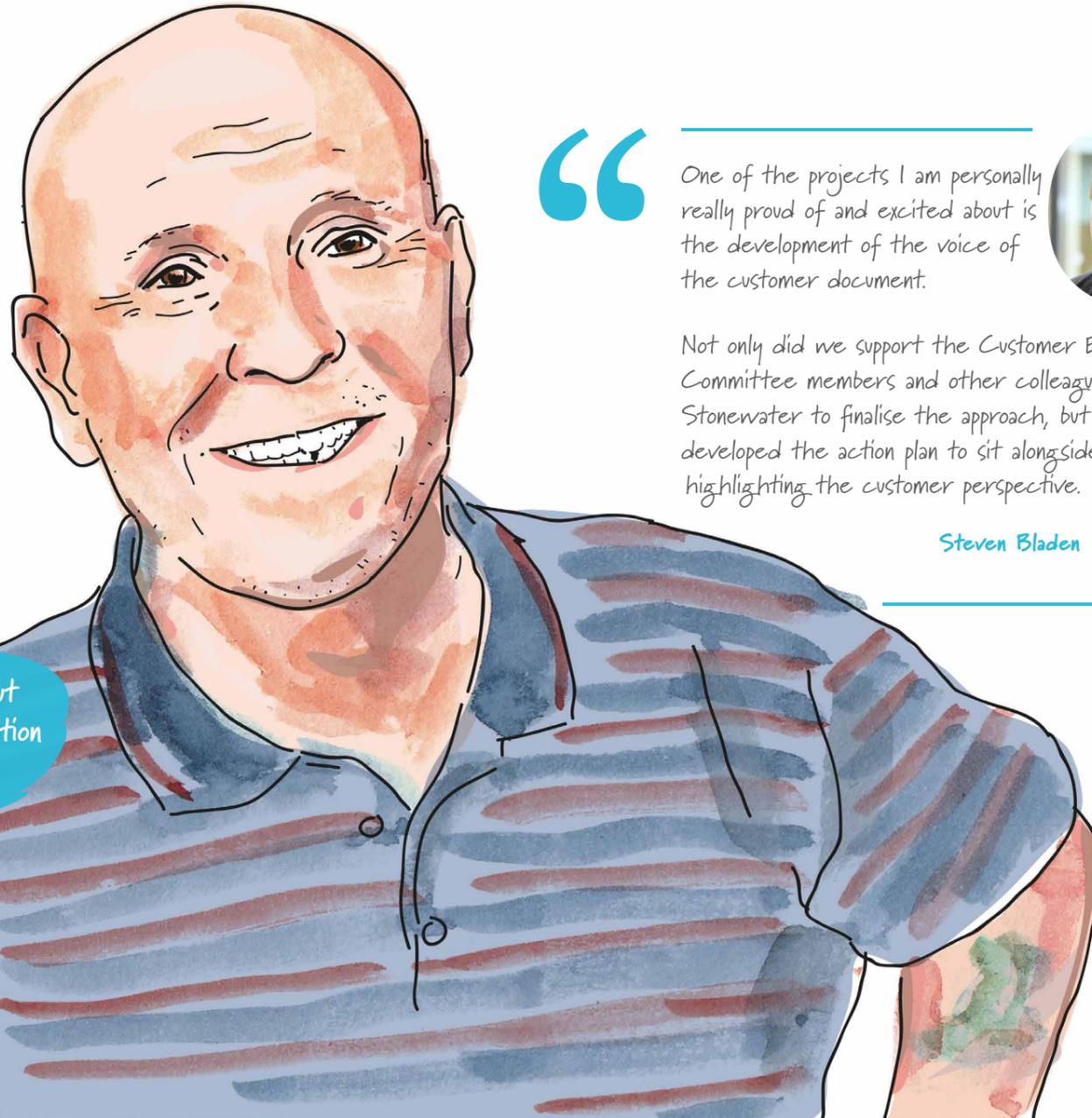
We all want to feel listened to, right? So it should be as easy as possible to make your voice heard.

To help with this, we've developed our 'voice of the customer' document (working with customers and colleagues) which sets out all the different ways you can get involved with Stonewater to improve the services you receive.

It informs how we tailor, develop and deliver our services to make sure they're right for you.

It also shares how we'll be monitoring our work to make sure we're achieving what we set out to do.

Keep an eye out for more information coming soon!



“

One of the projects I am personally really proud of and excited about is the development of the voice of the customer document.



Not only did we support the Customer Experience Committee members and other colleagues from Stonewater to finalise the approach, but we also developed the action plan to sit alongside it, highlighting the customer perspective.

Steven Bladen

”

## MyHome: self-serve designed with you in mind

You know better than anyone what you need most from online services. That's why we designed MyHome with customers to make managing your account as easy as possible.

MyHome enables you to view your account details, make payments and update your personal details at any time, wherever and whenever it suits you best.

### Did you know you can also now report your repairs through MyHome?

You'll be guided through easy steps to choose the right repair and our contractors will get straight back to you to arrange an appointment.

We'll be adding more features soon, so you can do more of what you need through MyHome more quickly than by phone. If you haven't signed up yet, what are you waiting for?

Just [click here](#) to register!

MyHome



7,000 CUSTOMERS

Since we launched MyHome in June 2019, over 7,000 customers are now using it regularly, with more signing up every day.

# Listening to you

## Your opinion counts – so make sure it's heard!

Listening to your views is really important in shaping services and ensuring we're providing value for money.

We realise we still have a way to go in certain areas, with some customers telling us we need to communicate more, that we don't always get our repairs service right, and that we need to improve how we maintain our schemes.

You may have noticed that from 1 April 2020 we introduced an independent feedback channel, working with a company called Rant & Rave, to find out how we're doing through regular text, email and telephone surveys.



We're listening and will make changes where we can. If you raise a concern through feedback, we'll get in touch to see how we can resolve things or make things better in future.

And we love positive feedback too, which we always share with the colleague or team concerned. So either way, make sure your views are heard!



14,000

During 2019/20, over 14,000 of you told us what you think about the services we provide.

## Customer quotes (positive and negative):

*"Jane was very helpful and cheerful. She sorted out my problem, so much so the job has been booked for tomorrow - very efficient!"*

*"He was very polite and helpful but unable to answer my query."*

*"Job completed by a first-class and professional plumber leaving no mess."*

*"The contractor did not clean up after himself. I excused him the first time as he called to apologise. But I don't understand why he still did the same thing the second time round!"*

## When things go wrong

In 2019/20, we received 489 complaints from customers. Although down from 574 on the previous year, we know it's still too many. We're determined to do everything we can to resolve issues before you feel you need to make a formal complaint.

Our customer feedback team have been working really hard to improve how we deal with formal complaints. As a result, 99% of complaints during 2019/20 were acknowledged on time and 96% were responded to within the target timeframe.

Over the year, seven complaints were referred to the Customer Complaints Panel (CCP). This is an opportunity for us to really unpick the problem and find a solution, and is offered to customers before they might decide to approach the Housing Ombudsman.

During 2019/20, we consulted with customers on the future of the Panel and the results were overwhelmingly in favour of keeping it. We'll be relaunching it as a formal customer involvement activity later in 2021, so if you think you'd like to get involved, keep an eye out for more information coming soon.

So we're going in the right direction but we're not stopping there. Looking ahead to 2020/21, we'll be focusing on how we make sure we improve more, through the [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#). As part of this, we'll be looking at our complaints policy, the information on our website, and our complaints guidance to ensure it's all easy to understand and accessible to everyone.

We're concentrating on learning from complaints and improving things so we don't repeat mistakes for different customers. By doing this, our aim is to deliver great customer experience as often as possible.



## Stonewater Scrutiny Panel: helping to shape our services

Have you heard about the Stonewater Scrutiny Panel? It's a group of customers who contribute fresh ideas by carrying out in-depth reviews to help shape the services we deliver. We value honest and constructive feedback, and being a member of our Scrutiny Panel gives you the opportunity to do just that – and benefit other customers too.

During 2019/20, the Scrutiny Panel made a massive 56 recommendations and also played a key role in developing our new voice of the customer document. They also met with the Housing Ombudsman to talk about their role and how Stonewater can work with the service in the future.

We're looking for more customers to join the Scrutiny Panel and help us get even better! To find out how, take a look at our step by step guide to getting involved on our [Scrutiny Panel web page](#).



“

*I love being a Scrutiny Panel member because I enjoy being a part of a team. I've made some friends for life. If we make one positive change, then I feel it's definitely worth doing.*



*I believe we make a difference, maybe not overnight as it all takes time but every recommendation we make goes to creating a better experience for all customers.*

**Loretta Cummerson**

*You don't need to have any skills to join the panel, just a passion to make a difference – just like I did when I joined just over a year ago.*



*I really feel that my opinions and contribution make a positive impact and feel assured that Stonewater appreciates the work that we do and keep us updated with our how our involvement has made a difference.*

**Steven Bladen**

”

# Get involved

## Customer hubb (help us be better)

The hubb is our customer involvement platform, which gives you another opportunity to help shape and improve the services we offer.

Together, we posted a fantastic 2,200 times last year, talking about 161 different topics. Discussions ranged from changes to services and scheme updates to sharing our interests and hobbies, such as photography, food and travel.

If you've got a great idea about how we can improve our services, want to leave feedback about how we're doing or find out what's going on in your local area, you can do it all on the [Customer hubb](#).

“

**Why our customers love the hubb:**

*"It's easy to communicate with other customers and staff at Stonewater."*

*"It's nice that customers can connect with each other."*

*"I like to talk to people and hear from others in similar circumstances and with similar experiences."*

*"The thing I like most about the hubb is that I don't feel so isolated!"*

”

### Get social with us!

Last April, our new social media team was set up to help support customers online, and share informative and engaging content across Facebook and Twitter.

### Since then, we have:

- ✓ Responded to over **8,000** messages and comments posted on Facebook from more than 800 customers
- ✓ Committed to a two-hour response time (within working hours)
- ✓ Created the Stonewater Community Group on Facebook for customers to interact and share stories with each other

If you're a Facebook fan, it's a great way to keep up to date. There's lots to 'like' - over the last year we've shared our podcast series, held live Q&As, and even hosted our first big hubb quiz, so why not head over to our [Facebook page](#) and check it out.

You can also join our [Stonewater Community Group](#) and chat to other customers online about what matters to you. Or if you prefer to Tweet, why not find us on [Twitter](#) and join in the conversation that way?

If you have any ideas about how we can make our social media channels even better just send us a message – we'd love to hear from you.



**213**

*In 2019/20,  
213 new members signed up to the Customer hubb.*

# Supporting you

## Helping you become more digitally savvy

Whether you're a complete beginner or just want to brush up on your technical know-how, we can help you improve your digital skills in no time.

We're working with a company called We Are Digital to provide online training, which you can do from home. You don't even need to have the IT equipment, as we can also provide this – and you get to keep it!

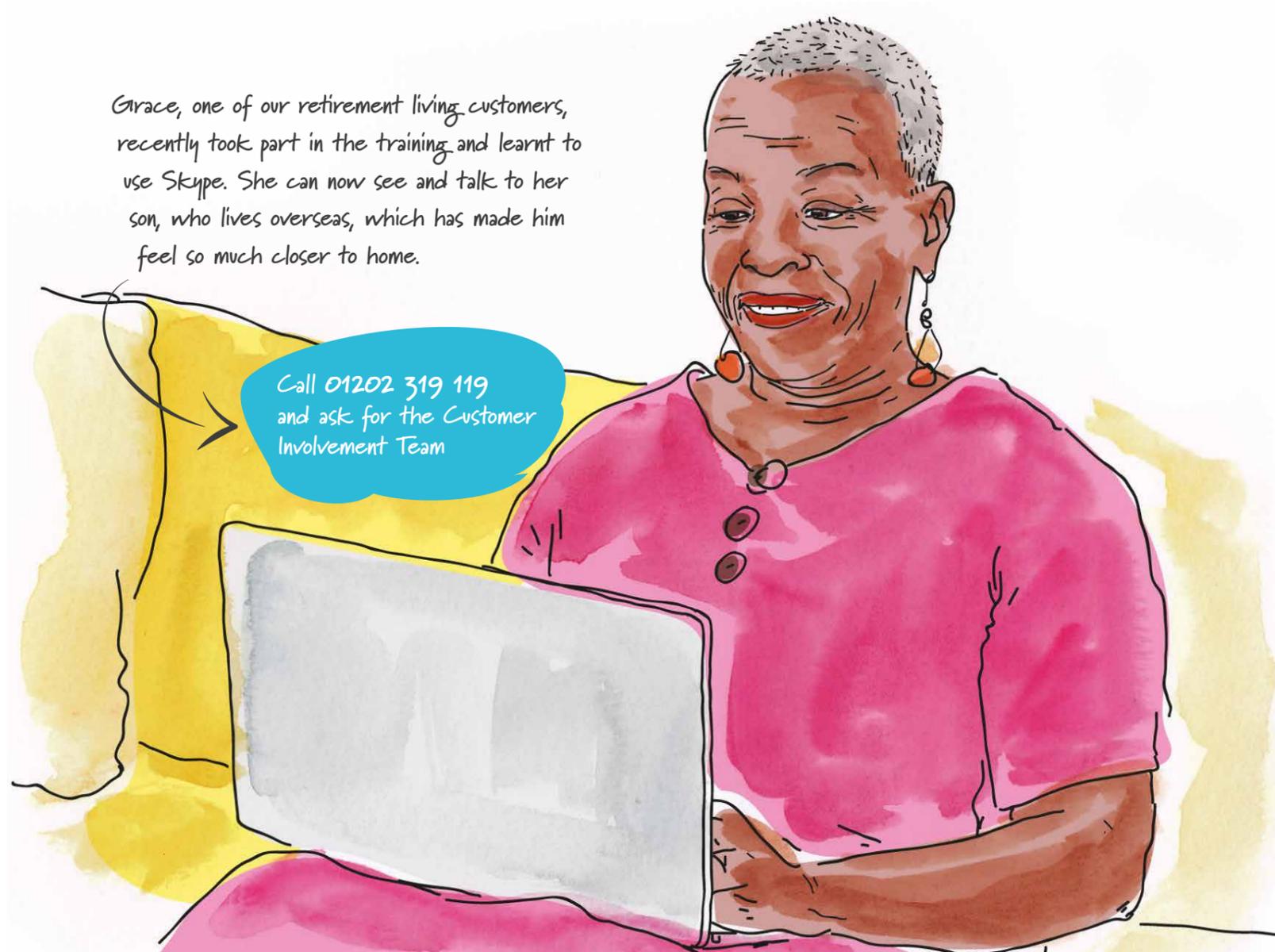
The training will take you through the basics, including setting up email, online shopping, signing up to MyHome, getting around the Customer hubb, and using social media.

So far, 100 customers have taken part and we've received some great feedback.

If you'd like to develop your skills or learn new ones, just add your details [here](#). We Are Digital will then get in touch to get you set up. Alternatively, you can call **01202 319 119** and ask for the Customer Involvement Team.

*Grace, one of our retirement living customers, recently took part in the training and learnt to use Skype. She can now see and talk to her son, who lives overseas, which has made him feel so much closer to home.*

Call 01202 319 119 and ask for the Customer Involvement Team



# Your home

## Making the most of where you live

In 2019/20, we've been working hard to improve the way we monitor our contractors' performance.

We've been using mobile technology to capture issues with window cleaning, grass and hedge cutting etc. This information, along with photos showing the problem, is then sent straight through to our contract managers for them to take up with the contractor.

Our Estate Champions – customers who work with our team to monitor their local contractors – play a key role in this too. You can find out more [here](#).

We've also set up a community grant scheme to help you make the most of where you live, with up to £5,000 available for community groups and up to £500 for individuals.

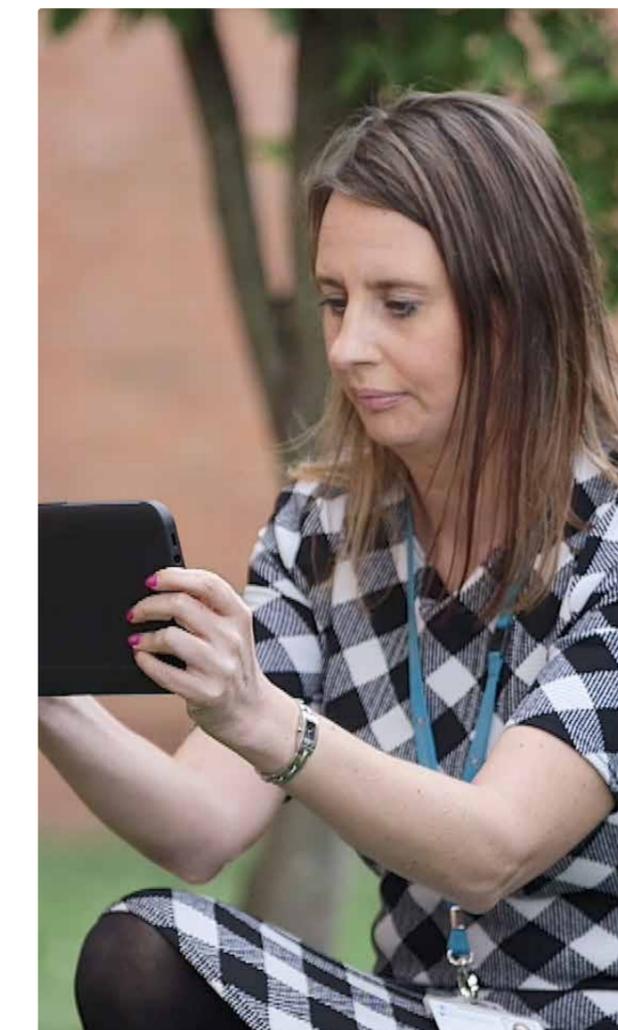
If you'd like to apply for either a community or individual grant, please [contact us](#).

Our aim is for everyone to receive a great customer experience. Since the coronavirus pandemic, we've been making the most of technology to deliver our services. This has been really successful, so we're now looking at how we can tap into virtual ways of working even more – watch this space for further information!

## Community grants

Community grants can be used for a number of things, including improving the health and wellbeing of customers; involving young people in making a positive contribution to their community; improving the general appearance of your area; or initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour.

If you prefer to apply for an individual grant, you could use this to improve your wellbeing; to support you in becoming more digitally confident; or to help reduce social isolation.



## Repairing and maintaining your home

We know how important your home is to you. That's why we invest heavily in maintaining and improving our properties.

We know that getting good quality trades people is hard and as a national business we can't just ask the local plumber. So

we've been reviewing our contracts with our repairs partners to ensure they offer the best service and value for money.

As part of this, we've already launched some new contracts and are in the process of setting up more, which will be up and running later this year. These will feature new ways of working, all of which are designed to provide you with great quality service.

During 2019/20, our contractors completed over 97,000 repairs costing over £14.5 million.



### Amount we spent during 2019/20:



**£4.2m**  
Gas safety



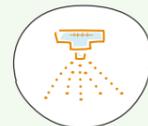
**£914,000**  
Electrics



**£300,000**  
Painting and decorating



**£1m**  
Major repairs

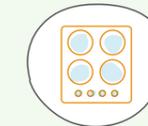


**£372,000**  
Fire safety improvements

### Number of major component replacements during 2019/20:



**1,037**  
Boilers and heating systems



**684**  
Kitchens



**346**  
Bathrooms



**105**  
Roof covers



**418**  
Windows and doors

## Keeping you safe

Your safety and wellbeing is always our top priority. We have a very good track record in our gas and fire safety performance and work hard to maintain this.

During 2019/20, we set up a new, internal team to carry out risk assessments to ensure your homes and any communal areas are as safe as they should be.

Using the new technology we introduced in 2018/19, the team complete surveys on site using a mobile device. This enables us to work more effectively and complete risk assessments more quickly than before.

### As of 31 March 2020, we completed:



**100%**  
Fire risk assessments  
1,531 in total



**99.9%\***  
Gas certification  
19,781 in total

\*Due to the impact of Covid-19 and some customers 'shielding', it was not possible to access all of our customers' homes to complete their annual gas safety check within the timescale. However, we worked closely with those customers to ensure their safety, and that of their neighbours, and successfully carried out the safety check as soon as was appropriate.

## Tackling anti-social behaviour

We understand that anti-social behaviour can be distressing and we'll always do our best to help if you're experiencing this.

You might not be sure if something is actually anti-social behaviour, like every day noise. To help you, we've put together a guide to anti-social behaviour on our [web page](#), where you can also find tips about things you can do to try to resolve the situation.

During 2019/20, we've also worked closely with our Customer Service Centre colleagues so that when you contact us, they can provide helpful information about dealing with anti-social behaviour in the first instance.

This often provides a solution without having to take formal action. If you have reported a serious issue that we're investigating, we've also put steps in place to ensure that you are kept up to date more regularly with progress.



# More homes for more people

## Building for the future

Stonewater's vision is for everyone to have the opportunity to have a place that they can call home.

We're determined to play our part in tackling the housing crisis by providing even more homes, for more people. Alongside investing in our existing homes, we have an ambitious plan to build new, attractive and quality homes.

We're continuing to find innovative ways to build homes, such as modular homes which are built in parts in a factory then transported to their destination and put together on

site. We're currently building 120 affordable homes in Herefordshire this way, providing homes for people who really need them more quickly than ever before.

We want to create places where people are proud to live so during 2019/20, all of our new developments featured public art to help give our schemes a real sense of community. We've also put in place a number of other initiatives, such as growing sustainable food and working with local schools to name our schemes.

We're committed to minimising our impact on the environment and are really proud of our partnership with the Community Forest Trust (CFT), which means new trees are planted for every home we build.



**654**

In 2019/20, we built 654 new homes, meaning more than 2,600 customers now have a home of their own.



**3,000<sup>TH</sup>**

Earlier this year, we celebrated the completion of our 3,000<sup>th</sup> home since Stonewater formed in 2015.



**3,900**

In 2019/20, we planted more than 3,900 trees and Stonewater colleagues took part in conservation events with the CFT to help regenerate woodland.

## Letting homes more quickly

In 2019/20, we made some changes to how we re-let empty homes.

We know that every day a home is empty, means another day a family has to spend in unsuitable housing so we've been working on making our turnaround time faster. We're also

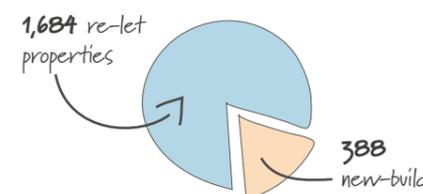
continuing to build relationships with local authorities to make applying for homes quicker and easier for customers. All of this means that there's less waiting time for customers to find and move into their new home.

We're now completing 70% of sign-ups using a digital signing system. Not only does this save paper but it also means that customers can read through all of the information and get any legal advice they may need in advance.



**29.5**

Our performance improved to 29.5 days from 31.6 days.



**2,072**

During 2019/20, we provided homes for a total of 2,072 people



**92.7%**

of these customers told us they were happy with the service we provided when they moved in, which is great news!

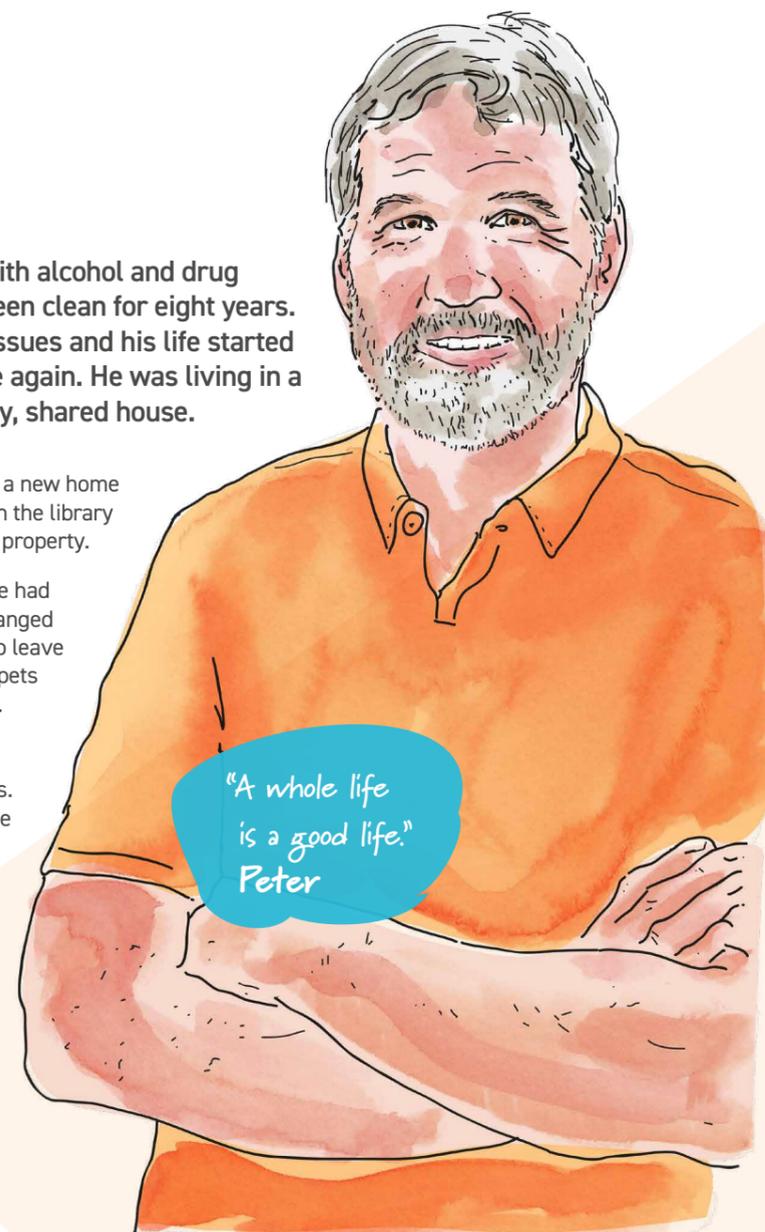
## Meet Peter

Peter had battled with alcohol and drug addiction but had been clean for eight years. He then had a few issues and his life started going downhill once again. He was living in a rundown, unsanitary, shared house.

Peter started looking for a new home and used the computer in the library and bid on a Stonewater property.

When Peter signed up, he had nothing at all but we arranged for the previous tenant to leave him her good quality carpets and fitted wooden blinds. Peter said he cried after signing up and couldn't believe how lucky he was. It's given him a new lease of life and he is now looking at getting back into work.

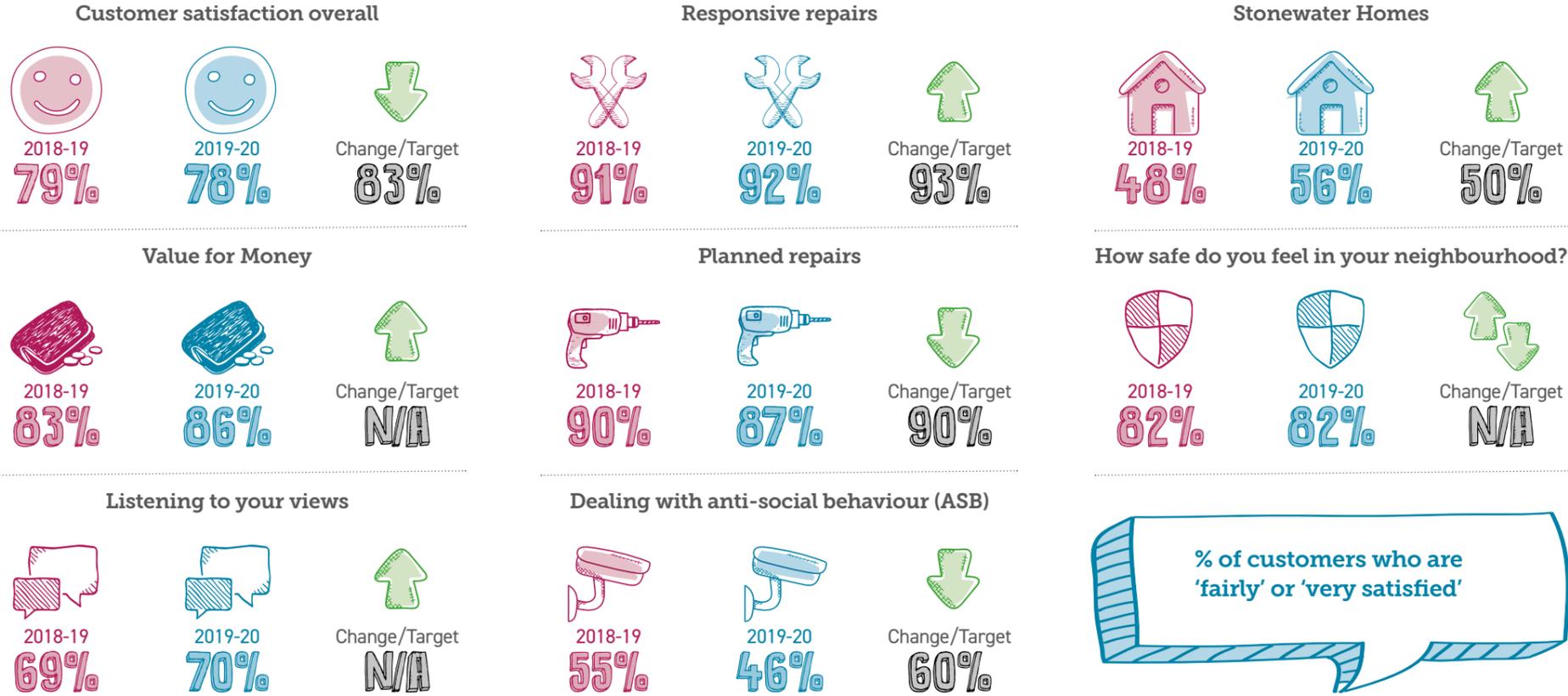
Peter told us that having a home he can be proud of is a good foundation and brings everything together as a whole. He added, "A whole life is a good life."



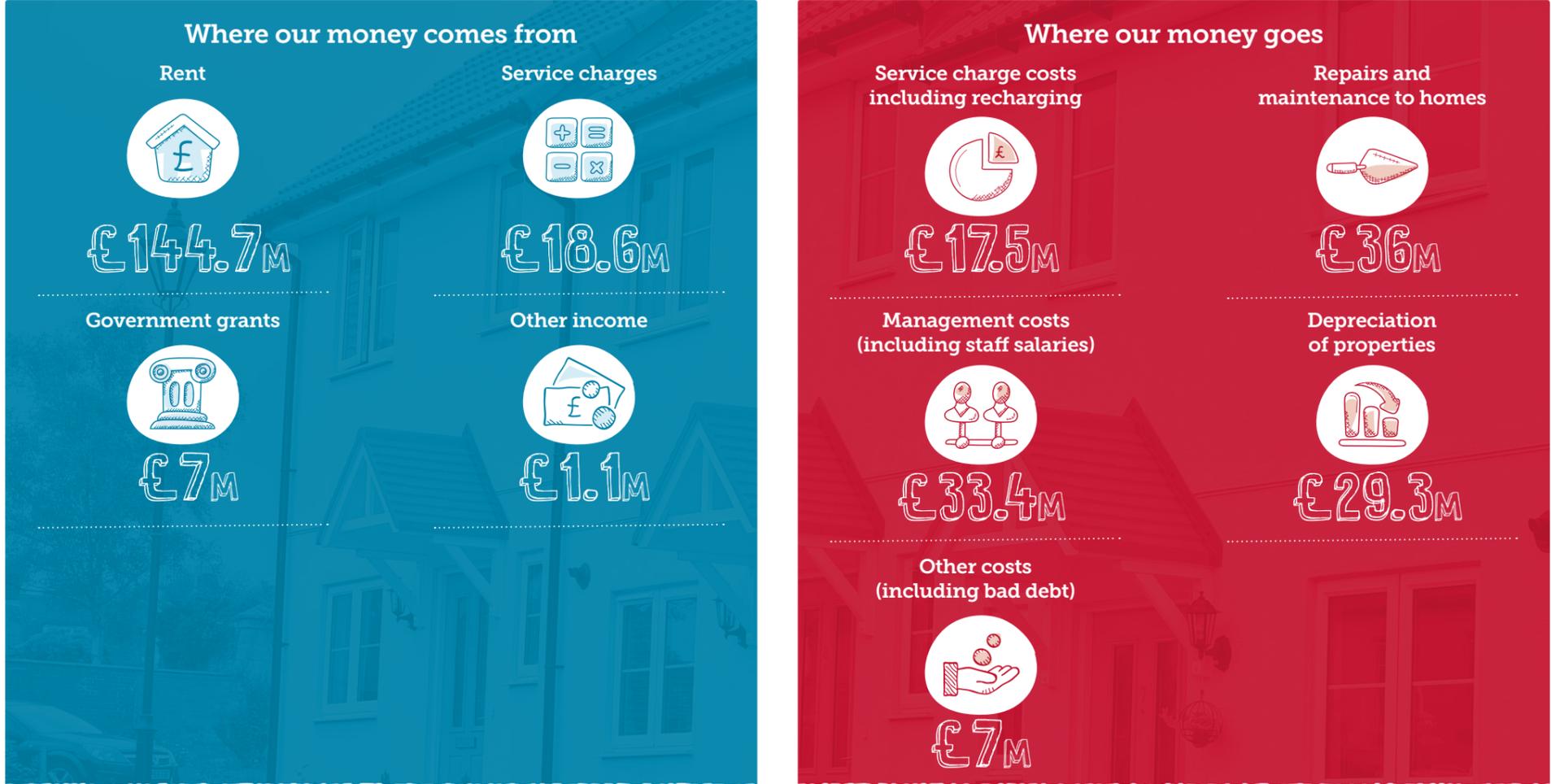
# How are we doing?

## Our performance

Your feedback is essential to help us develop and improve the services we provide to you. Here's what you told us for 2019/20 and how it compares to the previous year.



## Our finances



Find us at [www.stonewater.org](http://www.stonewater.org)

or follow us on

 Twitter

 Facebook

Customer Service Centre

01202 319 119

