Providing quality, affordable housing and creating great communities people are proud to live in – that’s what we’re all about at GHA. But we also want to support the people who live in our neighbourhoods so they can get the most out of their lives.

Over the past year we continued to build more homes and to invest in our existing properties, making sure all our stock remains warm and comfortable.

At the same time we expanded our range of services which – after listening to our tenants – we know brings the extra support so many families need. We’ve helped more people into jobs and training, provided money and fuel advice, offered support to get online and help with furniture and food. With welfare reform still having an impact on many of our tenants, that lifeline support is more important than ever.

Here are some of the highlights of our year 2014–15.
Glasgow Housing Association

Annual Highlights 2014–15

New homes and regeneration
GHA’s new-build programme continues to transform communities all over the city, with almost 1400 new homes built since 2003 and hundreds more in the pipeline. In the past year, 278 tenants have moved into modern, new homes, including at Marfield Street in Carntyne, the former Commonwealth Games Athletes’ Village in Dalmarnock and at Temple, in Anniesland.

Tenants are not only enjoying living in modern, spacious new homes, the energy-efficient features also mean cheaper fuel bills. That helps us tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.

Our new homes really do change people’s lives. Tenant Clare Carvill, who moved into Marfield Street last October, said: “Now my two sons have their own room they get along much better. This home has made a massive difference to our lives.”

Since April this year we’ve completed another 100 new homes – at Sighthill, Toryglen and Barmulloch – as part of Transforming Communities: Glasgow, a partnership with GHA, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government. The partnership has identified eight areas in the city as priorities for major regeneration. Another 2,800 new homes are planned over the next seven years after Wheatley Group – GHA’s parent organisation – secured a landmark £300m bond deal on the public bond market.

As well as building new homes, we’ve continued to make our existing homes warmer, drier, safer and more comfortable.

Our capital investment programme has seen more than £29.8m spent in the past year on improvements to our homes. Tenants are enjoying the benefits of new windows, central heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms. Since 2003, GHA has spent more than £1.275 billion upgrading more than 70,000 homes, the biggest project of its kind in Europe.
Increasing support for our tenants
We know communities need support, and this year we've introduced a wide range of services to help our tenants access jobs and training, put food on the table, furnish their homes, get online and get expert advice on benefits, money and budgeting.

Jobs and training
A vital way of increasing opportunities – and helping people fulfil their potential – is through access to jobs and training. In the past year we've helped 198 people into jobs and created 193 training places through the Community Janitors, our Modern Apprenticeship programme and the Wheatley Pledge.

The Community Janitors scheme sees long-term unemployed people work alongside GHA's environmental teams keeping neighbourhoods clean. Since 2006 around 1900 people have been through the programme. This year 126 people took part, and 115 of them moved into full-time jobs.

Our Modern Apprenticeships in Business, Housing and IT helped 19 school-leavers take the first steps on the career ladder this year – bringing the total to 174 since 2009.

The Wheatley Pledge encourages contractors of GHA's parent organisation to create jobs and training for our customers. Since 2013 the scheme has created 160 opportunities for people. In the past year alone, the Pledge has helped 61 people into jobs, created nine apprenticeships and another eight placements or internships.

Daniel Horsfield, who got a start as an apprentice joiner through the scheme, said: “There's not a lot of work around out there and Wheatley doing this for young people is fantastic.”

GHA's investment and new-build contracts also stipulate that jobs and training be created for local people, and in the past year GHA's contractors have created 11 jobs and 17 apprenticeships through this ‘community benefit’ clause.

Welfare services
We have increased the range of wraparound services designed to support people affected by welfare reform – from financial advice to help in furnishing their homes.

Our welfare benefits advisors help tenants claim all the benefits and tax credits they're due. In the past year, 3,482 tenants have used the service – and have accessed more than £5m in unclaimed benefits. Tenants George and Margaret Hassan are now around £400 better off after help from an advisor. George said: “It was a nice surprise as we didn’t know about the extra help. This means we’re better off.”

GHA's fuel advisors give tenants free, expert advice on keeping their gas and electricity bills low. A total of 2,748 tenants used the service in 2014 – 15 and saved £588,000 on their bills.

Our Home Comforts scheme provides free, recycled furniture for tenants struggling to furnish their homes. That support has been a lifeline to 567 tenants in the past year. And 1403 older and disabled tenants have used the Handyperson service for help with odd jobs around the home.
Our Eat Well programme has been a lifeline to tenants experiencing food poverty. As well as offering debt, budgeting and money advice, we distribute excess supermarket food to tenants who have nowhere else to turn. In the past year we’ve carried out 3,994 deliveries – and helped 755 tenants get back on their feet.

Tenant Ian Dean said: “Eat Well gave me advice and food parcels while I looked for work. It helped get me off the breadline.”

Digital inclusion
Glasgow has one of the lowest levels of internet usage in the UK and our efforts to get more tenants online are designed to help tenants access all the advantages of the internet.

GHA now supports 27 Click & Connect computer learning centres all over Glasgow. Tenants get free internet access and expert advice to help them log on to job sites, create a CV, pay their rent and complete online benefit forms.

Our support for the Lone Parents Advice and Support Network means mums and dads can also get benefits advice and help to complete online claims and learn about jobs and training.

We're also increasing choice for tenants by expanding our range of online services. Later in 2015 we launched improved online services at GHA, allowing tenants to see their account balance, make payments, book a repair and request other services whenever it suits them.

Social media remains a popular and effective way for us to interact with customers, and GHA now has 11,686 followers across Facebook and Twitter.

Legacy from the Games
The 2014 Commonwealth Games was, of course, a big event for the city.

But we judge its success on what it left behind for the people of Glasgow. A total of 98 GHA tenants are now enjoying life in smart new homes in the former Athletes' Village, but we've also worked hard over the past year to make sure the Games left a lasting sporting, cultural and social legacy.

One of the most important ways of doing that was through distributing furniture used at the Athletes' Village. More than 60,000 items of furniture were gifted to GHA by Games organisers – and then distributed by us to our tenants as well as to charities, other social landlords and voluntary organisations in and around Glasgow.

We also helped create a sporting legacy for our young people.

More than 900 east end school kids took part in the Legacy Games at the Emirates Arena, while we
gave young people the chance to take part in track cycling sessions at the same venue. We also organised a Mini Commonwealth Games for youngsters in Scotstoun, and helped school kids in Drumchapel keep the spirit of the Games alive by holding their own Drumwealth Games.

We made sure older tenants didn’t miss out by organising a ‘summer of sport’ at our sheltered housing complexes where tenants took part in activities such as indoor bowls and golf.

And Wheatley Group’s 2014 Games Year Sport Scholarship helped 10 young athletes pursue their dreams of sporting excellence with a grant of up to £1,000 a year to help with travel expenses and equipment. Wheatley Group’s Host your Kit competition also provided new strips and vouchers for sports equipment for 10 lucky sports clubs in GHA communities.

These projects have left a lasting legacy of sporting excellence – and healthier, more active communities.

**Area Committees**
GHA’s three area committees – made up of tenants and community representatives – are a vital way for us to support grassroots projects across the city.

Each committee has responsibility for £1.5million to spend on neighbourhood improvements, and have approved projects ranging from allotments and play parks to resurfacing pathways and renovating community centres.

The committees also have an annual community fund budget of £150,000 each to help our tenants lead ‘better lives’. Well over 100 projects have been supported in the past year, including helping young people improve their employability skills, organising parties for older tenants and helping families, carers and people with disabilities get an affordable holiday.

**Performance**
GHA reports on its performance against a series of indicators laid out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Our performance continues to show strong results, with approximately half of the indicators at top quartile levels.

A total of 90.6% of tenants are satisfied with the overall service they receive from GHA. In the past year, our level of current tenant arrears has fallen from 2.57% to 2.36%, while the average time to let homes is at 14.39 days, down from 19.56 days. Other major improvements have been in relation to: complaints responded to in full within timescales (up 13 percentage points); lettable homes that became vacant (down 3 percentage points); gross rent arrears (down 0.4 percentage points); and average length of time taken to re-let properties (down 5 days).

**Awards**
It’s been another year of business excellence for GHA, with awards and recognition for the work staff and tenants are doing.

Investors in People (IiP) is the UK’s leading accreditation for business improvement through people management. Following last year’s IiP Gold Award, GHA this year picked up Large Employer of the Year and Overall Employer of the Year at the annual IiP awards, while Chief Exec Martin Armstrong was named Leader of the Year. Judges described GHA as ‘an inspiration to us all’ and ‘an absolute stand-out organisation’.

GHA also won the ‘Business Transformation of the Year’ award at the UK Housing awards for our ‘Think Yes’ staff campaign. Meanwhile, our new-build development at Duke Street/High Street picked up City Regeneration Project of the year at the Scottish Property Awards.