

Residents' Annual Report 2019/2020



Metropolitan
Thames Valley

Serving people
better every day

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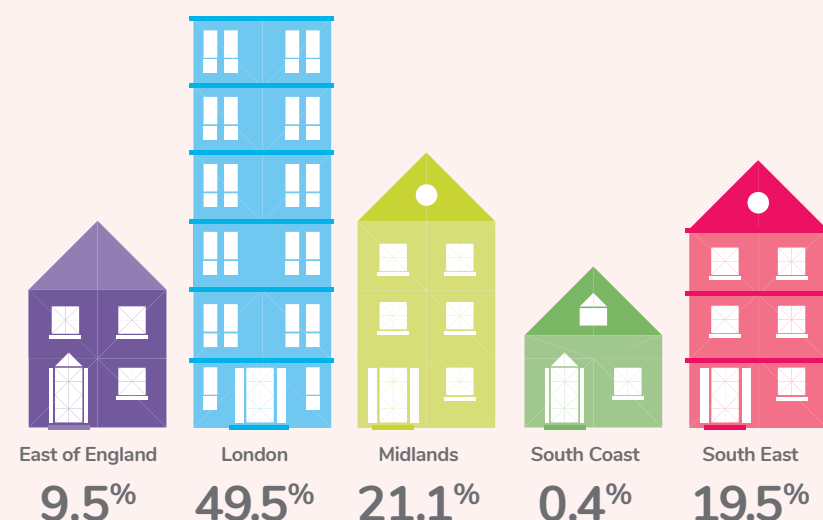
Who we are

Metropolitan Thames Valley (MTVH) is one of the UK's leading providers of affordable housing and care and support services.

Our vision is that everyone should have a home and the chance to live well.

Where we operate

We own, manage and administer more than 57,000 homes. This graphic shows percentages of housing stock by region.



This report is designed to provide all of our residents with a clear picture of how we've performed in the 2019/20 financial year. This includes how we're engaging with you, investing in your homes, resolving complaints when things don't go right, and staying financially strong to deliver on our social purpose.

Welcome

One of the key aims of the merger which created MTVH in October 2018 was to better serve residents in the areas that matter most to you. During the year, we made progress in this across a range of areas, including investing £129m in maintaining and improving our homes (2018/19: £118m), supporting more than 3,000 people into employment and training (2018/19: 1,800) and securing £1.4m in financial gains for residents through our money advice services (2018/19: £1m).

Despite this progress, we know there is much more to do. We want to raise customer satisfaction levels, develop our digital channels further, continue improving our services and be transparent in how we provide them. We also want to be fully accountable to residents, making sure your homes are well-maintained and your voices heard. We welcome the recent Social Housing White Paper, which outlines government proposals to ensure that residents are at the very centre of how social landlords operate – and we look forward to working with government and you to implement them, building on the progress we are already making.

Of course, it's impossible to write a review of 2019/20 without considering Covid-19. We had to respond both quickly and flexibly to the challenges of the pandemic – with residents' safety and wellbeing our top priority.

From the very beginning, we maintained crucial services such as Care and Support operations and NHS keyworker accommodation schemes thanks to the dedication of our frontline colleagues.

We also worked in partnership with local authorities, agencies and businesses to ensure that those who needed them most could access essential items, such as food and medication, as well other support.

We set up a Coronavirus Support Hub shortly after lockdown measures were first introduced in March to provide targeted help and referrals. We also put in place a programme of welfare calls to those believed to be most at risk – with more than 8,000 calls made at the time of writing.

Adapting our services during lockdown helped us learn a lot about our communities and the services they need from us. We want to use this to be a more responsive organisation, guided by your needs at every step.

Facing into the future, there is much uncertainty about the longer term economic and health impacts of Covid-19. However, we will continue to work with you to meet your needs, and play our part in helping people to have a home and the chance to live well.



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We want to use this to be a more responsive organisation, guided by your needs at every step.



Ann Gibbons
Executive Director,
Customer Services



Mark Everard
Executive Director,
Property



Resident governance

We're committed to engaging with residents to ensure we deliver what's important to them. As part of this, during the year we commissioned researchers to survey residents for their views on how we can do this better.

This took the form of an online survey, as well as face-to-face focus groups. The research identified opportunities to improve engagement and broaden representation in our groups of involved residents.

One of the main outcomes of this was a new resident governance structure, to directly connect residents in our different regions with MTVH and our Board:

Customer Services Committee

This group is a sub-committee of the MTVH Board. Three residents sit on the committee, alongside Board members and an independent member. They work directly with senior leaders in the organisation to amplify the voices of all MTVH residents and improve our services.

Customer Council

This group of 12 residents works alongside MTVH teams across the business and reports to the Customer Services Committee. They act on behalf of all MTVH residents to challenge and improve our services.

Regional Panels

Three regional panels, composed of nearly 30 residents in total will work with our Regional Directors and their frontline teams, reporting to the Customer Council. Their role is to help bring the voices of residents in the regions to the MTVH Board.

Ulrika Lewis

Ulrika has recently become an MTVH resident in London. She works in the NHS and, in her role on the committee, is committed to listening to a diverse range of views.



I intend to be your voice and your advocate – to represent your views, which in turn will help to further improve MTVH's services

Recruitment began in the summer of 2020, with our three Customer Services Committee members beginning their roles in October:

Pamela Newman

Pamela is a shared owner in London, and works for a housing association which provides support for some of London's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people.



This is a real and exciting chance to influence change for the better and have your voices heard through your Customer Services Committee



Ahunna Onyenso

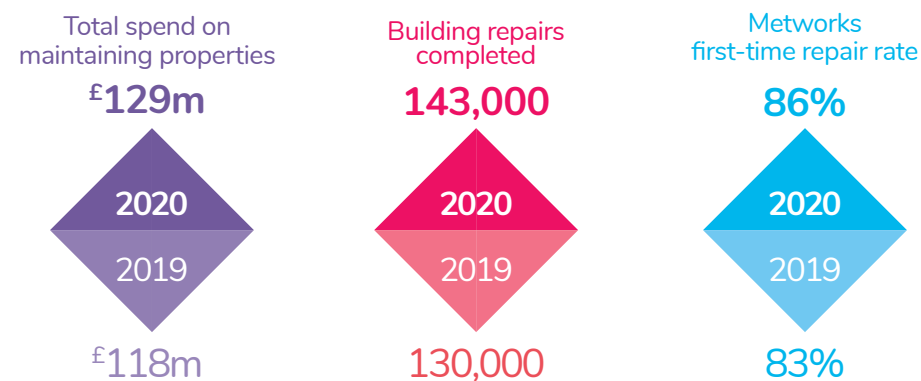
Ahunna is an MTVH resident from Reading, who works in the bioscience sector. As Chair of the Customer Council, she is passionate about collaboration between MTVH and our residents.

Let's work together to make MTVH the gold standard when it comes to customer service and satisfaction, enabling us to have good, safe houses and to live well



Investing in people's homes

We're committed to keeping you safe, warm and dry in your home. In 2019/20 we spent £129m (2018/19: £118m) maintaining our properties, with our newly established Commercial Services team providing specialist support and oversight on that spend to ensure quality and value for money. £40m (2018/19: £35m) of that spend was invested in improvements to homes, which included replacing 1,140 kitchens (2018/19: 747), 907 bathrooms (2018/19: 732) and 1,623 boilers (2018/19: 2,328).



Your safety is our top priority, and during the year we maintained high levels of gas safety, with a compliance score of 99.2% for inspections in the year (2018/19: 99.9%). We also established a new Safer Buildings team to lead on the legislative and regulatory changes that flow from the Hackitt review of building regulations and fire safety. This team has already carried out investigations across our taller buildings, and we are working to ensure that, in cases where safety work is required, it is completed quickly and effectively – with residents engaged and updated throughout the process.

As a charitable housing association responsible for more than 57,000 homes, including more than 4,000 multi-story residential blocks, we have adopted a risk-based approach to this work – meaning that those buildings with the highest risk categorisation (based on factors such as height and construction materials) are being focused on first.

As part of this work, the Safer Buildings Team is also responsible for managing all enquiries on the External Wall System form (EWS1) required by mortgage lenders to check whether a building meets government building safety guidelines. During the 2020/21 financial year, we will be inspecting at least 48 buildings, sharing EWS1 forms with residents and their representatives on request.

Our Property Desk, the dedicated section of our contact centre for property-related enquiries, took more than 235,000 calls (2018/19: 250,000) during the year and completed more than 143,000 building repairs (2018/19: 130,000). More than 80,000 of these repairs were completed by Networks (2018/19: 78,000), our in-house repairs team which operates in London and the East Midlands. Networks delivered a consistent service, with a first-time repair rate of 86% (2018/19: 83%) across these regions and 93% (2018/19: 94%) of repairs completed on time.

Customer satisfaction and complaints

Customer satisfaction for renters, by far our biggest group of residents, was 70% in 2019/20. This compares to 61.5% for Metropolitan residents and 73.7% for Thames Valley Housing residents in 2018/19, the year in which we merged. Although we report now as one organisation, we are working to fine-tune how we measure customer satisfaction in a fully integrated way – to help us get clear and reliable information which we can turn into action to make improvements.

Listening to residents and responding to your feedback is key to continually improving the services and support we provide. Below is a summary of the complaints we received in 2019/20.

- New complaints (Stage 1): 2,890 – 26% lower than the year before.
- Complaints escalated to Stage 2: 469 – by working with residents and taking action to resolve issues, only 16% of new complaints moved to the next stage.
- Complaints that were escalated to Stage 3: 272 – when a complaint needs further attention and residents want us to look again at our response, it goes to Stage 3. Just 9% of new complaints went to Stage 3 in 2019/20.

During the year, 28 complaints from residents were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman to look at, with the majority of these relating to repairs issues. We have continued to work closely with the Ombudsman to improve early resolution of complaints, and to learn from these cases.

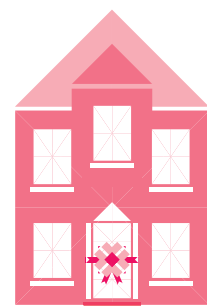
We have been working with five other landlords as part of a pilot with the Housing Ombudsman to improve early resolution of complaints. This has allowed us to make policy changes and improve training. Alongside this we are also working to ensure that we are compliant with all aspects of Ombudsman's new complaint handling code, which was published in July 2020.



Our financial performance

Maintaining good financial management is crucial to ensuring we continue to deliver on our purpose – giving everyone a home and the chance to live well. This is more important than ever against the backdrop of Covid-19, and the uncertainty around Brexit.

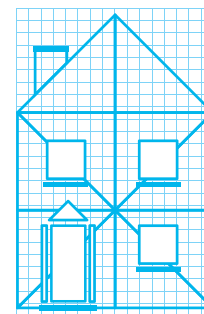
Our financial results for 2019/20 show that we're in a strong position, and this strength underpins the 1,023 new homes we delivered in the year (2018/19: 1,037). We also invested £272m in homes for the future (2018/19: £361m), and have a plan to build 13,400 over the next 10 years.



1,023
New homes delivered



£272m
Investment in buying new land and building new homes



13,400
New homes to be built over the next 10 years

Performance at a glance:

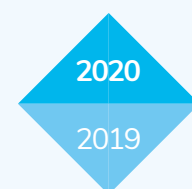


Turnover
£465m



£411m

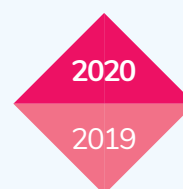
Adjusted operating surplus
£131m



£154m

As a charitable organisation, we reinvest the surplus we make back into delivering on our social purpose

Operating margin
27%



36%

Following an in-depth assessment of the organisation in January 2020, we were pleased to see the Regulator of Social Housing re-affirm our existing 'G1' rating for governance and 'V2' rating for financial viability. This recognises the responsible governance arrangements we've put in place, and our financial stability.

We know that there are challenges ahead in the external environment, but we're well-placed to meet these, building on solid financial foundations.

Value for money

Value for money is crucial to how we run our organisation. Through robust financial management, we can optimise our resources and better deliver on our social purpose of giving everyone a home and the chance to live well.

The integration of our two legacy organisations has enabled us to make savings and operate more efficiently – including bringing together central teams, integrating IT systems and procuring services more effectively.

We launched a new supplier relationship and contract management programme, which sets out how MTVH selects suppliers and manages performance issues to continually improve and drive value for money.

We've also invested in quality and consistent services, such as our new digital platform MTVH Online – which delivers a more streamlined and user-friendly experience for transactions such as paying bills or reporting repairs, while helping us to operate more efficiently in the long-term.

We're committed to working with you to ensure that value for money is embedded across the organisation and that our resources are directed towards the areas most important to you.

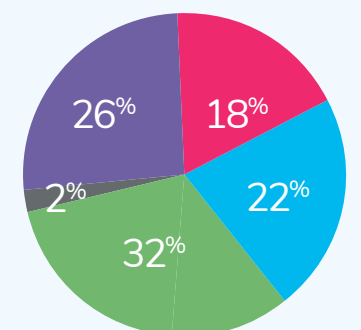
The graph on the right shows how each pound of your rent is spent.

During the year, we also carried out research into the socio-economic value of MTVH social tenancies, to demonstrate their impact on people, places, and the public purse. The research estimated that, in total, our tenancies contribute £713m a year to the UK economy, and that for every £1 invested in MTVH, £1.53 is returned to society.

This contribution includes at least £287m through boosts to the economy from home-building and maintenance; £174m through supporting economic participation and helping people get back to work; a saving of £83m for the NHS through fewer GP visits and reduced health inequalities; and a saving of £5m for the education sector by providing holistic support that enables children to get to school.

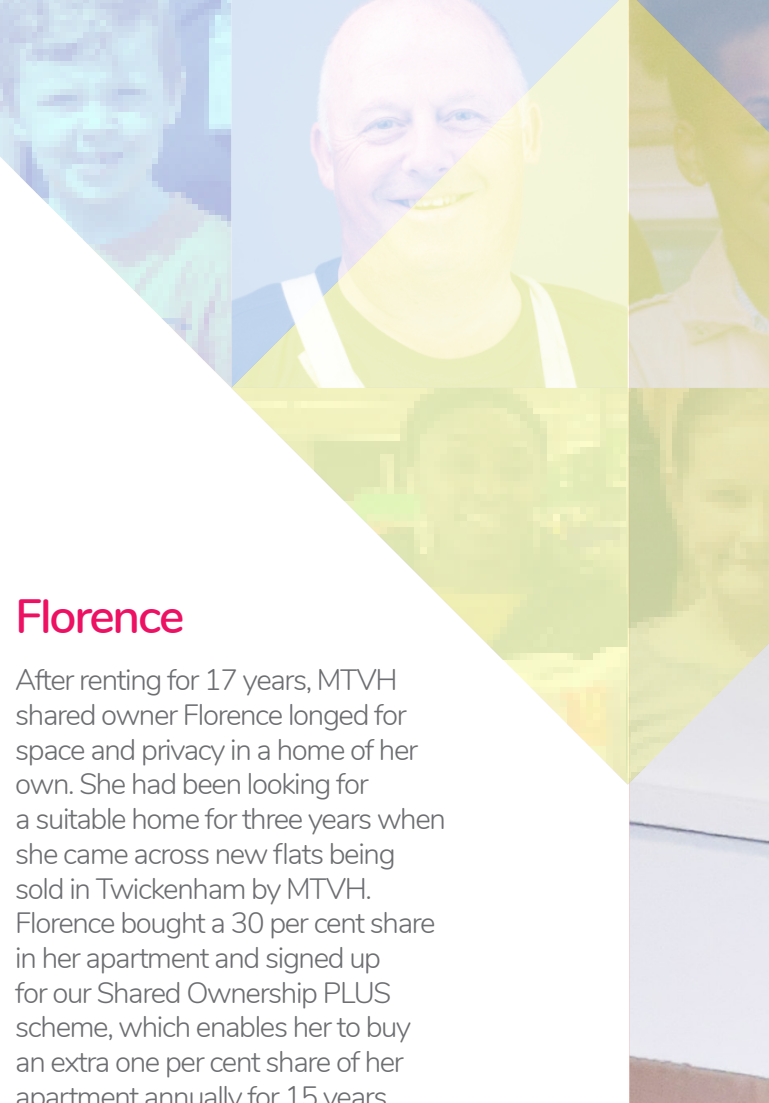
How your rent is spent

- Services such as cleaning and grounds maintenance
- Managing homes
- Repairs
- Other Costs
- Finance costs and developing new homes



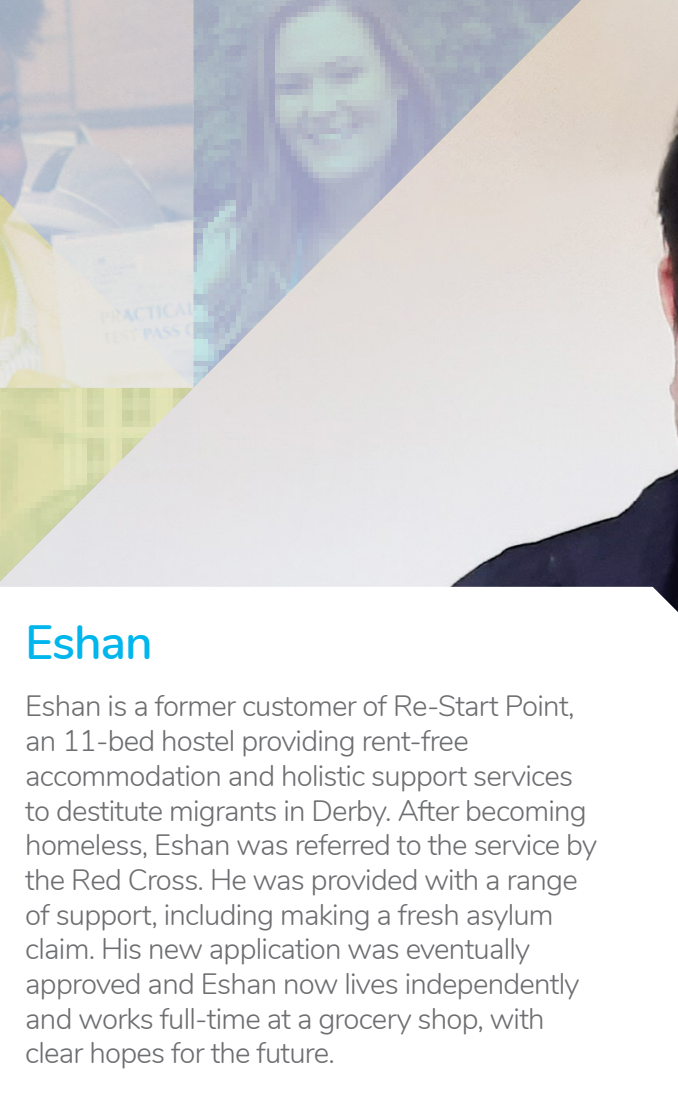


▶▶
I'd definitely recommend shared ownership. Buying a home has transformed my life.



Florence

After renting for 17 years, MTVH shared owner Florence longed for space and privacy in a home of her own. She had been looking for a suitable home for three years when she came across new flats being sold in Twickenham by MTVH. Florence bought a 30 per cent share in her apartment and signed up for our Shared Ownership PLUS scheme, which enables her to buy an extra one per cent share of her apartment annually for 15 years.



Eshan

Eshan is a former customer of Re-Start Point, an 11-bed hostel providing rent-free accommodation and holistic support services to destitute migrants in Derby. After becoming homeless, Eshan was referred to the service by the Red Cross. He was provided with a range of support, including making a fresh asylum claim. His new application was eventually approved and Eshan now lives independently and works full-time at a grocery shop, with clear hopes for the future.

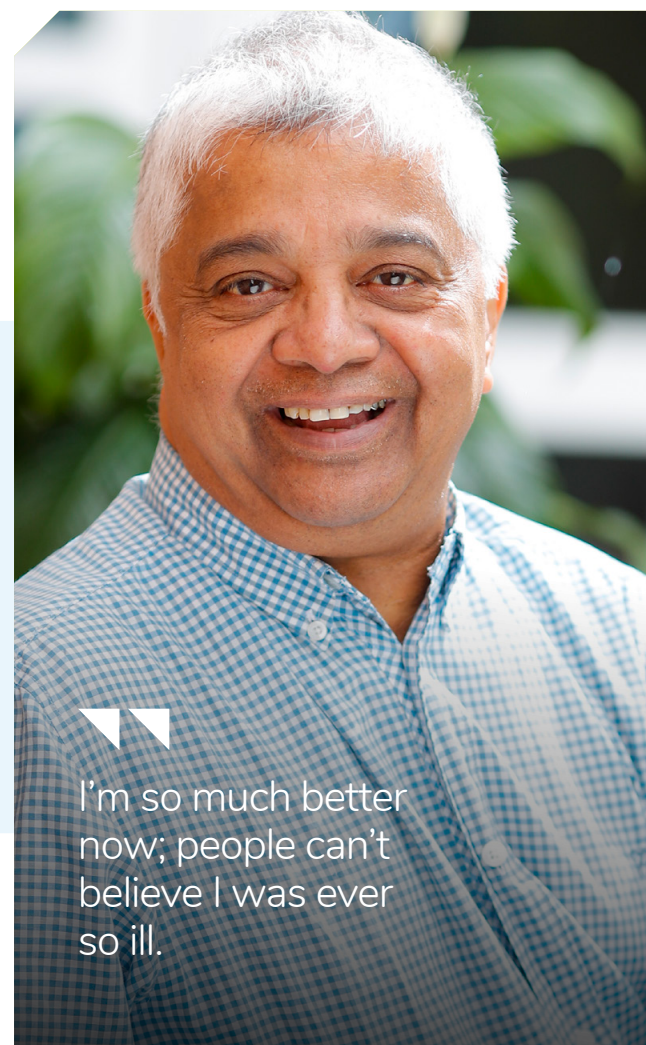


▶▶
Re-Start Point gave me an opportunity to re-build my life.

Resident voices

Kavi

Kavi lives with his wife in one of our supported housing schemes for older people in London. After being diagnosed with cancer in 2016, he needed a stable and affordable place to live so that he could follow his treatment plan. Concerned by plans by his private landlord to raise the rent, he saw an advert for MTVH's supported services and successfully applied. Not having to worry about accommodation meant Kavi could focus on his health, and he believes getting a home with MTVH saved his life.



▶▶
I'm so much better now; people can't believe I was ever so ill.



Lee

After being unemployed for three years, MTVH resident Lee was referred to our employment support services. It quickly became clear to Phil, our Employment Lead in the East Midlands, that Lee was an excellent administrator. "His performance was outstanding and we knew he would be a valuable asset to the business," says Phil. Lee now works 16 hours a week at MTVH, promoting the employment service we provide to our customers and representing MTVH at community job fairs.

▶▶
I love my job at MTVH, My confidence has been boosted and it has given me stability.

