



Futures in focus



Spring
2021



www.futureshg.co.uk



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Welcome to your spring edition of **Futures in Focus.**



We've had an unusual start to a new year with the third national lockdown in place. We know this has affected people in our communities in lots of ways, whether it's back to working from home, juggling home schooling with other commitments or placing additional pressure on the household budget, and our team members have been working hard to support our customers and communities in need.

We'd like to thank everyone who helped us to prioritise those most in need by considering whether their repair was essential or could wait a little while longer. This allowed us to focus on where we were needed most and minimise the risk of coronavirus to our team members and customers. We'd also like to say thank you to our frontline staff who have been working out in the community, keeping homes up and running and providing a vital service to the people who live in them.

Throughout the pandemic we've been bowled over by the community spirit shown in all the areas we work in – from Ironville to Daventry we've seen people coming together to support each other, with everything from handmade face coverings to groceries on doorsteps.



We've also had our own community growing at Futures, with January marking a whole year of MyVoice, our online platform. We've now got 147 members having their say on everything from our digital strategy to our customer communications and much more. You can find out more about MyVoice on page 5.

We hope you enjoy this edition, which is jam packed with information about all things Futures.



If you've got a story you think we should feature in our next edition, feel free to email communications@futureshg.co.uk and we'll be happy to take a look.



How are **we** doing?



Each quarter we run customer relationship surveys, where independent researchers contact customers from across our network to see how we're performing across our services. We're thrilled to see our satisfaction scores continuing to rise, and that we've managed to stay on the up despite the pandemic. These results are very important to us, and they really do inform the way we offer our services.

7/10 customers are satisfied overall with Futures Housing Group

8/10 customers think our contact centre team is helpful and professional

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>3/4 customers trust us

9/10 customers are satisfied with income and money advice, with **none** saying they are dissatisfied

>4/5 customers feel their rent provides value for money.



You might have seen that these customer surveys are being taken over by IFF Research, a market research company with lots of experience in the housing sector. You can find out more about IFF, our surveys and how you can have your voice heard on the 'Get Involved' section of our website.



Let's talk about... employment advice



At Futures we want to help as many people as possible live well, in a way that works for them. There's no single answer that's right for everyone, which is why we work with our customers to find a solution that suits them.



Life without work can be hard.

For a lot of us, work gives us a reason to get up and go in the morning and helps us stay afloat, helps us to learn and grow, and gives us a chance to meet new people and build relationships. While there's a real benefit to earning and supporting a household or lifestyle, for many people, work is much more than just a pay slip.



And that's where we come in.

Our employment advice team are a dedicated duo, working across our network with customers from all walks of life, no matter what stage of their employment journey they're on. Maybe you're not quite ready to step into the world of work and need some support building your confidence, or it might be that you want to explore your next steps. We're not here to pressure you or tell you 'the right way' to do things – we want to work with you to find the best solution we can.



Meet Louise



Futures customer Louise was furloughed due to the pandemic, and worked with our employability assistant Sylvia to build her confidence and secure an exciting new opportunity.

Futures has been offering mentoring circles to our customers in partnership with the Job Centre to help provide an insight into different careers and opportunities in light of the pandemic. These virtual sessions were how Louise first met with our employment advice team, having had the sessions recommended to her by her work coach.

She wanted to speak to someone and get some help and support to find a job or an apprenticeship, and our employment advice team were happy to help. They supported Louise to build her confidence in interviews and to believe in her own abilities. Sylvia, our employability assistant, worked with Louise during weekly Zoom calls, helping her to write applications and prepare for interviews.

Louise has now been accepted on an apprenticeship scheme with Derby City Council which will begin soon, marking the start of an exciting new career.

For Louise, the best thing about working with Sylvia was how friendly she was and dedicated to helping. She spent a lot of time searching for jobs and helping with preparations, which really helped to boost the chance of a successful interview.



I'd highly recommend getting in touch with the employment advice team. Without their help and support, I would not have been successful in getting my apprenticeship.

Sylvia also really enjoyed working with Louise and helping her on her journey to a new career.



Lots of people who were furloughed during the pandemic had their confidence knocked, so the mentoring circles were a great opportunity to start building some of that back up. For Louise, she said she was nervous about interviews, so we spent time preparing and doing mock interviews over Zoom - this helped her to become more confident at an interview. Her story is a testament to how hard she's worked. She has shown commitment and dedication to succeed, which has paid off, and we're excited to have helped her along the way.



If you're ready to start your employment journey, you can get in touch with the employment advice team by emailing employability@futureshg.co.uk or filling in the contact request form on our website.

Happy birthday MyVoice!

In January we celebrated a whole year of our MyVoice community platform, which gives our customers a chance to get involved and share their opinions on important issues at Futures. It's also a great place to get to know other customers and discuss everything from DIY to recycling to money saving, all while earning points that can be exchanged for exciting prizes.

It's never too late to join our customer community and have your say. Visit the **'Get Involved'** section of our website for more information and to sign up.



Ask us anything!

For this edition, we've asked our MyVoice community to put their questions to us so we can get to the bottom of what our customers want to know.



Why are properties upgraded when short term residents move on, but our home hasn't been updated since we moved in nine years ago?

Gary, Belper

When a tenant moves on, our properties are thoroughly cleaned and we sometimes take this opportunity to do maintenance work or repairs while the property is empty. It might look like we're upgrading, but often this work is just being done to make sure the property meets our lettable standard so the next customer can move in as quickly as possible. If you have any issues with your home, we'd recommend you raise this with the customer services team so they can investigate.



Do you have properties to rent in Derby and Nottingham?

Adesoji, Alfreton

Most of our properties can either be found in Derbyshire, particularly in the Ripley/Hearnor area, or down the M1 corridor in Northamptonshire, particularly near Daventry. Our properties are listed on the relevant local council's home finder website, and you can find out what's available by visiting futureshg.co.uk/find-a-home/. You can also see properties from other housing associations, like our friends at Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA), on your local council's website.



How come when people report problems that are causing damage to properties, nothing can be done about it?

Kevin, Daventry

This very much depends on the nature of the problem and what category it falls into. We always prioritise work that poses a direct risk of harm to our customers or their homes. During the pandemic some of our work has been limited, to protect our customers and team members and make sure we can support those most in need. You can see what category each repair falls into on the repairs section of our website, and you can also see which repairs are your responsibility as a customer.



Why do my repairs disappear? It had been seen by the team, but no-one has any record of the repair being raised? Grrrr!!

Michelle, Derbsyhire

This must be frustrating, Michelle, and we're sorry to hear this! We'd be happy to look into this specific issue further for you – feel free to contact the customer services team if the issue is still ongoing. In terms of raising repairs, you have a couple of different routes – you can either contact our customer services team by phone or email, or you could also use MyAccount which will give you the option of checking on the status of your repair once it's been logged – hopefully this will prevent it from disappearing again! We're also launching a repair checker soon on our website, so you'll be able to find out what's happening with a click of a few buttons. Keep an eye on our digital hub for updates!



Given the effects of Covid-19, what are the ongoing plans for the community spaces?

Karen

Our community centres have been closed since the beginning of the pandemic, due to concerns around keeping everyone using them as safe as possible. We're ultimately responsible for making sure that any coronavirus guidance is adhered to in our centres, and we just haven't got the resource to make sure everyone who uses them is social distancing and following the guidelines appropriately.

But the centres haven't sat empty – during the pandemic we've offered them to local health and social care workers who needed a place to take a break when they were out in the community. Our own staff who visit customers at home have also had access to them so they can use the loos and take a quick lunch break while out and about. We're keeping a close eye on government guidance so we can open the centres when it's safe for us to do so.

All in a day's **work!**

Our contractors and operatives are there to help our customers with issues around their home, whether it's a broken boiler or a faulty circuit. But sometimes these routine visits can give our team more than they bargained for...



An **explosive** problem!

When one of our contractors was working in a roof space in one of our homes, they discovered a mortar bomb tucked away in the loft, unknown to the customer.



They acted quickly to evacuate the property and contact the police, who subsequently called the Ministry of Defence to come and assess the risk of moving the bomb. Thankfully, it was not a live device and could be safely removed from the property so the work could continue.

We're proud of our teams for acting so quickly and looking out for our customers and their home!



Remember, if you see anything suspicious in your property it's always better to be safe than sorry. Don't hesitate to contact us, or the police, if you're worried, and if you think it could be an explosive device, never move it yourself. Although this was an extreme case that we don't expect to reappear any time soon, it's also good reminder to check your home for things that could lead to dangerous situations if not stored properly – make sure any chemicals are out of direct sunlight and kept away from any heat sources, and keep an eye on anything that might be out of place or potentially dangerous in your home.

All revved up about **fire safety**



Undertaking routine inspections is part of an average day for our assets team and helps make sure our communal areas and buildings meet all the safety regulations they need to.



While surveying one of our blocks recently, one of our team members found a motorbike stored in a communal area, not only causing difficulty for other people trying use the area but also creating a real fire risk for the people living there. Despite facing a little confrontation, he

managed to get the motorcycle moved on and stored in a safer location. We know it can be difficult to find secure places to store items, but make sure you're keeping everyone safe by using proper storage facilities and not blocking communal spaces or fire exits.

Fire risk assessments are available on our website and updated annually.

Update your details



It's important that we have the most up-to-date information so we can offer you the best service. If you've got a new phone number, updated your email address or changed your name, please let us know so we can be sure that we know how to get in touch if we need to. When you contact our customer services team to discuss something they will often check the details you're using against the ones we have on file, but if you've not needed to get in touch for a while it's possible that we have out-of-date information. This means when we need to contact you to book some maintenance or testing at your property or if there's an important service announcement – like we've had to send out at times during the pandemic – we might not be able to reach you. We want it to be as easy as possible to update your details. You can submit a form through the Contact Us page on the website, use MyAccount or speak to the customer services team directly on **0300 456 2531**.



Money advice service

 **0300 456 2531**



We want you to feel safe and secure in your home. If you're worried about your financial situation or just need some advice about money, get in touch with our dedicated money advice service at **moneyadvice@futureshg.co.uk**.

We can help you with:

- budgeting
- universal credit and other benefits
- utilities and bills
- rent arrears
- debt management
- and more.



Futures
Housing Group



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