





ANNUAL REPORT  
**2021/2022**



shaped around you



# INTRODUCTION

## A Message from the Chief Executive - Graeme Foster.

**Welcome to our annual report, where we look back at the year to March 2022.**



Graeme Foster,  
Chief Executive.

Writing now, it's easy to forget the challenging times we lived under including lockdowns and real fears for our health. As an Alpha community we pulled through. I'm really grateful to all our development-based colleagues for going the extra mile to make sure our residents were supported. It was a hard time for residents too, but with your help and co-operation we kept our communities safe. Thank you.

July 2021 saw the opening of our first extra care development at Upton on the Wirral. This state-of-the-art building is home to over 80 people and includes a bistro, lounge, gardens and hair and beauty salon. It's something to be proud of and a real symbol of what we can do. More importantly it's made a huge difference to the lives of new residents. It's brilliant to see a new community and friendships take shape and to see people living their best lives.

You'll read on these pages about Alpha being recognised as the UK's best older persons' landlord and how we have increased satisfaction scores among our residents. We've also carried out improvement works to your properties.

While all of this is important, we are driven by a passion to make a difference. Working with our communities is a privilege that we will never take for granted. While we don't pretend to get everything right, our values and our belief in doing the right thing will always drive us on.

Together we have created some amazing communities and we'll continue to do so.

We're committed to doing more and doing it better. We look forward to working with you in the next year and the years to come.

Take care

Graeme



shaped around you





# COVID 19

With the past 2 years disrupted by Covid 19, we did whatever we could to continue to provide our residents with support, from delivering 1600 home cooked meals during the first 8 months of the pandemic to carrying out welfare checks twice a day, when we were not allowed to mix.

We worked within the Government and Public Health England guidelines, and wherever possible we continued to deliver under extreme pressure and ever-changing circumstances, keeping you – our residents the main priority during those difficult days.

Unlike most other Housing Associations, our staff remained on site throughout, and we adjusted the services we were able to provide, undertaking emergency repairs and essential compliance works ensuring the well-being and safety of our residents was always our priority.

We were unable to carry out any works that were not urgent, which did leave us with a backlog, we have just about caught up with, and we thank you for your patience and understanding.



## ACCESS ALPHA RESIDENT GROUP

2021 saw the launch of our 'Access Alpha' programme to review our draft policies and be involved in re-procurement of services.

The call was put out to our residents for help and as always you did not fail us.

We recruited 34 volunteer residents who have reviewed 7 policies:

- Allocations
- Complaints
- Lettings
- Recharges
- Scooter Storage
- Safeguarding
- Domestic Abuse

Feedback from the group has resulted in changes to the policies (pointing out language needed to be plainer and suggesting amendments etc.) and provided reassurance to Alpha Living that our policies are fit for purpose.

Our hope is that we can grow this group of active residents and get our residents scrutinizing and challenging how Alpha Living operate.

If this is something you are interested in getting involved in, please contact our Customer Experience team at [customerexperience@alpha-living.co.uk](mailto:customerexperience@alpha-living.co.uk) or by telephone at **0330 460 9870** (press option 1 for customer experience team).



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## BEST OLDER PERSON'S LANDLORD

In November 2021 Alpha won the prestigious UK Best Older Person's Landlord award.

Organised by Inside Housing (a trade publication that covers the UK's social housing sector), in association with the Chartered Institute of Housing (the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards), the UK Housing Awards recognise the ingenuity, creativity and passion of housing providers across the UK.

Following submission of our entry which included supporting testimonials from our residents, it was judged by an independent panel of professionals, all experts in their fields, ranging from representatives of other housing associations including tenants through to varying bodies such as the Housing Diversity Network and Chartered Institute of Housing.

We were absolutely overjoyed to be announced the winners of the UK Best Older Person's Landlord category. It truly is a remarkable achievement and has helped to shine a light on the incredible work carried out by all the teams and individuals across Alpha for the betterment of our residents and the community we serve.



## RESIDENT CONSULTATION

We have consulted with more than 400 residents this year over various issues including the removal of weekend 'on-site' Development Managers, Lunch Club provision and decoration/furniture choices for communal areas.

Feedback from our residents has been positive, who love that they have chosen colour schemes and styles themselves and are even more pleased with the finished product – life is so much better when we work together....







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# LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE ROADSHOWS

Over the 12-month period, members of our Senior Leadership Team and other staff members visited a number of developments (Barnfield, St Peters Court, The Court and Greenside House) engaging with residents and finding out 'what they want from Alpha Living'.

At the core, we want to strengthen our involvement in a wide range of community matters, to help us truly understand the challenges residents face. We think this is how we can deliver the housing and services that are right for our communities, and we are going to work even more closely with you to successfully do this. We see the Roadshows as an opportunity for you to talk to us about what is important to you.

We aim to formalise a 'timetable' that will be published on our website which will give everybody an opportunity to meet some of the Leadership Team and other members of staff they may not have met previously.



## RESIDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Early this year 176 of our residents agreed to take part in a telephone satisfaction survey which was undertaken by The Leadership Factor (TLF) on our behalf.

Residents were asked their opinions on several topics including:

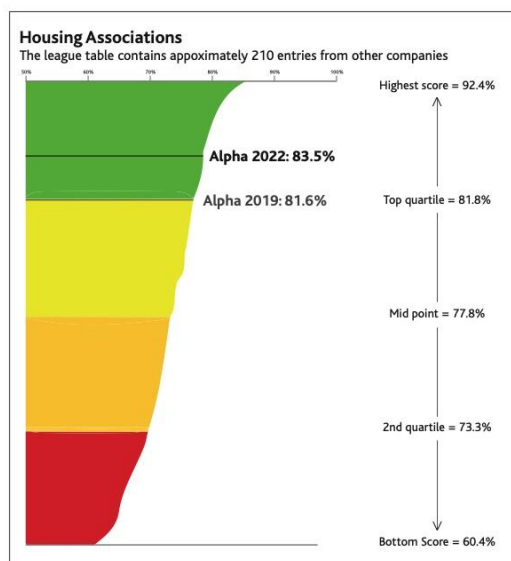
- Overall quality of your home
- Helpfulness of employees
- Helpfulness of contractors
- Your rent providing value for money
- How easy it is to contact us
- How repairs and maintenance are dealt with
- Listening to your views and acting on them

Overall, the results were positive seeing an increase in satisfaction from the previous survey

(81.6% in 2019 to 83.5%).

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The survey did however highlight a few areas we need to improve on, with the biggest issue reported being repairs and the number of visits required before the issue is resolved.

To address this, we have set ourselves targets, and aim to improve our communication with you, keeping you informed about what is happening with clear timescales about when you can expect works to be completed.

## COMPLAINTS

## Housing Ombudsman Service

In July 2020 the Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaint Handling Code, setting out good practice for the sector that ensures complaints are responded to effectively and fairly. Our Complaints Policy was subsequently re-written, reviewed and approved by our Access Alpha Residents Group.

To gain a detailed insight into the association's performance in regard to complaints handling over the past twelve months, detailed analysis of complaints was undertaken.

This analysis involved quantifying the number of complaints against each category and measuring the effectiveness of Alpha Living in terms of adhering to complaint resolution timescales (the graph overleaf gives details).

The analysis also confirms the outcome of complaints in relation to whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

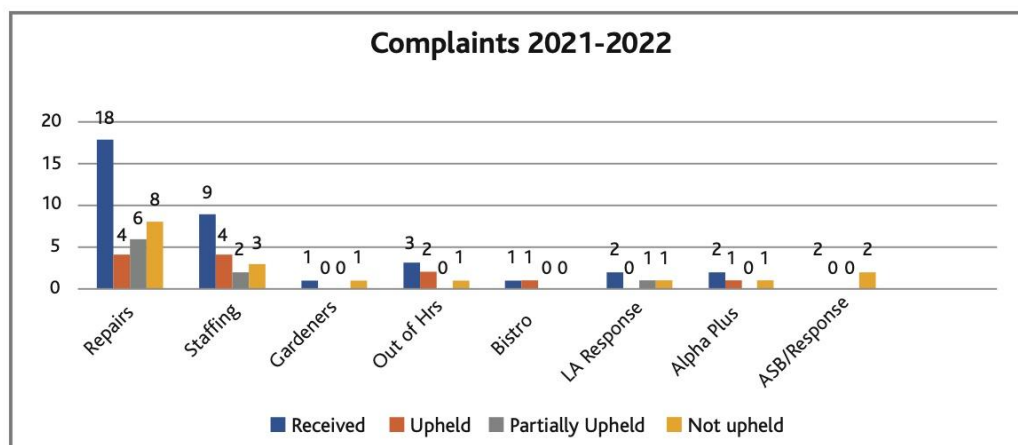
The analysis used, highlighted the following findings:

- A total of 38 complaints (Stage 1) were recorded through the Complaints Handling Process during the reporting year
- There were no complaints escalated to Stage 2 or referred to the Housing Ombudsman
  - 32% of total complaints were upheld
  - 23% partially upheld and
  - 45% were not upheld
- The Association processed 100% of Stage 1 complaints within the stipulated timescales as laid down by the Housing Ombudsman.



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We have adopted a 'lessons learnt' approach, and have reviewed various policies/procedures and provided extra training to our team as a result of the complaints we received.

## POPPYFIELDS EXTRA CARE DEVELOPMENT

Poppyfields is Alpha's bold venture into Extra Care Housing. After some delays due to the Covid pandemic, Poppyfields opened officially on the 19th July 2021 and residents started moving in. Within 3 months all 78 apartments were occupied and the start of a new community and friendships began.

Residents living in Poppyfields have a variety of care and support needs.

Alpha Living staff members are on site Monday to Friday 9.00 am - 5.00 pm with Premier Care providing onsite scheduled care for residents who are based on site 24 hours a day.

A main attraction of Poppyfields is the onsite Bistro where residents can have a 2-course meal, 7 days a week. This is included in the overall weekly charge and is a condition of tenancy.



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The meal provision was an attraction and was a plus point for resident's families as they knew their relatives would eat a fresh cooked meal each day and would become less socially isolated as residents would mix and make new friends. This service is now provided by the Alpha Catering Team.



## IMPROVEMENT WORKS

As we continue our journey to improve our properties and the lives of our residents, Alpha has been busy continuing to upgrade kitchens and bathrooms despite the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Handyperson team has been rebranded as the AlphaWorks team which more accurately reflects the additional skills of the team who carry out some of our investment works in addition to repairs. Since our last in person Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2019, Alpha has been working hard to deliver our component replacement programme across all developments and locations. This has been done with a mixture of contractors and our own AlphaWorks team.

For the financial year ending 31 March 2022, 62 kitchens and 30 bathrooms have been upgraded. The AlphaWorks team being responsible for 32 kitchens and 3 bathrooms.

Each kitchen installed by the AlphaWorks team saves Alpha a minimum of £1,500.

Works to our empty properties to ready them for the next resident for mainly Wirral developments are also undertaken by the AlphaWorks team and again savings are made not only on decoration cost but also on void clearance cleaning and general repairs during the void period.

This has resulted more than £88,000 worth of savings, compared to the use of external contractors.

We have also replaced one of the vans in the transport fleet with an all-electric vehicle. Reinforcing Alphas commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.







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The agility of the AlphaWorks team has also been a massive plus, as we respond to the matter at hand in a timely and professional manner. This gives reassurance to our residents and customers. The team are well liked and give a reassurance to our more vulnerable residents, as they go about their work due to their reliable and professional approach.

As Alpha continue to expand the continued growth of the AlphaWorks team will reinforce and ensure the quality of service our residents receive will constantly improve.

## COMPLIANCE WORKS UNDERTAKEN

Safety is of paramount importance to Alpha, ensuring that all our residents, staff and any visitor are made as safe as possible within our Developments. Whilst works identified in fire risk assessments (such as upgrades to emergency lighting, updating fire signage and fire stopping to the fabric of the building) have all been completed, we are continually checking to ensure these are not compromised due to such impacts as repairs being carried out or re-modelling various areas.

We had cladding surveys carried out where necessary to establish the risks and any required works identified. All resulted in low risks which will be due to the developments not being high rise and the quantity of cladding minimal.

Alpha has upgraded 4 fire alarm systems which has resulted in much lower frequencies of false activations.

There have been 223 EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Reports) carried out this year. This is jointly between the number of voids and regular 5 yearly testing. We have improved the voids process for electrical compliance and where the average turnaround for electrical testing was 14 days in 2021, this has improved to an average of just half a day in 2022.

Development Managers continue to carry out weekly, monthly, six monthly and annual checks within all our Developments. The checks include various actions such as fire alarm checks, lifts operating properly, washer driers free of fluff and emergency light checks for example. It is a combined effort for safety as it takes all colleagues to be aware, manage and engage with colleagues, external services and residents to maintain and improve our overall performance in compliance.



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## YOU SAID - WE DID

- One Development received external funding for a defibrillator and sought permission to have this installed in the communal area. Alpha had a joint meeting with residents and reviewed the various responsibilities in maintaining a defibrillator onsite. Both residents and Alpha were happy to see the defibrillator successfully installed.
- Residents at Naseby Court reported that parking was a real issue as so many of the residents have their own cars, but spaces were limited because of the bin storage facilities situated within the car park area. We suggested relocating the bins into the redundant garage freeing up an extra 2 parking spaces within the car park. Feedback from residents has been very positive.
- Residents at Barnfield in Dewsbury reported that parts of the gardens were somewhat neglected because of the steep incline/position. Alpha engaged a local contractor well verse with the issues who attended and spruced the areas up. Feedback from the residents was positive.

## FINANCE



### Statement of Comprehensive Income

2021/22 was another successful year for Alpha, underpinned by the ongoing theme of change. Alpha continued its strong track record of meeting its objectives, exceeding its financial targets and implementing measures to plan for a revised strategic future.

The year was also challenging, once again, for the sector and for Alpha as we continued to deal with the impact of Covid 19.

Turnover for the period increased by 13.05% from £6,302,378 (2020/21) to £7,125,075 (2021/22) which included the additional income generated following the completion and handover of Poppyfields from July 2021.

Statement of Comprehensive Income	2021/22 £	2020/21 £
<b>Turnover</b>	<b>7,125,075</b>	<b>6,302,378</b>
Operating expenditure	(5,698,698)	(4,829,869)
<b>Operating surplus</b>	<b>1,426,377</b>	<b>1,472,509</b>
Interest receivable	172	2,762
Interest payable and financing costs	(461,510)	(371,908)



Surplus for the year	965,039	1,103,363
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A surplus of £965,039 was generated (£1,103,363 2020/21). Whilst reduced to 2020/21, this was in line with forecast to allow for the delivery of Poppyfields. Surpluses are planned to return to similar levels to previous years from 2022/23.

Operating expenditure increased in the period from £4,829,869 (2020/21) to £5,698,698 (2021/22) mainly related to the additional costs incurred for Poppyfields. The overall operating margin over the period therefore decreased slightly from 23.50% (2020/21) to 20.02%.

## Statement of Financial Position

Alpha's cash position improved during the year from £1,292,867 (2020/21) to £1,851,116 (2021/22) as a result of receipt of the final grant funding from Homes England in relation to our new extra care facility, Poppyfields. This can be seen in the Statement of Financial Position below.

Our current growth strategy is supported by a £15.65m borrowing facility through Lloyds Bank PLC with a total of £13m being drawn to 31 March 2022. The undrawn facility of £2.65m will ensure Alpha is fully funded throughout the lifetime of the current 30-year business plan.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2022		
	2021/22	2020/21
	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Tangible housing properties	41,582,325	40,288,334
Tangible head office property	312,531	-
Other tangible fixed assets	761,088	795,862
	<b>42,655,944</b>	<b>41,084,196</b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Stock	-	1,554
Trade and other debtors	348,990	531,729
Cash and cash equivalents	1,851,116	1,292,867
	<b>2,200,106</b>	<b>1,826,150</b>
<b>Less creditors due within one year</b>	<b>2,470,993</b>	<b>2,293,104</b>
<b>Net current (liabilities)</b>	<b>(270,887)</b>	<b>(466,954)</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>42,385,057</b>	<b>40,617,242</b>
<b>Creditors due after more than one year</b>	<b>23,968,413</b>	<b>23,165,617</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>18,416,644</b>	<b>17,451,625</b>
<b>Capital and reserves</b>		
Non-equity share capital	43	63
Income and expenditure reserve	17,947,440	17,053,574
Service charge reserve	469,162	397,888
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>18,416,644</b>	<b>17,451,625</b>

If you would like to see a full copy of our financial statements, you can download them from our website at [www.alpha-living.co.uk](http://www.alpha-living.co.uk) or alternatively, please telephone head office on **0330 460 9870** (*option 1 for the customer experience team*) who will be happy to provide

you with a hard copy via your development manager.

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# APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are a great way to support young people to transition between education and the workplace, allowing individuals to earn while they learn and gain a nationally recognised qualification on completion.

During the pandemic, young people who left education were disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn and bore the brunt of the impact of sector closures. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the lockdown hit youngest people hardest, with employees under the age of 25 around two and a half times more likely to work in sectors that were shut down compared with other employees.

We find this to be unfair and we want to change the lives of young people in our communities.

At Alpha, we are committed to supporting young people gain entrance not only to the workplace, but to start what we hope will be a successful and fulfilling career for them. Combining on-the-job training with off-the-job learning is an effective way of growing our skills base and embedding our culture. It also gives both our apprentices and us an invaluable opportunity to develop the expertise we need now and in the future.

In the last 6 months, we have taken on two apprentices, Daniel Arrowsmith in Finance, and Ellie Amis in Housing and Asset. We asked them to tell us a little bit about why they applied for their apprenticeship with Alpha, what they wanted to achieve through it, and a bit about themselves outside of work.







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## Daniel stated

▲▲ The main reason I applied for an apprenticeship was because I thought it was the perfect fit for me. This is because having the ability to earn and learn makes for a greater personal development as well as gaining vital experience in a professional environment. By the end of my Apprenticeship, I hope to have passed my course and become more efficient in my role allowing for me to embed myself within Alpha in the future.

Activities outside of work include going to the gym every day and exploring Wales with friends or family on the weekends whenever I get the chance, which has allowed me to become more active. ▼▼

## Ellie stated

▲▲ I applied for my Housing and Asset Apprenticeship because I have always been interested in the people that make business work and thought the perfect job for me coming from a Customer Service background was Housing, as it incorporates a lot of everything.

Outside of work I am very interested in Politics which conveniently goes hand in hand with my apprenticeship as politics has a direct impact on the housing sector. I also enjoy listening to all kinds of music! So far, I am thoroughly enjoying my apprenticeship! ▼▼

All of us here at Alpha are excited to have both Daniel and Ellie on board and we are looking forward to seeing them grow and develop.



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## THANK YOU

Alpha would like to extend a special thank you to all Board members, staff and residents for your continued contribution and support in yet another successful year. Thank you to all those involved in the preparation of this report which we hope you all enjoy.

*Graeme Foster*



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