

Futures in focus

Winter 2020



www.futureshg.co.uk



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Welcome to the Future



Welcome to the first issue of Futures in Focus. We're excited to be launching this new way of communicating with our customers about our organisation, the services we offer and the communities we live in. It comes at an exciting time for the business as we launch our new corporate plan and reveal our new brand – revitalising our focus on creating better futures.



At the end of September we launched our **new corporate plan** which sets out our priorities for the next three years. There are four key themes of the plan:



Customer centric

Keeping our customers and their needs at the heart of what we do.



Growth and development

Building and acquiring more homes to ensure we are playing our part in helping more people find a safe, secure and affordable place to live.



Sustainability

Continuing to respect the environment and finding new and greener ways of working, as well as being a stable business with a strong future.

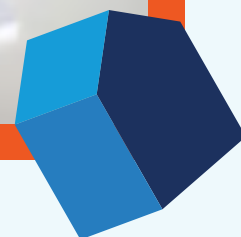


Our culture

Continuing to develop a staff culture that supports all our people to be the best they can be, to aim high and to achieve their goals.

You'll also notice that we have a **brand new look!** As well as refreshing our priorities with our new corporate plan, we decided to refresh our branding, to make it more modern, accessible and engaging. We felt we'd outgrown our previous identity and want to step forward proudly as a forward thinking and ambitious organisation, with a brand that reflects it.

You might notice a little bit of crossover while we update our vans, signage and other communications, but we're expecting to be fully transformed to the new Futures soon.



We hope you enjoy reading about what we're up to at Futures, and if you have any feedback please do get in touch with our communications team by emailing communications@futureshg.co.uk – we'd love to hear from you.

What's in a day?

We've just released our annual review for 2019-20, and we thought we'd give you a quick update on what we were getting up to on an average day!

On a typical day in 2019-20, we



Finished building
1 new home



Completed
107 repairs



Answered the
phone **416** times



Helped **15** Beep Assist customers
with supported-living technology



Replaced **1** front door, **1** roof, **1** kitchen,
1 bathroom, **8** windows and **3** boilers

We're looking forward to spending another **365** days supporting our customers & communities.

Starting a conversation

At Futures, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive organisation. We celebrate the things that make us different, and we provide opportunities for everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Like many, we were inspired by the Black Lives Matter protests in June to start a conversation on what our place is in our community. While we already have policies and procedures in place about equality, diversity and inclusion, we recognise that we could do more to support our communities and make sure we're meeting their needs.

With this in mind, a group of staff from across the organisation have come together to develop our equality, diversity and inclusion procedures and strategies, and make sure that every person who is part of our Futures community feels valued and supported. We're starting by looking inwards at our team members and how they feel,

through surveys, focus groups and education. We want each and every team member to feel empowered to bring their whole self to work, stand up to prejudice and discrimination, and celebrate our colleagues and customers for who they are.

We do want to make sure that our customers are part of this conversation. With that in mind, over the next few months you might see us reaching out to ask your views on different issues using our MyVoice platform, and we'll be more public in our support of community and cultural events on our website and social media channels.

We'll keep you updated on our activities and findings on our website and through our communications with you. We are fully supported in these activities by our board and in our new corporate plan, and we're looking forward to our next chapter.

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We celebrate the things that make us different, and we provide opportunities for everyone



Let's talk about... money worries

We know the pandemic has been difficult financially for a lot of people. For many of us, the circumstances we find ourselves in at the moment are out of our control, which can leave us feeling helpless and not knowing where to turn.

Money worries can strike at any time, but there are steps you can take to make sure you keep on top of your essential payments. A good starting point is a budget – it doesn't need to be anything complicated, just a log of everything that comes in and everything that goes out. This will help you identify any spending you might be able to cut back on.

1 Make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to

There can be a stigma around claiming support from the government, but there shouldn't be. It's there to help the people who need it most, and it's important to make sure you're getting all the support you're entitled to – regardless of whether it's because you're a parent or carer, are disabled or have a long term health condition, or need support to keep the bills paid while you're looking for work. Our money advice team can help you work out what you're entitled to and how to claim it.

2 Check behind your virtual sofa

If you've ever moved banks, it's worth checking that your old accounts are definitely closed – if not, they may have been sitting open gaining a small amount of interest that you can now take out. It's also worth speaking to your utility suppliers and see if your account is in credit – if there's a significant amount, you can request a refund from them and ask that they re-evaluate what you're paying month-to-month.

3 Switch it up

Speaking of utilities, why not take a look at [USwitch.com](https://www.uswitch.com) to make sure you're not paying over the odds for your essentials – they can compare different providers and let you know which one would work out the cheapest. Even if you can't get a better deal in terms of monthly payments, some providers will offer an incentive to switch like cashback or a shopping voucher – so it still might be in your best interests to change.

4 Cash in your pocket

Sign up for a cashback site like TopCashBack, Shopmium or Quidco and earn money as you spend, and get discounts or vouchers on all sorts of products. It might just be a few pennies here and there to start – but you know what they say about looking after the pennies!

5 Your opinion is valuable

If you have internet access and a little bit of time to spare, you can easily earn money through completing online surveys on a range of subjects through websites like Prolific or YouGov. This gives you the opportunity to make a difference in politics, advertising, academia and more, all while earning some extra money.



At Futures, we don't want anyone to lose their home, and eviction is always our last resort. With that in mind, we know that things may have changed for you over the last few months and we want to help by providing you with support where we can.

We know these tips only go so far, and so if you're experiencing serious financial difficulty please reach out to our money advice team on **0300 456 2531** for support.

Money worries can have a serious impact on your mental health, so if you need to speak to someone reach out to one of the following services:

Mind Infoline call 0300 123 3393
(between 9am & 6pm on weekdays)

Samaritans call 116 123
(any time)

SHOUT text SHOUT to 85258

There might also be a local NHS emergency mental health helpline near you. To see if there's one near you and to find the number, visit this website <https://bit.ly/urgentmentalhealth>

If you're worried that you might harm yourself or someone else, **call 111 for urgent advice**. They can put you in touch with specialists in your area who can help you.



Meet Andy

Andy has been working for futures for almost 12 years, and gives us an insight into his work with the money advice service.

Covid-19 has changed my average work day quite a bit, but I still spend most of my time responding to referrals from our money coaches and getting in touch with customers who need support with their finances.

We'll normally start with a telephone call to start the process, or if that isn't suitable I'll visit them at home. I'll gather all the information I need, such as details of existing benefits, employment details, and any arrears or debts they might have. I can help by contacting creditors to put a hold on any recovery action while I work with the customer, and then I'll spend a few days helping with case work – this might be writing a benefit application form, filling out statements or helping to create payment plans that will start clearing debts and arrears. I can also help with applying to funds for eligible customers to support them to afford white goods and similar things.

My favourite thing about my job is the difference it can make to a customer – there are some really complicated systems out there that I can help them navigate, and something that appears simple like being approved for Universal Credit can make a huge difference to their life.

I wish people knew that we really want to help them, but to do that we need them to engage with us and provide all the information we ask for. We're not here to judge you or decisions you've made in the past – we just want to help you get back on track. Occasionally there might be things that we can't help with – but if we can't, we will know the people who can and we'll get you in touch with them.

My advice for customers with financial worries is that the earlier you start to tackle any issues, the easier it is to sort out. Don't be afraid of contacting creditors and explaining your situation as they will usually want to help, and you can always contact our money advice service or services like Shelter and Citizen's Advice who can give you information on where to start. There are some really good, reputable services out there who can give information and advice, and all you need to do is ask.

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#HomesAtTheHeart

We've been taking part in the National Housing Federation's Homes at the Heart campaign. #HomesAtTheHeart is calling for the government to make a once-in-a-generation investment in social housing, because everyone deserves a safe, secure, comfortable place to call home.

Being stuck at home in lockdown has made us realise how important a good home is. We need to act now to make sure that people are no longer stuck in poor quality or overcrowded conditions due to a lack of suitable accommodation. More social housing will give everyone the chance to live in safe, secure and affordable homes.

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we need 90,000 new social rented homes every year to help prevent homelessness...

There are 3.6 million people in England in need of social housing who are not currently able to access it, and we need 90,000 new social rented homes every year to help prevent homelessness and tackle overcrowding and poverty.

We need you to get involved, so please write to your local MP, or tweet them, and ask them to put social housing at the heart of our social and economic recovery from coronavirus. To find out who your local MP is, visit:

<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>



Have

Your

Say

We want to know what you think! If you'd like to shape Futures and have a say in the services we offer, you can sign up for **MyVoice**. You'll earn points for taking surveys and giving your opinion – and you know what they say about points! There are a range of exciting prizes available that you can cash your points in for, because we know your time is valuable.

We also run fun community challenges and are building up a forum of customers like you, so scan the code to sign up.



Let's get social!

We use Facebook and Twitter to share service updates and information about our organisation and communities. Hit 'follow' to stay in the know and be the first to know about what's going on in the Futures community.



@futures_hg



@futureshousing

What does home mean to you?

We asked our MyVoice community to share what home means to them.

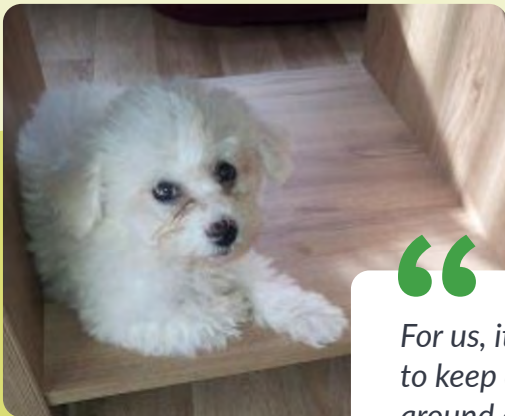
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*Home to me is... my sanctuary. My safe place.
My forever home. My independence.
Home to me is... where the heart is.*

- Tracey, Customer



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My home means so much to me and my dog Fifi. We feel safe and contented. I love the view at the back of my home. Get to meet many cows, plus I like to see all the trees. I also have very good neighbours.

- Customer

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For us, it's a lovely quiet place to relax and enjoy, easy to keep clean, and safe for our little Poppy to wander around as she pleases.

- Customer



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For me, privacy. Knowing I can shut my door and be alone, knowing I have green spaces to plant flowers and a space to sit outside with a drink. Knowing I have my home for as long as it is needed. Not being treated like a second class citizen just because I'm in social housing. Futures has always listened to me, and helped me keep my home during dark times, and improved it when needed. I love my home.

- Stephanie, Customer

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For me, home means independence, security and safety. I spent 8 months in a women's refuge with my children having left a home I had spent years creating. My ex partner was abusive and never believed I could financially support myself and the children on my low income and he enjoyed the control this afforded him.

Had I stayed, he would have been right. I worked nights to have the children in the day and I couldn't see a way out. But due to his persistence to stay in the family home, thankfully we were housed by Futures.

I am still able to work for the NHS during the day, pay for the house I live in and bring the children up without any help. He is not able to set foot into this property. To be given that break and the opportunity to rent this house on my own was the best thing that happened to me, even if it has meant starting again from scratch. Thank you!"

- Customer



Use **MyAccount** to manage your home at a time that suits you. 24 hours a day. 7 days a week.

www.futureshg.co.uk/myaccount/



MyAccount
ANYTIME. ANYWHERE



0300 456 2531



www.futureshg.co.uk



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Futures Housing Group



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