



# Annual Report to Tenants 2023/24

## Message from the Chair

At Wirral Methodist Housing Association our focus is always on our residents, and we know that the last year has been another very challenging one for many of them. Sustained inflation levels have seen steep rises in food and energy prices as well as rising interest rates and skills shortages. This has had a major impact on those on low and fixed incomes and created a challenging environment for community Housing Associations and other organisations that work alongside us.

This last year has also seen increased sector scrutiny from the regulating agencies for social housing - all designed to ensure residents receive the service they deserve, whether it be quality homes and repairs, responsive 'right first time' services, a prompt and open approach to complaints or the opportunity to get involved and shape the services delivered.

Innovating and changing to raise standards while delivering 'business as usual' is particularly challenging for our small team. We do, however, welcome the increased scrutiny of our sector and customer standards and we are engaging and working proactively with the new requirements to learn and improve.

We also welcome the new Consumer Standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Residents voice should be heard and influence the quality of service they deserve. We are committed to listening, learning, being held to account and are being open and transparent. Feedback enables residents to rate services and track our performance. During 2023/2024, 76% of our residents indicated satisfaction with our services.

This past year has seen many initiatives to raise our standards, including: reviewing our housing stock condition data through a systematic survey of properties, proactively investigating all reports of damp and mould,

and investing in our IT systems to enable us to more effectively collect, analyse, and improve services. The team also moved into a fit for purpose modern office environment which brought everyone together in one connected workspace.

We have continued to do our bit to respond to the national homes shortage with some 25 high-quality new homes in Rock Ferry and Wallasey. Work has also started above the offices in Birkenhead to deliver 8 new homes by April 2025 and we are actively involved in Wirral BC's master plan to regenerate Birkenhead in identifying opportunities for much needed homes.

It has also been a time of change across our teams. Valued and long-standing team members have moved on with our best wishes and this has been a challenge. We have welcomed new colleagues who I am sure will take us forward.

This year, the Association is celebrating 60 years since a group of committed and far-sighted members of the Wirral Methodist community determined they could make a difference by providing homes to those in need.

From that acorn we have grown to some 906 homes on the Wirral. We are very proud of our heritage and place in the Wirral community, and determined that by innovating, collaborating, and learning, the future for community social housing on the Wirral will go from strength to strength.

I hope you find this report informative and interesting, and we would love to hear your feedback. In the meantime, I also take this opportunity to thank the team on behalf of the Board for their enthusiastic commitment, congratulate them for all they have achieved and wish them well for 2024/2025.

**Bryan McPaul**

## Welcome from the Chief Executive

This year marks 60 years since Wirral Methodist Housing Association was formed. In 1964 a group of people from the Wirral Methodist Circuit established the Birkenhead (Methodist) Housing Aid Society Limited as they were really concerned that there wasn't sufficient affordable quality accommodation for local people. 60 years later we still have this as one of our central aims.

There remains an acute need for more homes across Wirral and West Cheshire. We remain committed to providing new homes and making sure our existing ones are in good condition and accessible to those who need them.

During the last year, we have made further steps to know your homes much better and have completed a total survey of all properties. This will help us know your needs, and plan our improvement work better than we have done in the past.

We have delivered new homes in Rock Ferry and Wallasey, and it has been good to see how these new properties have made such a difference to the lives of the new tenants.

We continue to try and improve our services. We do this through our surveys and this year we have completed the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. Further details are included in this report, and it is good to see relatively high levels of satisfaction in many areas. We know we need to get better at handling complaints and we will continue to learn from your feedback and from other areas such as the Housing Ombudsman.

Thanks to all our tenants and staff for helping to make Wirral Methodist such a special housing organisation.

**Paul Carhart**



**Paul Carhart**  
Chief Executive

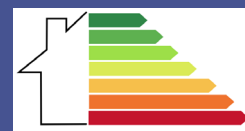
## Stock as of 31/3/24



**In 2023/24 we have 906 homes**

Property type	Amount
● General needs	<b>645</b>
● Supported	<b>244</b>
● Shared Ownership	<b>17</b>

## Environmental sustainability



EPC compliance 2023/24 –  
we have 606 properties  
**69% Grade C or above**



Energy costs have been reduced and efficiency increased by including LED lighting in all kitchen & bathroom replacements and ensuring boiler replacements include a system power flush and the fitting of thermostatic radiator valve.



We continue to reduce office waste and energy consumption through video conferencing, introducing electronic signatures for tenancy agreements and emailing contractor invoices.

# Keeping you safe

This is our top priority. We compare our performance to those of similar-sized Housing Associations, and we benchmark using figures supplied by Acuity Benchmarking.

We know repairs are important to you. Here’s how we did in 2023/24:

**We achieved**  
**93%**  
**satisfaction with your last repair**  
Target 97% Benchmark 93%

**We achieved**  
**96%**  
**right first time for repairs**  
Target 97% Benchmark 91%

**99.9% compliance with decent homes**

Emergency repairs: **96%** Target 97% 323 Repairs  
Reactive repairs: **99%** Target 99% 1018 Repairs

**Gas Safety**  
**100%**  
homes with valid  
certifications  
Target 100% Benchmark 100%

Electrical inspections in  
domestic and communal  
properties  
**99.9%**  
Target 100% Benchmark 100%

**Fire Risk**  
**100%**  
of properties with  
communal areas assessed  
Target 100% Benchmark N/A

Safety is a very high priority for the association and a lot of work goes into ensuring all these safety checks are successfully completed with only one electric check outstanding because of access reasons. Along with these checks we also complete a range of checks around fire, water and lift safety which all serve to reassure our residents that their homes are safe.

## Anti-social behaviour

We know anti-social behaviour can be deeply upsetting and disruptive for those affected. We continue to work with you and partners including Merseyside Police, Victim Support and Wirral Council to tackle problems when they arise. In 2023-24 we have had 15 ASB cases and closed 14 cases.

**Tenants satisfied with ASB outcome: 100%** Target 100%

Noise nuisance	4
Domestic abuse	1
Drugs & substance misuse	4
Fly-tipping	2
Harassment	4

# How much we spent on improving your homes in 2023-24

Capital expenditure included £2,708k on properties and £313k on parts. The focus was on internal work.



**bathrooms**  
**£24,000**



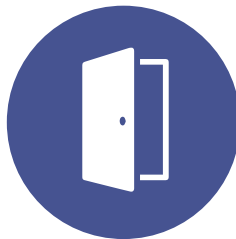
**kitchens**  
**£31,000**



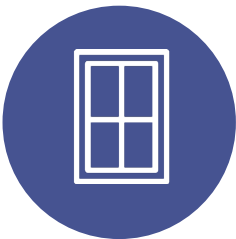
**boilers**  
**£42,000**



**central heating**  
**£18,000**

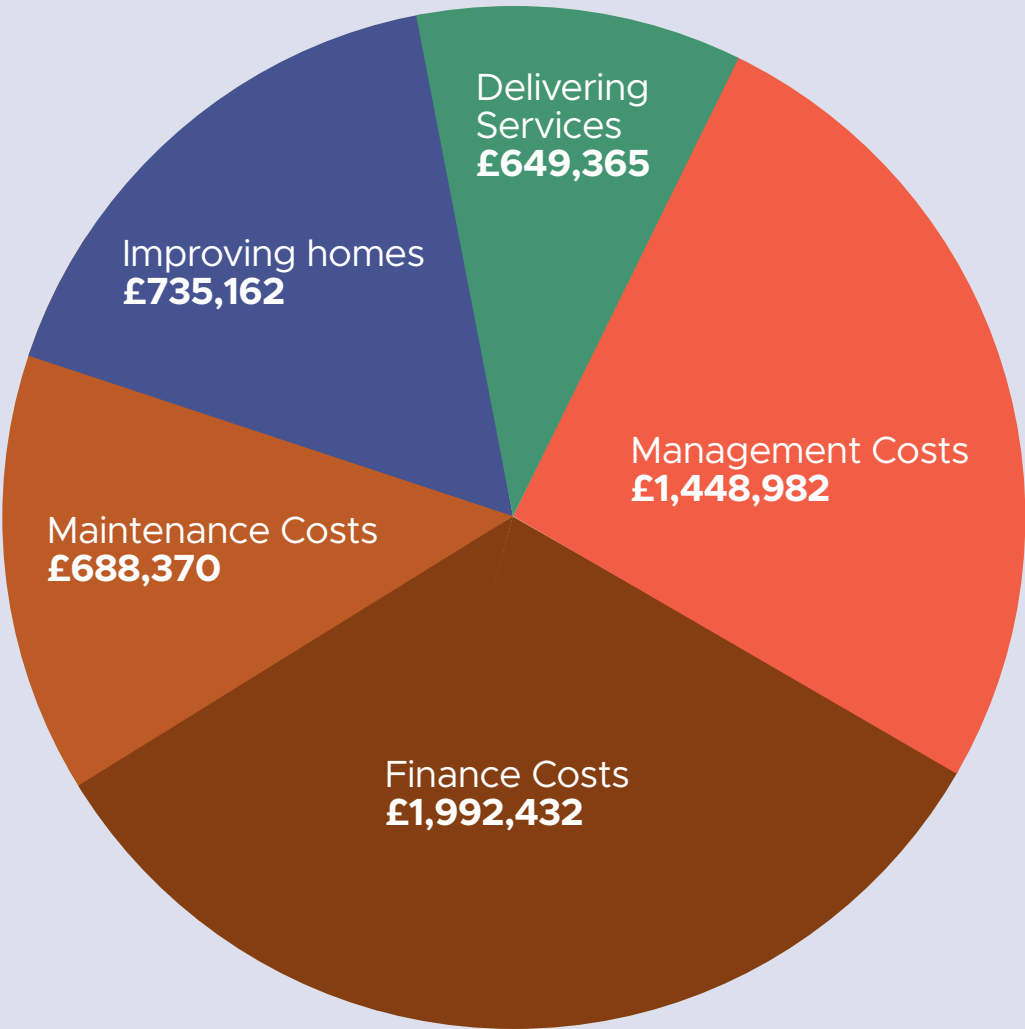


**doors**  
**£9,000**



**windows**  
**£12,000**

# Where we spent each £1 of income in 23/24



# Financial performance

Ongoing changes to inflation and interest rates mean that we are working hard to ensure we understand the impact on our costs, income and the long-term impact on our business plan. We remain financially strong and well-governed, achieving the best possible value for money.

## Annual Accounts Summary

	2022/23	2023/24
Surplus	£757,000	£1,557,000
Turnover	£5,598,000	£6,054,000
Operating costs	£4,841,000	£4,497,000

<b>Rent collected as total % of rent due 22/23</b> <b>100.2%</b> Target 102% £4,939,783 Benchmark 99%	<b>Rent collected as total % of rent due 23/24</b> <b>99.99%</b> Target 100.1% £5,306,664.00 Benchmark 100%
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## Average weekly rents

	2023/24
1 bed	£94
2 bed	£99
3 bed	£113
4 bed	£123

# We are listening!

## Complaints



Number of complaints 23/24

**53**

Stage 1

**52**

Stage 2

**1**

Ombudsman

**0**

## Type of complaint

Repairs

**37**

Housing Management

**12**

Other

**4**

Complaint Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Grand Total
3rd party contractors	3		3
Policy	1		1
Property Condition	11	1	12
Failure to provide service	10		10
Delay with providing a service	6		6
Standard of service	21		21
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>53</b>

## What we've learned

We know that you just want us to get things right first time. That's what we want too. This year we've learned that we need to:

**Make sure complaints are dealt with**

**Keep you informed of progress**

**Make sure you are content when the complaint is closed**

**Make sure you know the different ways you can complain**

**Learn from our mistakes**

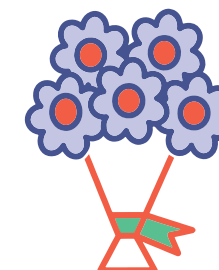
**Let you know how we're doing that**

We always work to learn from any complaints that we receive – but the team here at WMHA really appreciate it when someone takes the time to say, 'well done'. Here's a selection of the comments we've received this year:

**“Many thanks for your fast response. The contractor who attended the repair was polite and made no mess”**

**“Many thanks for helping me move, my new property is lovely”**

**“Thank you to the Housing Officer for all her help. I really appreciate the support she gave me”**



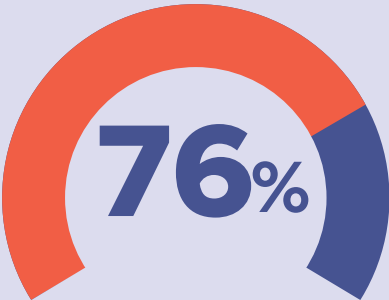


# Working with you

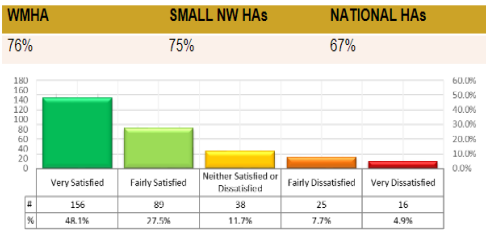
The results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey held in 2023 showed a **45% response rate**, which is high when compared to other associations. The independent survey was partly undertaken because the government has introduced its ‘Tenant Satisfaction Measures’ as a way of regulating social housing. We were keen to do the survey because we want to know what you think, how we compare to others and how we can improve.

The result overall was that 76% said that you were fairly or very satisfied with the service provided by the association.

TP01 - Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by WMHA?



We compared this with 23 similar associations where overall, 23,287 tenants had replied to the survey. The average level of overall satisfaction was 67% so the association is 9% above the average.



Following the survey, the association contacted all tenants who had expressed dissatisfaction to identify any specific problems that needed to be addressed. The result was a 10-point action plan covering all areas of concern that is published with detailed results on the website.

# Annual General Meeting and Tenant Engagement 2023

This took place on the 29th September at the Lauries Centre in Birkenhead. We were so glad to see many of our partners and supporters join us to celebrate all that we have achieved in 2022/2023. The Chair expressed that the aim was to engage more with tenants to help improve and change the business and to give greater support.

The association is forever looking for new ways to improve and continue to do so on behalf of the tenants. We were delighted to welcome so many tenants from the local area to join us for an engagement session at the AGM. Tenants were asked before the session to send their questions in and they would be answered on the day. We also gave all 24 tenants at the event the opportunity to ask questions on the day.





## Communicating with you

We understand that it can be frustrating if you tell us about something and you don't hear about what's happening – or if you do, it's full of jargon

This means we have had to look at the way we run our service. We realised that before we could communicate well with you, we had to make sure we communicated well with each other. As a direct result of what you asked for, we have:

- Made sure all staff are updated at regular briefings
- Collated all the feedback we received and provided tenants with regular updates on any changes to services we provide
- Enabled our front-of-house staff to answer most enquiries themselves
- Continued to deliver a full-time dedicated phone line
- Offer more information in our Buzz newsletters



## Complaints handling

You made it very clear to us that once a complaint is made, you need to be kept informed about what is happening. We are constantly reviewing our complaints handling in line with guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.

We have now:

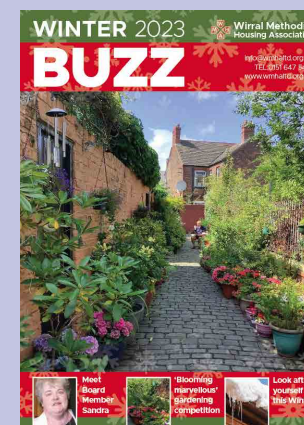
- Trained staff to log, investigate and manage complaints
- Trained staff to keep the complainant informed at every stage
- Updated our complaints policy and put it on our website
- Assigned David Smith as the Complaints Champion on our Board

## Housing Ombudsman Service

## Keeping in touch

You like to know what we are doing, why we're doing it and how you can be involved. With help from your feedback, we have:

- Improved our newsletter so it's providing helpful information, like how to keep warm, and giving community news, like our garden competition
- Held events and met you in your neighbourhood to hear from you direct



## Building Thriving Communities

### The Milliners

On Monday 24th April 2023, handover was completed on 15 new apartments in Birkenhead that will help to ease the demand for affordable homes for single-person occupants and couples. The scheme is made up of one-bedroom apartments and has regenerated a derelict brownfield site in the Rock Ferry area.

The prominent site at the junction of New Chester Road, a main road into Birkenhead town centre, had been vacant for many years, with redevelopment considered unviable.

The three-storey apartment building has been designed in compliance with Homes England quality standards and the Nationally Described Space Standards.



## 60 years of memories

There are some tenants who have lived in our homes since day one. One of these is the lovely Mrs Joanne Carrington-Smith. She generously told us some of her life story: "I was born in the front parlour of a house in Simpson Street in June 1957. I went to school in Claughton Road however it is no longer there. They are building flats on the site. "I was married in 1978 and moved to 18 Simpson Street. I was there for 42 years before I sold the house to Wirral Methodist and moved to 5 Simpson Street where I was until November last year when my husband and I moved to more suitable accommodation. "My grandparents also moved in 1929 to Simpson Street and were there for 34 years. So, I suppose you could say there have been three generations living in Simpson Street for 95 years." What a brilliant slice of history.



## The Annual Garden Competition 2023

We celebrated the hard work you put into your lovely gardens with a competition this year. There were lots of entries for the two categories, communal garden & private garden all with inspiring stories about what gardening means to you. Judging was a tough job for Chief Executive Paul Carhart. 'It was very difficult to choose a winner as each garden was uniquely beautiful,'

Private garden winner Mr Karl Reynolds from Aldersgate loves gardening. "This project started 4 years back, as I work in a stressful environment, so when I come home I want to relax. We have also made the summer house so we can get away from the TV and talk about hopes and our dreams, I hope you like it"



The joint winners of the communal area category were the residents of Claughton Road and Hornby Street. The tenants at Claughton Road said "We first started to transform our entry area back in 2010 with our close neighbours along Claughton Road, Birkenhead, by putting a few plant pots of flowers out after alley gates had been fitted. Our neighbours have always held a Friday morning get-together for neighbours, friends, and other visitors to enjoy a coffee and a chat in the entry. We all help keep the entry tidy and weed-free. We enjoy swapping plants or growing cuttings for each other and for friends."

The tenants at Hornby Street said "I would like to put forward Hornby Street for our community effort in making our entry look clean and colourful for all to enjoy."



## Why it's good to TAG along

The Tenants Advisory Group is central to our efforts to make sure we are delivering the best service we can. If you want to get involved, then please contact us at [info@wmhalt.org.uk](mailto:info@wmhalt.org.uk)

## We are here to help

We know that the past year has been tough for many people. Our Tenant Support Fund is there to help tenants keep their tenancies if they experience financial difficulties. From the requests for assistance in the last year, we paid out £6200 from the fund.

If you need help, please tell us. Our dedicated arrears officer will use a benefits calculator to make sure you are receiving all the support available. We also make referrals to the Fuel Bank Foundation for assistance with utility debts and to Wirral Borough Council who offer support with obtaining white goods. We work with a range of other partners, including Involve Northwest, Age Concern, Make It Happen and local food banks. We want to make sure that you are aware of all the help and support that is available to you.



Call **0151 482 3456**  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral)



Call **0151 306 4840**  
[info@makeithappenbirkenhead.co.uk](mailto:info@makeithappenbirkenhead.co.uk)



Call **0151 644 1100**  
[www.involvenorthwest.org.uk](http://www.involvenorthwest.org.uk)

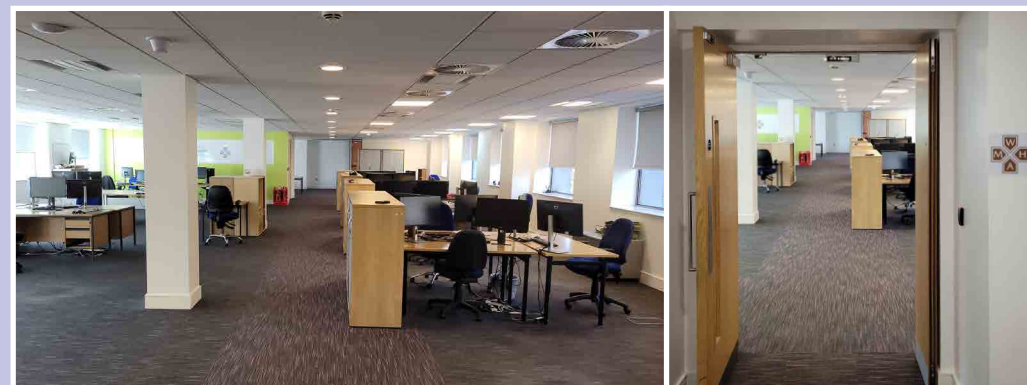


[www.wirral.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.wirral.foodbank.org.uk)

## Our office workspaces have changed

In December 2023 we moved our operational teams from our Head office at 42 Hamilton Street across the road to Partnership Building, the home of Magenta. We have secured some excellent quality workspace for our staff and this means that our colleagues can enjoy an open bright and safe environment, have access to respite facilities and use fully interactive modern meeting rooms.

The space also allows our board to be able to meet in person – or via remote access as we are able to use the professionally appointed meeting facilities. We have also been able to have space to meet tenants by appointment in the welcoming reception area.



We have moved out of our old office primarily to allow for the development of new homes in our old office. This is a great use of space and we look forward to telling you about the eight new homes in our newsletter and next annual report.

The world of office workspaces has changed since the pandemic and we now require flexible modern spaces and by renting some space at Magenta we are also achieving a value for money solution as well as ensuring we have safe and pleasant work surroundings. We are still taking appointments only for visits to the office as you have told us that your preferred method of contact is via the phone. In addition our Housing Officers spend a great deal of time out in the areas where we have homes so please let us know if you need a home visit.

## WMHA Board Members



**Bryan McPaul**  
Chair



**Tom Sault**  
Governance & Internal  
Controls Committee Chair



**Claire Fouracre**  
Tenants & Communications  
Committee Chair



**David Smith**



**Maggie Cornall**



**Kerry Scott**



**Craig Sparrow**



**Sandra Simmons MBE**



**John Morgan**

## We want to hear from you

If you have any questions or would like to give us feedback on this Annual Report please contact:  
info@wmhaltd.org.uk or phone 0151 647 5471



[info@wmhaltd.org.uk](mailto:info@wmhaltd.org.uk)



**0151 647 5471**



[www.wmhaltd.org.uk](http://www.wmhaltd.org.uk)



**Wirral Methodist Housing Association**



**@WMHALTD**



**Housing**  
Ombudsman Service

### A not for profit organisation

**Registered office:** 42 Hamilton Street, Birkenhead CH41 5AE

**Registered number:** Regulator of Social Housing - L0848

Registered Society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Act 2014 - 16740R

**External Auditors:** Mitchell Charlsworth LLP Chartered Accountants

3rd Floor, 5 Temple Square, Temple Street, Liverpool L2 5RH

**Bankers:** Barclays Bank plc, 182-184 Grange Road, Birkenhead CH41 6EA

**Solicitors:** Brabners Horton House Exchange Flags Liverpool L2 3YL