



Growing Stronger Communities

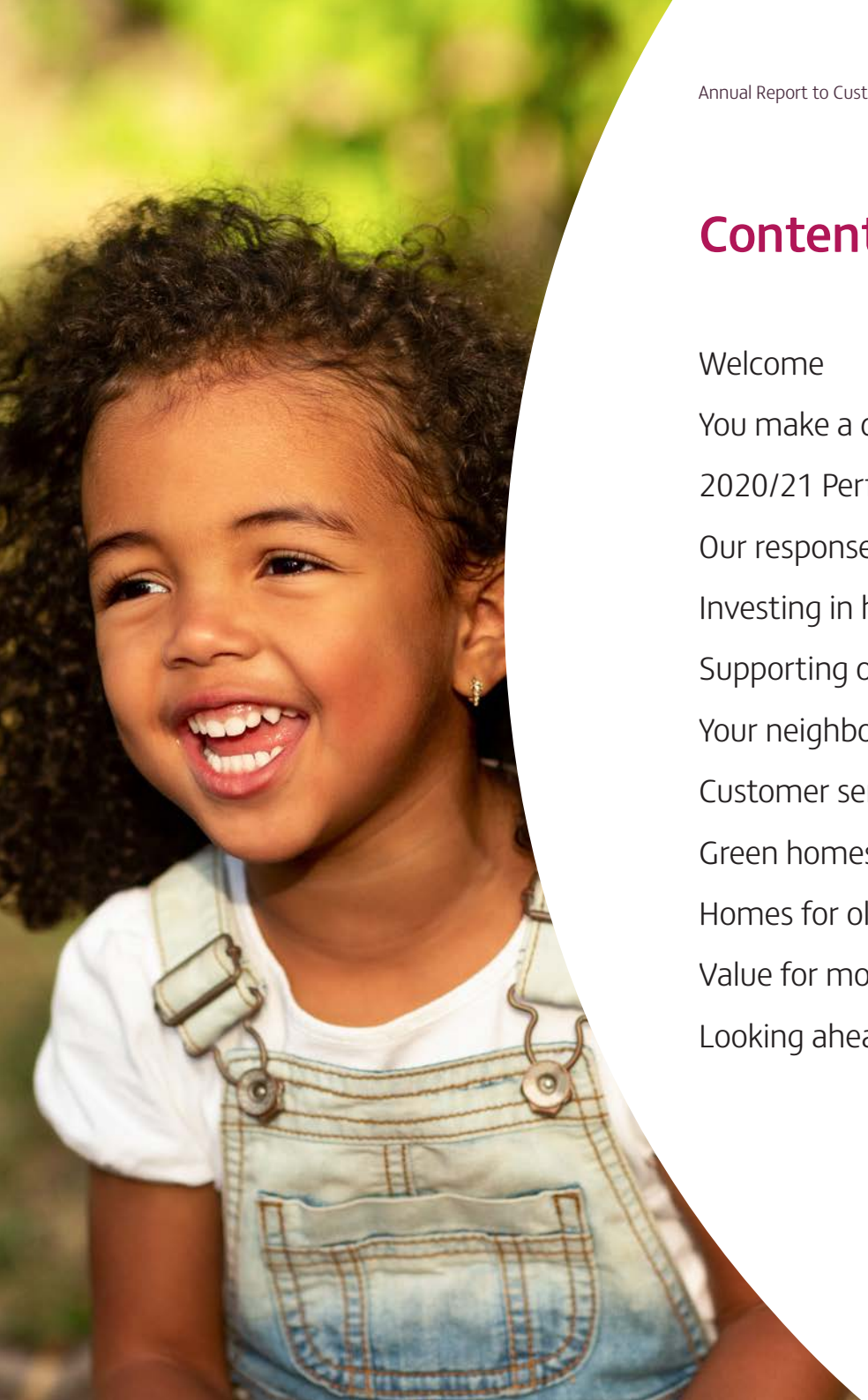
An extraordinary year
in the life of Torus

Annual Report 2020/21



Contents

Welcome	01
You make a difference	02
2020/21 Performance	06
Our response to Covid-19	08
Investing in homes	16
Supporting our people	18
Your neighbourhood	22
Customer service and complaints	24
Green homes & neighbourhoods	26
Homes for older people	28
Value for money	30
Looking ahead	32



Welcome

To say 2020/21 was a challenging year for us all would be an understatement.

The way we live our lives, how we interact with one another and the services we provide across communities - everything changed because of Covid-19.

In the 12 months this report covers, we worked hard to adapt to ever-changing needs and Government guidance, to keep doing the essentials well and to be there with practical, tailored support for those who have been most affected by the crisis.

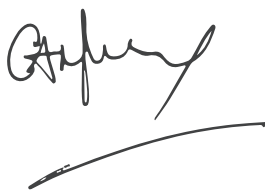
At Torus, everything starts with safety. This approach shaped the Safe Systems of Work we created to make sure core tenancy and housing services could carry on safely. From providing vital help to hard-hit families (including food parcel supply to almost 2,000 households) to expanding our digital programme, we worked hard to focus support where it was needed most.

Connecting and partnering with tenants and communities to get through Covid-19 has proven how strong and resilient our neighbourhoods really are, even in the toughest of times.

Meaningful partnerships with customers are at the heart of what we do. Launched in July 2021, our five-year Corporate Plan renews our commitment to 'growing stronger communities' and ensuring tenants have a powerful voice in service delivery. Our customer promise, inspired by the Social Housing White Paper, provides a clear commitment to achieving this.

You'll hear many tenant voices in this report and the difference they make.

As always, we need your help to make sure we're getting things right and are delivering the right services, in the right way.



Cath Murray-Howard
Chief Operating Officer





You make a difference

More of what matters to you

Our tenants thoroughly review the annual report, so it is shaped by the things that matter most to you. Tell us what you think. We're always looking for ways to improve. So, if you have any suggestions, please email annualreport@torus.co.uk

Use your tenant voice

To find out more about how you can get involved and have your say, contact our Tenant Voice team

call **0800 678 1894** or email tenantvoice@torus.co.uk

"I volunteered to join the Scrutiny Group as I have experience in problem solving and understanding data. As a new member of the group, I am looking forward to being part of the team to help Torus get things right first time."

David, Scrutiny Panel member, Warrington.

"As a tenant I obviously want my landlord to provide the best service possible. Being a member of Landlord Operations Committee (LOC) alongside other tenants from across the heartlands ensures that we are having real influence on services. We ensure they remain of a high standard and improve where needed. I can speak for my other colleagues when I say we are honoured to be the current custodians and hope to leave a legacy for those that follow."

Teri, LOC Member, Liverpool.

"As I am disabled, I feel it's important that my voice is heard as I might be representing the views of others who are in the same position. I've lived in my home now for over 10 years and this is the first time I feel I'm being asked for my point of view on my home, my community and how Torus are delivering their services. I take part in Torus Talk and find it refreshing that a very diverse group of tenants, from different age groups, backgrounds and race have a forum where we can discuss issues that are affecting us. It's great to know we are being listened to!"

Maureen, Torus Talk, Policy Review and Community Investment Fund Panel Member, St Helens.

"I got involved with Tenant Voice as I wanted to make a difference, get a better understanding of how Torus works and find ways to help. Being on the Scrutiny Panel means I can have a positive influence on how Torus deliver services. It is easy to get involved and as I have a young family, I can pick and choose how much time I commit to attending meetings. I feel our opinions are listened to by Torus management. I also feel valued and that I have a positive influence on how Torus works in my community."

Hannah, Scrutiny Panel member, St Helens.

Tenant Voice

Putting tenants at the heart of everything

Empowering tenants has remained a priority throughout the pandemic.

This year we launched the Tenant Voice Strategy, which sets out the direction for tenant involvement and outlined how we will engage and consult with you - our tenants and leaseholders. It aims to encourage as many people as possible to have their say in the shaping and scrutinising of our operations. We're doing more than ever to make sure that you can have your say.

Together with Tenants – read more about our early adopters

www.torus.co.uk/news/together-with-tenants

A significant challenge in the past year has been maintaining engagement during the pandemic and adapting how Torus works with tenants. We have developed a single online portal, to host all consultations and involvement opportunities, which is now open to all tenants and residents.

www.torusconsultations.co.uk/tenant-voice

During 2020/21, support was provided to help tenants access Microsoft Teams and all planned consultations and engagement activities were moved online. Alongside this, an email and phone service were provided for those without digital access or skills.

In June 2020, the senior leadership team held a virtual live event to speak directly to tenants and answer questions about changes to services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Longer term, we have commissioned Torus Foundation to help get more tenants online by providing them with digital equipment and training.

As restrictions eased we also started to resume face-to-face engagement, both out in our communities and meetings with customers.





Tenant Voice Highlights 2020/21

Continually reviewing and strengthening our Tenant Voice makes sure we're always working to meet your priorities, and that we consistently improve services in partnership. The figures below show some of the year's tenant engagement headlines.

- **4 virtual Tenant Inspections** completed looking at complaints, rents, anti-social behaviour, and home safety
- Torus Talk Facebook group membership **increased to 542 members** (a **47% increase** from the previous year), with **217 Posts**, **1,022 Comments** and **1,090 Reactions** being added
- **53 tenants** have engaged in formal groups
- **9 new Scrutiny Panel** members recruited
- **20 new Tenant Inspectors** recruited
- **11 tenants** were involved in awarding **£139,500 in grants** from the Community Investment Fund
- **196 volunteer hours** given to formal groups



The Landlord Operations Committee (LOC)

Seven tenant volunteers and six others from Torus Board and our local authorities make up LOC, which focuses on customer service standards and performance. In 2020/21, LOC looked at:



COMPLAINTS



BUILDING SAFETY



FORMER TENANT ARREARS



REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Our offer to you the customer

Over the next few pages, we will update you on the impacts of the pandemic on our services and explore how we are performing more generally across our key operational areas:

- ✓ Safety at home and across communities
- ✓ Investing in homes and communities
- ✓ Supporting our people
- ✓ Your community
- ✓ Customer services and complaints
- ✓ Green homes and sustainable neighbourhoods

In each of these sections, we will highlight how Tenant Voice has helped us make decisions and shape your services.



2020/21 Performance at a glance

This snapshot of our activities highlights key achievements in 2020/21. We understand that our performance is about more than just numbers, however. The pages that follow explain in detail how we performed across the activities that matter most to you.

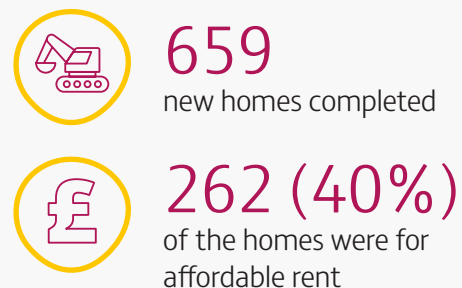
Repairs and maintenance



Complaints performance



New homes



Social impact headlines



Working together with tenants



*Some standard checks were unable to be completed due to access issues presented by the pandemic

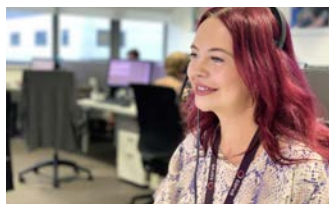
Awards

The Maples Extra Care and Westhead Avenue development in Kirkby was awarded the RICS Social Impact Award



2020/21 timeline of response to Covid-19

Against the challenging and disruptive backdrop of Covid-19, we managed to adapt and maintain our services. Our commitment to supporting people and building stronger communities became more important than ever and underpinned all activity. Our teams were flexible and operated digitally so that support to tenants could be offered where and when it was needed. As a result, we maintained essential services that directly support communities across Liverpool, St Helens, and Warrington throughout 2020-21.



MARCH/APRIL

Frontline staff became **Key workers**.

Closed offices, suspended non-essential repairs, and bought **75,000 items of PPE** to keep customers and staff safe.

Handled a record **15,000 calls**.

Gave **emergency grants** to local food banks.

Committed **not** to take legal avenues for tenants in arrears.



MAY

£25,000 donated by Torus Foundation to St Helens Council, supporting their provision of emergency food supplies.

Our Domestic Abuse Support Service, Safe2Speak, reached a case load of **333 cases** and the 24-hour helpline received 69 calls across April & May.

Commenced wellbeing calls to check up on **resident's welfare**.



JUNE

Allocated **10 homes** to homeless people in urgent need.

Senior leadership team held a virtual live event to **speak directly to tenants** about services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Repairs beyond emergencies were **resumed**.



JULY

A new single **freephone** contact number and email address was rolled out, making it easier for you to contact us

FireFit Hub ran a virtual summer camp. A total of **454 activity bags** were distributed to young people to combat boredom throughout our Covid response.



AUGUST

FireFit Hub reopened with **new services**.



SEPTEMBER

Torus Foundation provided over **100 pieces of digital kit** (tablets, computer systems, dongles) to families in need.

Outreach sessions started in South Liverpool. Trying to reduce the number of young people idling in the street.



OCTOBER

Launched an enhanced customer focused Complaints Policy. All complaints have been responded to **within 10 days** after launch.



NOVEMBER

Announced that we will invest up to **£12 million** into community initiatives over the next two years to address the hardship caused by coronavirus.

Further **wellbeing calls** made to check on resident's welfare

FireFit forced to close due to new government guidance.



DECEMBER

We provided further support for foodbanks: **11 grants** given; **6 Foodbanks** supported; **£38,000 given** in grants. Food parcels were supplied to **1,971 households** as part of our covid response.

We ran the Torus Group **Christmas Fundraising Appeal**, providing Christmas gifts for young children and those at risk of social isolation, including homeless and the elderly.

FireFit **reopened** again.



JANUARY

An additional emergency emerged, and Storm Christoph affected 101 Torus homes in Warrington with severe flooding. We relocated 27 households and their pets into **emergency hotel accommodation** and provided further subsistence payments more than **£120,000**.

Government guidance once again forced the closure of **FireFit Hub**.



FEBRUARY

Further wellbeing calls made to residents. A total of **15,851 wellbeing calls** and texts were made across 2020/21.



MARCH

We involved **26 tenants** in the development and design of a new "Your Home, Your Safety: Tenant's safety guide".

Let's March launched to get residents moving in our extra care schemes.

Responding to communities in need

As our timeline shows, our approach across the group in 2020/21 was to step out, step in and step up.

1 STEP OUT

Social distancing meant that in person interactions were kept to a minimum. The first lockdown significantly diminished Landlord Services' ability to deliver a broad-based customer service, with all but emergency home repairs and gas servicing works initially suspended.

2 STEP IN

We worked hard to ensure all services were moved online and made accessible in new formats.

3 STEP UP

We committed to reaching more people and delivering a spectrum of essential services on the frontline. Working with agility, we launched new services as a fast, effective crisis responder whilst continuing core services to enhance and change lives.

Your housing services

We have worked hard to continue to deliver services, whilst balancing keeping you and our staff safe.

We have adapted by focusing on:



Virtual viewings

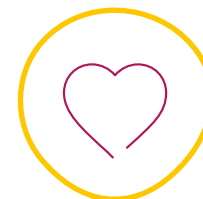
Introducing 'virtual viewings and electronic 'sign-ups' to allocate properties to families and people in need -

1,400 new tenants signed up electronically reducing the need for face-to-face contact.



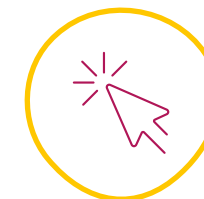
Pro-active support

Supporting people struggling to pay their rent, by pro-actively offering support to our customers.



Wellbeing checks

Regular wellbeing checks on our older and vulnerable customers.



Online activities

Moving our Tenant Voice and customer involvement activities online. Full stop needs adding after online.

A place to call home

Supporting the homeless

Throughout the pandemic, we have worked closely with local authorities to reduce the numbers of homeless people and give rough sleepers a safe place they can call home. This was in response to the Government's **'Everybody In'** scheme at the start of lockdown. We have prioritised getting empty homes ready for let as quickly as possible, giving those without a home priority access.

- Our initial response saw the **allocation of 10 homes** to homeless people in urgent need between June and August 2020.
- We worked closely with local authorities to **rehouse 753 people** facing homelessness during the pandemic.
- All our refuges and emergency accommodation remained **open 24/7** throughout the lockdowns.

In March 2020, John M, affectionately known as 'Ted' found himself without a roof over his head after losing his place in a hotel. Due to Covid-19 he required immediate accommodation and was moved into the guest suite at a Torus Extra Care Scheme, The Maples in Knowsley. Due to local authority allocation rules, Ted was not entitled to remain in the scheme permanently. But, with concerns about his health and wellbeing, Torus advocated for Ted and asked them to reconsider. As a result, Ted was able to move out of the guest suite and into his own apartment on a permanent basis.

This Government's strategy has no doubt saved lives, but as lockdown is eased the future remains uncertain for many homeless people and the next phase of our response is now being looked at.

We are committed to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the long term. Therefore we have committed to the National Housing Federation post-pandemic priority of 'no return to rough sleeping' and joined the Crisis 'Everyone In' campaign. In July 2021, Torus was the first Registered Provider to complete and open "move-on" accommodation funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) fund.

The successful proposal was a joint bid from Torus and St Helens Council. Looking ahead to 2021/22, Champions Court in St Helens will support the next stage of our rough sleeping response by providing long-term 'next steps' accommodation.

"It's made me feel great and safe, I want to thank all the staff. I've made a lot of friends here and I feel a lot better. I feel so much happier about the future now I am part of this community."



Domestic abuse

Incidents of domestic abuse and violence increased during the lockdowns.

Safe2speak

The Torus Support Network is commissioned by St Helens Council to run its Domestic Abuse Support Service, Safe2Speak. The team, including trained Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's), work in partnership with a range of agencies to safeguard and protect victims of domestic abuse. The service is free, confidential, supportive, informative, non-judgmental, and available to anyone experiencing domestic abuse of any kind: sexual, physical, emotional, or financial. The team also offer a 24-hour helpline which:

→ **Dealt with increased demand**

26 new referrals in May 2020 compared to 3 referrals for the same time in 2019.

→ **Took 685 high risk referrals**

(90% contacted within 1 working day)

→ **Responded to 799 medium risk referrals**

(92% contacted within 3 working days)

The lockdowns often saw a reduction in calls seeking help, as victims were often isolating with the perpetrator. This meant they felt unable to call and proactively seek support. In response to this, we introduced a new 'textline' where victims can text for help.

Refuge

Refuge is emergency accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse, offering space for single women, single men and families escaping domestic abuse. The address is confidential. Our specialist staff provide residents with the skills they need to begin a new life free from fear. In 2020/21 refuge dealt with:

→ **47 new admissions**

(44 females/3 males)

→ **27 single people**

→ **20 families**

(with a total of 32 children)

The St Helens Refuge remained open, with social distancing and 24/7 support via intercom in place. Furthermore, the team have continued with 'Target Hardening'. Providing equipment to victims to keep them safe in their own home, such as door braces.

“Sarah was fabulous, understanding and patient. She listened to me and pointed me in the right direction.

I feel I can take on the world after the support from Safe2Speak.

Anonymous



Safety at home and across communities

Every tenant and resident has the right to a decent, safe home. Keeping you and our communities safe has been a priority throughout the pandemic. With people spending more time at home, gas, electrical and other safety checks have never been more important. We adapted our ways of working and if we did have to come into your home, we did everything we could to keep you safe. Our staff worked as quickly as possible and followed Government guidance for safe and secure works.

Each year, we have targets for the number of safety checks and risk assessments we must complete in given timeframes. Completing these checks is essential to certify and evidence that our homes are safe for tenants. Our performance is down on 2019/20, having been impacted by a range of factors including the suspension of some services.



36,608
gas safety checks completed



99.93%
on target



993
fire risk assessments completed on our communal areas



100%
on target



3,089
electrical tests completed



94.16%
on target



86%
of our domestic lifts have been maintained and serviced



4,413
legionella inspections were completed



100%
on target



6,126
asbestos surveys were completed



100%
of surveys due for our non-domestic properties were completed



95.37%
Our asbestos surveying programme for domestic properties was suspended for most of 2020/21 due to Covid-19.



35,669
of 37,399 of our domestic properties have a valid asbestos survey despite this interruption

Your Home, Your Safety: tenant's safety guide

In April 2021 every Torus tenant was posted a copy of 'Your Home, Your Safety', a new Torus health and safety guide for tenants. It explains the steps we take to keep you, your family, neighbours, and your home safe. The guide was developed in response to the Government's 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents' White Paper. The aim of which is to make major reforms to support housing customers in England. It is a direct response to the tragic events at Grenfell Tower fire in 2017.

Our new guide focuses on health, safety, and customer involvement in how we deliver their services. This guide was developed with customers, who worked with staff from our Assets, Communications and Housing Services teams, giving their input on the content and design



Customers commented:

“I found the booklet very informative clear and precise on all subjects, tenants will be reassured Torus are on the ball and reliable at all stages.”

Angela, Warrington

“I found it a very resourceful guide. It helped me a lot to know about the safety hazards around my property.”

Zabihulah, Liverpool



www.torus.co.uk/news/tenants-safety-guide

Going forward...

We have also appointed a new Building Safety Manager, who will have an increased focus on tenant engagement and listening to the tenant voice on safety matters.

Tenant Voice

Access for Gas Safety checks during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Nine tenants provided feedback on how Torus could encourage tenants to allow access for gas safety checks. During the first lockdown we struggled to gain access to properties due to safe systems of work and concerns surrounding Covid-19.

Their suggestions of explaining the safety measures in place and the importance of having the checks completed were all incorporated into the communications campaign.

Your Home, Your Safety Guide:

Tenant's safety guide: **26 tenants** were involved in the development and design of the new tenant safety guide.

Safeguarding (keeping adults and children free from harm, neglect, and abuse):

7 tenants attended a virtual session to take part in a discussion around safeguarding. Their feedback was incorporated into a review of Torus' approach to safeguarding and helped shape the new policies and strategy, which rolled out in summer 2021.



Investing in homes

Since June 2020, our repairs and maintenance services have continued to run as normal in a Covid-secure way. However, there are still challenges: a significant backlog of repairs caused by the lockdowns; certain materials remain in short supply; high demand; and reduced staffing numbers because of sickness.

Throughout the pandemic our commitment to customers continued to be:

- to maintain and improve your homes
- to complete your gas safety check every year
- to ensure all our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

Torus' construction, maintenance and repairs contractor, HMS, provide all your repairs and maintenance services, offering an efficient routine and emergency repairs service.

How did we do?

We worked hard to maintain and improve your homes throughout the year. The number of repairs and maintenance issues we address within target are important to us, as is your satisfaction with the service as a tenant. It is essential that our homes are kept to standards we can all be proud of.



151,669
repairs (22,064 emergency) performed



100%
emergency repairs completed on target



99.99%
of non-emergency repairs within target



98.5%
of all repairs resolved on target



84.7%
of customers were satisfied with the repairs service



372
average number of responsive repairs completed per day



£6.2m
spent on routine responsive minor repairs – an average of £89.44 per job



£4.4m
spent on major responsive repairs



346
major adaptation works completed



1,480
minor adaptation works completed



£17m
invested in modernising and refurbishing existing homes



£7.1m
invested in planned works – including painting and annual gas servicing



£13.57m
spent on components – including new kitchens and bathrooms



£30m
set aside to invest in existing homes in 2021/22

During the year we installed:

- ✓ 492 new bathrooms
- ✓ 619 new kitchens
- ✓ 1,538 new boilers
- ✓ 4,376 smoke and heat alarms
- ✓ 345 new windows
- ✓ 357 new roofs
- ✓ 944 electrical rewires

“We are committed to ensuring that customers are at the forefront of everything we do.

Over the past 12 months we have been working closely with the Tenant Voice team. As a result, we have involved customers in the development of policies and service offers.”

Carl Talbot-Davies,
Acting Group Assets Director



Tenant Voice Impact

Rechargeable Repairs Policy

24 tenants took part in the consultation and the new policy has been agreed with tenants.

Responsive Repairs Policy

33 tenants took part in the consultation. Tenants provided feedback on timescales for different repairs and shared their experience as a customer receiving the service.

Grounds Maintenance

32 tenants provided feedback on the revised Grounds Maintenance Policy; this was updated following tenant feedback.

A New And Improved Kitchen & Bathroom Specification For All Torus Tenants

70 tenants were consulted. Tenants agreed principals for staff to follow in developing the specification - high quality, easy to maintain, and safe. Tenants provided feedback on personalisation options and choice. They were able to view the final specification and confirmed that the new specification met or exceeded their expectations.

“I think it’s great that Torus and tenants can work together on what they want in their home which is beneficial to both Torus and tenant.”

John F, Involved Tenant, Liverpool



Supporting our people

We're here if customers need a little extra support. This is a priority for us, especially in difficult times. Changes to benefits and economic hardship mean that we're actively involved in helping our most vulnerable customers find work opportunities, manage their finance, and reduce rent arrears. Support is offered through the Torus Support Network, our Money Advice, Rents & Welfare Reform Teams and our charitable arm, Torus Foundation.

Torus Foundation offer:

- Support with benefits and Universal Credit
- Support with budgeting, maximising your income and money management
- Help find work and training
- Help with digital skills
- Run activities that improve your health and wellbeing

Our Social Value output

Through our services, projects, and interventions we work with a broad range of customers, supporting all ages and abilities to take up new life changes, grow and thrive. The impacts of our support go far beyond just figures; however, these stats help to illustrate the breadth and scope of our offer.

In 2020/21 we:



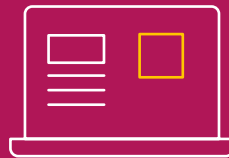
Helped **422 people** into employment



Supported **406 people** into training



Ran wellbeing activities attended by **277 people**



Delivered **33 Digital Inclusion** training sessions



£4,150,235

Unlocked in financial gain for **1,884 customers** through our financial inclusion services

Money and finance

We provide tailored support for tenants struggling to navigate Universal Credit. The outputs of this activity were:



2,390

Alternative Payment Arrangements applied for



518

Vulnerability Alternative Payment Arrangements applied for



3,976

Universal Credit Claims supported to date



343

Total Rent Third Party Deductions approved (471 applied for)

Tenant feedback confirms that the support we offer has made a big difference:

“I cannot thank the Torus Officer enough for all her hard work. The money has made a big difference to my life, it enabled me to get some extra support as I’ve been finding it harder to manage myself lately. She was excellent and made it happen. I had gotten to the point where I couldn’t be bothered, so without her help, I would still be struggling.”

Ken, Torus Tenant

“I was struggling with a complicated Housing Benefit claim, but thanks to your expertise I was awarded Housing Benefit of £89.21 per week and Council Tax benefit of £15.15 per week. I am forever in your debt. Thank you.”

Chris, Torus Tenant

“After losing my partner, I struggled with my mental health. Thankfully with support from Torus I have turned my life around. They supported me with PIP and ESA applications and I was awarded £10,000 in backdated payments. I couldn’t have done any of this without the support from Torus. I feel like I have a new lease of life.”

Sarah, Torus Tenant

“The Torus officer was brilliant; she contacted my boss who was only paying me Statutory Sick Pay and got him to put me on furlough. This meant I received 80% of my wages and was able to pay my rent.”

Unnamed, Torus Tenant





Employment and Training

New Leaf is led by Torus Foundation and is part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) program, funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund. One New Leaf participant to go on and secure a dream job directly with the NHS was Reem from Winsford, who moved to the UK after leaving Jordan and securing Refugee Status. Reem worked hard to develop a healthcare focused CV with her mentor and completed a Job Seeking Course.

As a result, Reem went on to become a Bank Healthcare Assistant within the NHS. She intends to continue studying alongside her job so she can achieve her dream role as an NHS nurse.

“New Leaf is incredible! It helped me to take a big step in my life by giving me more support than I ever expected. My mentor is one of the people who changed my life last year and I am very grateful. I couldn’t have gotten my first job in healthcare without New Leaf.”

Reem, New Leaf participant



new leaf
a torus foundation service



Young people

FireFit Hub is a cornerstone of Torus Foundation. Services are designed in collaboration with our members and partners, ensuring the facility inspires and empowers members and the broader community to reach their full potential. A key stakeholder and pillar in the South Liverpool community, FireFit Hub is a place where young people feel safe and secure, have a sense of belonging, feel trusted, respected and listened to, and do not feel judged.

Khalel* is a FireFit Hub member who is adapting to life in Liverpool after fleeing his home country and seeking asylum. Prior to lockdown, he would visit the Hub often for football and chill zone sessions. During the months of lockdown, FireFit's outreach team often saw Khalel out in the community. He mentioned how he was struggling and often felt down in his mood. The outreach team arranged for Khalel to attend the centre for one-to-one football sessions to keep him active and have time away from home. Our outreach team also identified that Khalel was struggling with food and arranged for the family to receive a family sized food portion once a week. Khalel* expressed how these things helped the family a lot and he was very appreciative of the support given. His low moods happen far less frequently now.

*Not his real name

Health and Wellbeing

In March 2021, customers across our extra care schemes were encouraged to take part in 'Let's March' and complete laps of their scheme daily. Feedback has been positive and as a result more pedometers have been purchased using Lottery Funding.

One walker said

"I enjoyed the walks, it got me up and out each day. I enjoyed walking to the different parks. I also taught the group the names of the birds that we would see. I still cannot believe I walked 56 miles. I'm really enjoying the sessions."



Find out more about our social impact activities in the Torus Foundation 2020/21 Social Impact Report:

 <https://torusfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TORUS-FOUNDATION-SOCIAL-IMPACT-REPORT-2021.pdf>

Tenant Voice Impact

Torus Foundation liveability feedback session

11 tenants took part in a consultation session to help shape Torus Foundation's Health & Wellbeing projects. Tenants reviewed a draft survey and suggested changes to make it more customer friendly. The information provided in the sessions will be used to develop plans around impact days and community gardens.

Digital inclusion project

Torus Foundation has provided digital equipment and training to **11 tenant voice representatives**.

Your neighbourhood

We know that the safety and appearance of neighbourhoods is a concern for our customers. We want our neighbourhoods to be thriving, safe places you can be proud to live in.

- We are committed to tackling Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and have a specialist team to deal with any issues.
- Our Neighbourhood Teams carry out regular Estate Inspections to ensure that your community is safe, green, and clean.
- We work in partnership with the Police, Fire Service, and other partners to tackle individual community issues and create safer spaces.
- Our Community Investment Fund (CIF) provides grants to local initiatives four times a year.

This year, much of our activity was impacted by Covid. Our Neighbourhood Officers were unable to visit you in your home and for a time we were unable to meet you face to face. Despite these difficulties we continued to tackle anti-social behaviour, carried out regular inspections of your estates, issued funding and progressed green space projects.

Tackling Anti-Social behaviour

The pandemic and the resulting lockdowns saw a spike in reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) for our Torus Safer Estates and Neighbourhood Teams. Most people living in our communities are happy and mindful of others. But a small number who cause issues can have a big impact on both the place and the people living there. That's why we have dedicated neighbourhood staff and a bespoke enforcement team to tackle any problems.

We saw a 55% increase in alleged drug dealing cases between March to June 2020. To combat this, we have continued to work closely with Police partners, providing supporting evidence to successfully obtain four Closure Orders, one in Liverpool and three in Warrington.

As restrictions have lifted, we have been able to serve notices to customers who have caused serious ASB. We have also been able to visit some tenants in partnership with Police to issue final warnings before legal proceedings, which has been very impactful.

“I would like to thank the team at Torus for their support during this period. Without this support, our job would be much more challenging and the lives of those in this area would be worse off.”

PC Hancock, Warrington Beat Team



Tackling ASB in 2020/21:

- **2,479**
ASB cases opened
- **31**
Possession Notices served
- **3**
Outright Possession Orders
- **16**
Injunctions
- **2**
Evictions related to ASB



Torus trials new technology to tackle nuisance noise – The Noise App

Noise nuisance remains the biggest report issue across all areas. With over 800 noise complaints in just one year, it was clear a new approach to tackling this issue was needed. As a result, we introduced a smartphone app called 'The Noise App'.

The app helps people to capture offending sounds and chart incidents of loud disturbances from neighbours. On the other end, it allows us to efficiently manage noise nuisance cases, without the need for an officer to visit a customer's home and install noise monitoring equipment. This has been especially important as we sought to help reduce the spread of Covid-19. The Noise App pilot is still on-going. We will evaluate its impact and potential to roll out more widely at the end of the project.

Your Green Spaces

We are committed to increasing the quality and number of green spaces in our communities. As part of our £12m pledge to support our communities, we will be developing a programme of 30 'Cleaner Greener' projects (10 in each heartland). These will identify outdoor areas that need to be improved to transform our neighbourhoods. It's hoped that these improved public spaces will reduce fly-tipping and become home to community gardens and allotments.

Rainford in Bloom

Over the past year, the Torus St Helens Neighbourhoods Team have worked with local Councillors and the community on the 'Rainford Junction in Bloom' project, the aim of which has been to increase planting therefore making the space 'greener'. Residents and volunteers have brightened up unadopted spaces by planting flowers which are not only beautiful, but also encourage community spirit and wildlife across the region.

“It is great to see a community pull together with a united goal of improving where they live, and Torus are proud to be involved with the project going forward.”

Neighbourhood Officer, Adrienne Griffin



Tenant Voice Impact

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) tenant inspection: inspected access to ASB services by reviewing the website, calling the Customer Hub and reviewing standard letter templates. Tenant Inspectors provided positive feedback on the service along with recommendations for improvement. **One key recommendation** was to standardise information on the website. This has been included in the scope for the new customer website.

Customer service and complaints

We strive to deliver consistently excellent services through our clear offer to customers:

- Choose the way you contact us.
- Friendly knowledgeable staff who want to help.
- If you have a complaint, we keep you informed with how it's being dealt with.

Customer service

The service that our customers receive is just as important as the quality of homes we provide, and the Torus Customer Hub is the main way that you get in touch with us. The Hub plays a critical and central role in the services we provide, they are the first port of call for most customers. Last year, the Hub team were busier than ever with a 5% increase in activity on 2019/20. January 2021 saw a new record number of calls taken in one day – 2,060.

The Scope of Our Service in 2020/21:

- **371,018 total calls** were taken
- An average of **1,399 calls** a day were answered
- **94.7%** of calls answered (351,342)
- **91%** of overall customer satisfaction

In July 2020, we also introduced a single freephone contact number and email to contact the Customer Hub. So, no matter where you live, there's now just one number to call or email for advice and support.

Complaints and putting you first

In October 2020, following consultation with customers, we launched a new more 'customer focused' Complaints Policy. The new policy was in response to the new Housing Ombudsman Code released in July 2020 and the Government White Paper. The new policy puts the customer first and makes clear that we welcome complaints as a chance to put things right, genuinely address your needs and strengthen relationships.

In 2020/21 we recognised the need to improve response times to customer complaints. As a result, a new 100% performance target was set across the business, with a commitment to respond to all formal complaints within 10 working days. Changes to the process were made to support the achievement of this aim, including a commitment to contacting the tenant within 48 hours. 81 managers were trained in the new complaints policy and the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code.

Since the implementation of the new Complaints Policy, our performance improved, with 100% of formal complaints being addressed within target.

In 2020/21:

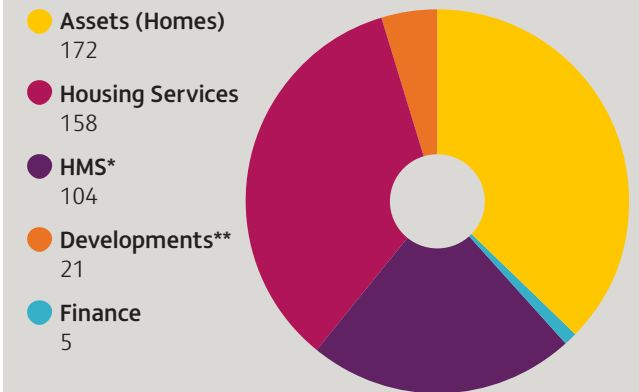


460
formal complaints received



95.02%
were responded to within 10 days

What were customer complaints about?



*Repairs & maintenance **New Build

Damp

Of the 104 repairs and maintenance complaints, 38% were regarding damp. Damp in some Torus homes is an issue we are working continuously to address as we understand the trouble and upset it can cause tenants.

Damp issues are difficult to resolve, there is no 'quick fix' or singular solution. In addition, the source of the problem needs to be located before any works can begin. Despite this when compared to other repairs, we took an average of 58 days to resolve damp cases in 2020/21. We aim to reduce this response and resolution window further in 2020/21.

Learning from complaints

Complaints are important feedback and a great tool to improve services. Here are two examples of how we've done just that.

The problem

Customer reported a delay in response and lack of ownership after reporting a rat infestation in their property.

What we learned

A failing in this case was due to a split in responsibilities between two different teams.

What we did

Moved the process and budget under the Assets team. Also, a new 48-hour response timescale has been agreed. In addition, we have developed stronger partnerships with Local Authority pest control services, to ensure a speedier response.

The problem

A case which was escalated to the Housing Ombudsman identified that delays had occurred in the repairs process, causing inconvenience.

What we learned

The root cause of the delay was lack of accessible information on the product fitted which needed to be repaired, this led to several visits to identify the problems and delays in sourcing parts.

What we did

An action plan was agreed to improve quality of information held about non-standard fittings.

Tenant Voice Impact

Complaints Policy: 33 customers took part in a review of the policy and standard letter templates sent to tenants. Customers provided feedback on the process, timescales, and wording of the policy. The Scrutiny Panel also reviewed a customer complaint journey and provided recommendations for improvement which were incorporated into the policy. An action plan has been developed to improve how Torus responds to complaints with targets set for response times and a new customer satisfaction survey has been introduced.

Housing Ombudsman code self-assessment: The Scrutiny Panel reviewed Torus' assessments against the complaint handling code. The self-assessment has been shared on our website.

Customer Hub freephone number: Following feedback from customers, a new single freephone contact number, email and aligned opening hours were rolled out in July 2020.

Locality Plans: 22 tenants attended virtual consultation sessions to provide feedback on draft Locality Plans. The plans were revised following tenant feedback. Tenants emphasised the importance of green spaces in their communities.

Green homes and sustainable neighbourhoods

“We want our residents to benefit from living in warmer, more energy efficient homes. Our on-going commitment to invest in our existing homes will not only help our tenants, but also the environment at large.

“By reducing energy consumption, we can protect the people who live in our homes from high energy bills and hopefully help reduce fuel poverty.”

Carl Talbot-Davies, Acting Assets Director 

As the region's largest provider of affordable homes, we understand that many are experiencing real hardship because of the pandemic. Maximising income by reducing fuel poverty is a priority for us and we are actively looking at ways to help. We are also in the process of working with partners to create a full environmental sustainability strategy, the implementation of which will begin in 2021/22.

Last year, **£4,916,377 was invested** into improving the energy efficiency of your homes. We completed **2,789 jobs** including: Replacing boilers, windows, central heating updates, and the installation of innovative hot water/heating systems.

RetroFIT for the Future Investing £3.2m to make homes warmer and reduce energy bills

Torus is **investing £3.2 million** into helping **337** of our existing homes in Liverpool become more environmentally friendly. This investment will not only help reduce carbon emissions, supporting Liverpool City Region (LCR) to become a zero-carbon city region by 2040, it will also benefit tenants by improving energy efficiency, reducing fuel bills, and making homes warmer.

The RetroFIT for the Future project, led by Sefton Council, has been funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to retrospectively install low carbon solutions to homes and make them 'future proof'. The project has ambitious aims, hoping to achieve an 80% reduction in the in-use CO2 emissions of each property.

Established by the European Union, ERDF helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit

 www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding

Rumney Whitehall & Northumberland Terrace estates to get a £2.2m makeover

£2.2million has been invested to improve **292** tenants' homes on the Rumney & Whitehall Estate in Kirkdale. The area, which is made up of blocks of flats, received improvements to roofs, windows, and railings.

Furthermore, the estate has also benefitted from new External Wall Insulation (EWI). This not only looks great but also helps keep properties warm, keeping heating bills in check whilst also reducing the carbon footprints of the buildings.

 www.torus.co.uk/news/estate-makeover



Providing quality homes through a pandemic

The need for genuine affordable housing across a variety of different tenures has never been greater and we remain committed to addressing this across the region. At a time when 'home' has never been more important, we have risen to the challenge and continue to build the homes that are needed, where they're needed, for the people who need them most.

In 2020/21 we **invested £83.2m** into developments. **£31.1m** of this was on the **659 new homes** and **£52.1m** was spent on homes under construction, land purchases and future homes.

In 2020/21 we delivered a range of new homes:

- **25**
for social rent
- **262**
for affordable rent
- **91**
for Shared Ownership
- **29**
for Rent to Buy
- **25**
for private rent
- **227**
specialist homes for people with additional care needs
- **854**
new homes started on site 2020/21
- **1,356**
new homes projected for 2021/22
- **£78.4m**
spent on new homes

We plan to build a total of 9,490 new homes by 2030, investing £1.56 billion in the region.

We offer a mix of home types and tenures to reflect changing local needs. As of 31st March 2021, the total **number of Torus homes was 39,154**

Including:

- **33,077**
social housing general needs
- **4,046**
homes for older people and supported accommodation
- **935**
shared ownership homes
- **1,171**
leaseholders
- **141**
intermediate rents



Boosting homes for older people

Building affordable homes for older people, and those with specialist care needs, has and always will be a priority for Torus. At present, there is a lack of specialist homes in the country. Last year we opened two brand new purpose-built Extra Care schemes, **providing an additional 227 homes** with care for the over 55s.

The £13m, Foundry Wharf in Fingerpost, St Helens, opened in April 2020, providing 130 homes. This was followed by the £11m, Harpers Green in Padgate, Warrington which offered an additional 97 homes. These two schemes join our other new scheme, The Maples in Kirkby, Liverpool, that opened in February 2020, **together providing 327 new affordable homes.**

“The scheme is tremendous; the help from all the staff has been second to none. I enjoy the activities and was glad when we were able to get the good times going again!”

Jimmy, Foundry Wharf

“Harpers Green is all about community. Whilst we all have our own apartments, it’s nice that we can get together, to have fun and support each other. We are looking to do lots more activities as Covid restrictions continue to lift.”

Pete, Harpers Green

“Everyone is friendly and I love all the staff and the carers. I am so happy here; I love my new apartment. I enjoy going for a walk around and saying hello to my new friends. I would not want to live anywhere else.”

Dennis, Harpers Green

“Moving into the scheme was an upheaval, made even harder by Covid. But the staff and other residents have helped me adjust and settle in. I no longer feel isolated, as I am now part of a lovely new community.”

Carole, Harpers Green



Our Extra Care schemes provide residents with their own, one or two-bedroom modern apartment, where they can retain their independence but have the peace of mind that flexible onsite care is available when it’s needed.

They also offer a range of communal areas and gardens plus facilities open to the community, such as hair salons and bistros where residents can meet and relax with others.

In 2020/21 we also opened Winefred and Gorsuch House in St Helens, which provided 61 new homes for people over 55 and Celandine Court, Lostock Gralam, which provides 64 homes for people over 50.

Both schemes offer contemporary one and two bed apartments which are available for affordable rent, with access to a communal lounge where residents can socialise.



“In all the places I have lived, I have never felt this safe and comfortable. This new apartment is like a dream come true.”

Sylvia, Celandine Court

Torus has completely changed my life. I picked up my keys this week and I feel like a young man moving into his first home, I’m that excited! After getting coronavirus and thinking ‘this is it’, I’ve been blessed with a brand-new home where I can feel safe and secure. Torus has given me the biggest head start to start living my life.”

Kevin, a 59-year-old frontline Nurse, Gorsuch House

The future

Despite the impact of the pandemic, at the end of March 2021 we had **32 sites** under construction **building over 2,041 homes**. Our footprint covers 10 Local Authority areas across the Liverpool City Region, Cheshire, Warrington, and Wigan.

Torus joins forces with LFC and olympic legends at Melwood

Since taking over the site in 2019, we have been committed to working with the local community to create a housing-led development that continues to be an asset for West Derby. Community consultation is still ongoing, and all feedback is currently contributing to the site's design.

We are excited that our partnership with the Fowler-Carragher Academy and Steve Parry's swim! has ensured the future of the iconic Melwood building, which will enable local people to make the best possible use out of its world-class facilities.





Value for money (VFM)

Delivering value for money is key to how we operate. Our Board leads our approach, through setting our goals and deciding how we spend our money.

This makes sure we have a healthy balance between delivering customer satisfaction, maintaining high quality energy efficient homes, increasing the supply of new housing, and creating a great place for employees to work.

Making efficiencies

We are committed to providing value for money across everything we do and that means working efficiently, effectively and maximising the money we spend. The better our value for money, the more we can invest in the services that make a difference.

In 2020/21 we delivered savings of £5.2m compared to total costs before Torus and Liverpool Mutual Homes amalgamated to become a single housing provider. These were achieved through integration of teams and ICT systems and competitive procurement using the increased buying power to reduce costs. Integration of teams and processes has delivered efficiencies across HMS allowing them to maintain costs absorbing inflationary pressures. Service delivery was assessed with some legal services brought in house reducing reliance on external legal support generating savings.

How we compare

The regulator of social housing produces a range of VFM metrics, and we have benchmarked our 2020/21 performance against the performance of a peer group of other housing providers in 2019/20. Of the 9 indicators, Torus performed above the peer group median in 8. This included cost per unit at £2,761 compared to peer group £3,610.

Comparing ourselves against competitors is important as it allows us to identify our strengths and weaknesses, ultimately ensuring that we provide maximum value for customers.



Value for money highlights:



93.46%

of our customers are satisfied that their rent provides good value for money



£6.9m

of efficiencies have been generated since amalgamation*



9.4%

Our reinvestment in improvements and new developments as a percentage of property value is 9.4% compared to the peer group average of 7.2%

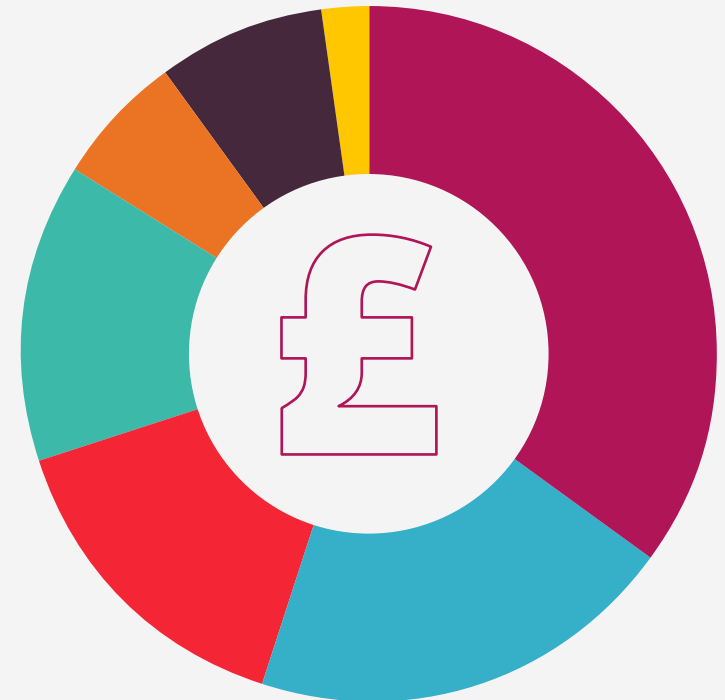
*includes pre 2020/21 savings

How we spend our money

Transparency is one of our core values and we think it's important for you to see how our money is spent proportionately

How every £1 of rent is spent

● Developments	35%
● Housing Management	20%
● Repairs & Maintenance	15%
● Other	14%
● Home Improvements	06%
● Interest	08%
● Social Investment	02%





Becoming a shareholder

Torus operates a policy of open membership which allows tenants and leaseholders to apply to become shareholders of Torus. Becoming a shareholder is a great opportunity to get more involved and help Torus to promote tenant engagement.

As a shareholder you will be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting and to vote on policy decisions, you will also be invited to attend shareholder briefings and other engagement events.

If you are interested in becoming a shareholder and you satisfy the criteria set out in the Shareholding Membership Policy, you will need to complete an application form and pay £1.00.

Contact the Torus Governance Team to find out more on **0800 678 1894** or email **info@torus.co.uk**

Looking ahead

Despite the on-going presence of Covid-19, 2021/22 is shaping up to be another busy year at Torus. We're pushing to deliver the pledges we made in our Corporate Plan and work together with tenants to make big things happen.

Our focuses include:

- Aids and adaptations and how we can maximise personal independence
- Environmental Sustainability and moving towards low & zero carbon
- Safeguarding, Diversity & Inclusion
- Gas servicing MOTs for every Torus home
- Putting tenant voices first in service delivery
- Building safety and our 'Safety Plus' commitment
- Services that improve lives and life chances
- Designing homes for the future

Read all our pledges online by visiting www.torusnewday.co.uk





1 Old Haymarket
Liverpool
L1 6RA

call 0800 678 1894
email info@torus.co.uk
web www.torus.co.uk