

A photograph of two elderly men sitting outdoors in front of a brick building. The man on the left is bald, wearing glasses, a grey sweater, and a dark jacket, smiling and looking towards the right. The man on the right is wearing a brown baseball cap with 'MARINE' on it, a blue collared shirt, and a dark sweater, smiling broadly. A large blue diagonal overlay covers the right side of the image, containing text and social media icons.

Housing@21

# Oldham Report 2023/24



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Thank you

# Welcome from the Chair

I am pleased with the progress and accomplishments the team has achieved in enhancing the lives of Oldham residents over this period. This is especially true when comparing against a national backdrop of declining standards and challenging satisfaction measures for social housing residents generally.

Throughout the year, the Executive Team has continued to work hard in collaboration with Oldham Council. In addition, we have, as a Board, had a strategic dialogue to review all aspects of the workings and relationships with both the officers and council leadership. This has added to the strength and depth of not only the relationships, but also helped us reflect on what we are doing well and what we can do better.

The Executive Team has established strong additional partnerships with a number of organisations, such as MioCare, Action Together and Age UK. These partnerships have enabled us to support intergenerational activities, promote digital inclusion, and initiate health and wellbeing projects. We have also focused on transforming and upgrading our facilities, which has significantly improved the experience and quality of life for the local community.

During my visits to Oldham, I have had the pleasure of meeting residents and visiting several completed projects. These interactions have provided valuable insights from both residents and our dedicated local teams, informing us on how we can continuously enhance the standard of homes we manage and the services we provide. We maintain high standards and strive to deliver exceptional services, as evidenced by the positive feedback we receive on a daily basis. The efforts and hard work of the team in Oldham have played a vital role in our accomplishments, and I am confident that with such a committed team, we will continue to reach new heights in the coming year.

I would like to pay special tribute to the dedication of the Community Voices, who serve as our 'eyes and ears' in each area. Their efforts in monitoring our services,

providing regular feedback to our teams, and driving improvement across all services are invaluable.

I am proud to be part of the achievements in Oldham over the past year and pledge my continued support for the year ahead.

**Suki Kalirai**

**Chair of Oldham Retirement Housing Partnership (ORHP)**





# Introduction

The past year has presented significant challenges for all our stakeholders — our residents, dedicated employees, partners, contractors and our organisation as a whole. Despite facing a tough economic climate, including high food and energy costs, we are encouraged by our achievements.

Recognising the importance of targeting our resources to make a real and positive difference in residents' lives, we are proud to highlight the success of our Helping Hands Fund. This vital initiative, jointly funded by Oldham Council and Housing 21, continues to serve as a lifeline for residents; a first-hand account of its impact is detailed on page 11.

Throughout the year, we've enhanced our understanding of damp and mould issues within residents' homes and established a dedicated workstream aimed at providing individual solutions for any issues identified. Our damp and mould inspection programme has been instrumental in assessing home conditions and gathering insights from home visits. In cases where damp or mould was identified, our dedicated technicians worked hard to implement effective remedial works. We remain committed

to working in partnership with residents, offering expert advice on reducing condensation and eradicating damp and mould in the homes we manage.

In collaboration with Oldham Council, we have worked hard to improve our facilities. We have refreshed the decor and furnishings in several of our schemes and upgraded communal spaces. Additionally, garden areas have been improved to provide more enjoyable outdoor spaces for residents.

During the summer, we moved offices to improve working conditions for our dedicated Customer Services and Property Teams. Our new office and meeting room in Hollinwood Business Centre has provided an ideal setting for our teams, allowing them to thrive and continue delivering excellent services to residents across Oldham.

Despite the challenges, our achievements over the past year reflect our commitment to residents and employees. We look forward to building on these successes in the coming year and continuing to make a positive impact on our community.

**Dawn Aston-Adams**  
Head of Oldham PFI Service



# Performance Information

## April 2023 to March 2024



We had **156** lettings over this period



**91%** of telephone calls answered within 24 seconds



We completed **96%** of urgent (eight hour repairs) within the timeframe

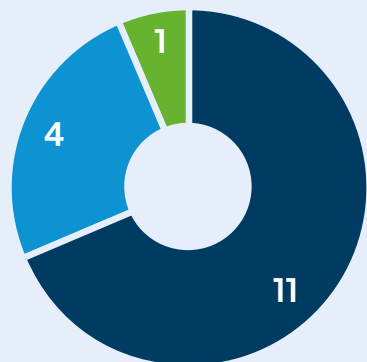


**100%** of tenant breaches of the Tenancy Agreement responded to within five working days

### Compliments and complaints over the 12 month period

**We received 16 compliments in total.**

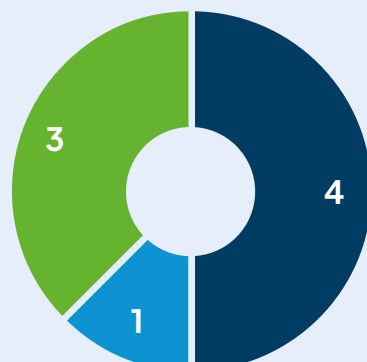
- Repairs contractors
- Employees
- Grounds maintenance



**We received eight complaints in total.**

- Repairs
- Employees
- Grounds maintenance

All were resolved at stage one.



### Complaints Process for Financial Year April 2023 – March 2024

Housing 21 welcomes feedback about our employees and services as this helps us learn and improve.

In 2023/24, we acknowledged complaints within two working days and provided a detailed response within seven days (stage one). If more time was needed for investigation, we informed the complainant of the expected response date. Unresolved complaints could be escalated to stage two, where the Head of Service in Oldham would respond within 14 days. If still unsatisfied after eight weeks, the complainant could request an investigation by the Housing Ombudsman. More details on our performance, complaints, and contacting the Ombudsman are available on our website under Resident Information.

# New Contractors

## New Contractors in Oldham

### Alben Landscapes and APM

In June, Alben Landscapes took over the grounds maintenance contract in Oldham. Community representatives, Janet and Janet joined the managers responsible for selecting the contractors, ensuring that residents' views on quality and customer service were addressed. Alben Landscapes has prior experience managing grounds maintenance under PFI contracts, so was deemed well suited for this role in Oldham.

In addition to grounds maintenance, Alben Landscapes will handle gritting and snow clearance during the winter months. Managed by Ben and Simon Ashworth, this family-run business is dedicated to sustainability and youth development. We are pleased to welcome Alben Landscapes to our team and look forward to a productive partnership.

Also in June, APM was selected as our new cleaning contractor for all Oldham schemes with their considerable experience in delivering services to other housing providers. Marie and Anita, Community Voices from School House Flats, played a crucial role in the selection process ensuring residents' perspectives were considered following the retirement of the previous contractor, Always Cleaning.

The transition was smooth for residents, as the employees from Always Cleaning were transferred to APM and received their induction to APM's ways of working by their enthusiastic new manager, Shaun Maitland.

Housing 21 extends its gratitude to all the Community Voices for their valuable time and collaboration with managers during the procurement process.



Ben and Simon Ashworth  
with Janet and Janet

Anita and Marie either side  
of Shaun Maitland





# Brown Edge Road and Violet Hill Court

## Brown Edge Road Community Room Extension

We are continually looking to improve our properties and facilities, with residents at the heart of the decision making process. As part of this project, residents chose the colour theme for the decor and interior design from a number of mood boards presented by our Interior Designer.

In the last year, we have completed several refurbishments which have each been marked by a celebration event for residents to attend. Our first completed project was a renovation at Brown Edge Road. We extended and transformed a bungalow for residents to use for their social activities and events. To celebrate, residents were invited into the bungalow's lounge for a delicious buffet lunch and jazz musical performance. Several visitors attended from the Oldham Retirement Housing Partnership, the Housing 21

Board, a number of Housing 21 employees and Councillor Shah, Leader of Oldham Council who cut the ribbon.

## Violet Hill Court Gardens

September marked the official opening of the new gardens at Violet Hill Court. This project was resident led and centred on a makeover of the original garden area, as well as two additional new garden areas for residents to enjoy. Guests included Oldham Councillor, Peter Dean alongside Oldham Council officers, Housing 21 employees and students from a nearby high school who regularly attend Violet Hill Court and have formed lasting friendships with the residents. Over 40 residents were present for the ribbon cutting ceremony, and then went on to enjoy a lovely afternoon tea and musical performance. The gardens are provided for all residents to enjoy and will continue to be a source of delight by introducing vibrancy and colour to the communal space.



# Good News Stories

## Digital Inclusion

Housing 21 has funded several rounds of IT courses for Oldham residents, in partnership with Inclusive Bytes, a community interest company that supports digital inclusion through education. The organisation leads the courses and has become a familiar face for residents.

Most recently, residents of Violet Hill Court, Aster House, Trinity House, Victoria Gardens, Hopwood Court and Walton House registered their interest in learning new IT skills and were given the opportunity to attend sessions that ran over a period of six weeks. Throughout this time, they learnt how to play games, download content, buy goods online, as well as how to generally navigate a computer. They were even given the chance to test out a virtual reality headset!

The residents varied in terms of their skills going into the course; some were complete beginners while others had prior knowledge

they wanted to build on. Regardless of their previous experience, they all finished the course feeling more confident and empowered to keep learning.

Overall, residents have commented that they enjoyed the sessions and felt more confident in using a computer, with one resident saying: “Age doesn’t matter. If you are able to concentrate, then you will enjoy a course like this because it keeps your brain ticking over.”

The quote is a testament to the success and popularity of the course amongst those who attended it. Inclusive Bytes focuses on reducing fear for those who have limited experience using technology, teaching techniques like ‘drag and drop’ by playing games, such as solitaire.





## Enhancing Community Spaces

Old Mill House was the proud recipient of a £1,000 grant from Action Together, which enabled the installation of a beautiful water feature in the communal garden. This addition has greatly enhanced the garden's ambiance, allowing residents to enjoy the soothing sounds of flowing water from the comfort of their flats. The creation of this fountain was a team effort, with residents and their families working together to ensure it was positioned for everyone's enjoyment. The water feature is also illuminated at night, providing a pleasing visual experience for all.

In the spirit of giving, residents and employees from School House Flats, Chew Vale, and Lees House came together to gather Christmas gifts for children across the borough who might have otherwise gone without. These gifts were collected and delivered to Oldham Council just before Christmas for distribution.

⋮ The heartfelt feedback we received  
 ⋮ highlighted the significant impact of  
 ⋮ Housing 21's contribution, as one message  
 ⋮ emphasised: "For the children, it makes a very  
 ⋮ sad, challenging time of year exciting again."

We are incredibly proud of these achievements and the community spirit that made them possible.



# Addressing Residents' Concerns

## Small Changes, Big Impact

It can often be little things that can significantly improve our quality of life, and with this in mind, Local Housing Managers have been listening to residents' concerns and taken action to address them.

### Here are some of their successes:

#### Violet Hill Court

When driving, residents were facing visibility issues when leaving Moss Street onto Howard Street due to parked cars. They requested an extension of the yellow lines on Howard Street to alleviate this problem. The Local Housing Manager worked with the local councillor and the highways team at Oldham Council, and the extension has now been approved.

#### Lees House

Residents requested locks on the gates facing Further Hey Close to prevent non-residents from accessing the area, as this was leading to littering and dog fouling. Authorisation was given to install a keypad and thumb turn lock on both ends of the fence.

Additionally, residents asked for an auto door release sensor for the first floor corridor door to help residents using walking frames and electric scooters. An automatic door release mechanism has now been installed.

#### Charles Morris House

Residents requested an additional path to the front entrance of the scheme to avoid having to walk over the grass verge. A new path has been constructed, significantly improving accessibility for everyone.

#### Recreation and Limesditch Road

Residents attending football matches at the playing fields in front of their homes noticed dog walkers were not cleaning up after their pets. The Local Housing Manager contacted the council and they agreed to add signage around the fields and distribute leaflets in the surrounding areas.

⋮ We remain committed  
⋮ to listening to residents'  
⋮ concerns and addressing  
⋮ them whenever possible to  
⋮ make the positive changes  
⋮ needed to enhance their  
⋮ quality of life, which is always  
⋮ our top priority.





# Helping Hands

## Helping Hands Fund

In response to the rising cost of living, the Helping Hands Fund has been a crucial source of support for residents, addressing concerns about heating, food, bills and day-to-day living expenses. With the support of Oldham Council and Housing 21, the fund has provided grants to eligible residents offering up to £300 to help with essential needs, such as food, warm clothing, energy debt and health-related expenses.

Since April 2023, the Helping Hands Fund has awarded 53 grants to residents across Oldham, amounting to a total of almost £10,000. This financial assistance has been vital in ensuring that residents can meet their basic needs during these challenging times.

A resident at one of the Oldham schemes, Kevin, was absolutely delighted with his new oven and expressed his gratitude thanking Helping Hands:

“I can’t thank Housing 21 enough for all of their assistance in getting this grant, it has made a huge difference to my life. I can now have the means to prepare my own meals throughout the week thanks to Helping Hands.”

Other Local Housing Managers highlighted that several residents have utilised the grant to purchase food, which has been particularly beneficial over the winter period. This support has been a vital lifeline, providing much needed relief and stability for the residents in our community. Helping Hands has made a profound impact on the lives of many, ensuring that residents can live with dignity and security.

# Resident Conference

The annual Housing 21 Oldham Resident Conference took place in November 2023 at St Herbert's Parish Centre in Chadderton. The event was attended by Community Voice representatives, winners of the 2023 Garden Competition and Fab Neighbour Competition, as well as representatives from schemes recognised in The Royal Horticultural Society North West Britain InBloom Competition.

Residents enjoyed a series of informative talks from Oldham Council and Housing 21, with an interlude of music and songs from 'Sounds Familiar'. The Chairman of the Oldham branch of the University of the Third Age even came along to give an engaging talk on the benefits of lifelong learning.

The attendees were then divided into three groups for interactive breakout sessions:

- **Nordic Walking Demonstration:** Participants learned the basics of this engaging activity.
- **Tai Chi Taster Session:** Led by our resident instructors, this session introduced attendees to the benefits and techniques of Tai Chi.
- **Inclusive Bytes Tech Talk:** This included a virtual reality presentation, offering residents a glimpse into the latest technology innovations.

Throughout the day, residents were encouraged to learn new skills and try new activities. Many found these new activities enjoyable, which led to the rollout of Tai Chi sessions across several schemes.





# IT Club and Community Voice

## Old Mill House IT Club

Formed in 2014, the Old Mill House IT Club began with a successful grant application through Action Together Oldham Funding, securing the maximum grant amount of £1,000. This funding was used to purchase iPads, chosen to help the new 'Silver Surfers' get started with their digital journey.

Over the years, members of the club have grown in confidence and many now own their own laptops. They are fortunate to have Robin Birch, a dedicated volunteer who joined in 2016 through the Action

Together Oldham Volunteer Programme. Robin's extensive knowledge and expertise has been invaluable and is available to the members whenever they need it.

The group is open to anyone who is interested in learning new skills or simply looking to socialise. Members from Hood Square, the local community and Old Mill House are welcome. Whether you want to learn or just enjoy a chat over tea and biscuits, the IT Club offers a warm and supportive environment.

Dorothy Cooper, the longest standing member, shares her experience: "Being part of this group has opened a whole new world for me. I have learnt new skills, can do my own online shopping, and even order online for our community shop. I FaceTime my brother in Canada, something I would never have been able to do without the IT Club."

The club continues to be a valuable resource for the local community and the members unanimously agree that the IT Club has helped them maintain their independence, acquire new skills and form meaningful friendships.





# The Meaning of Being a Community Voice

## What is Community Voice?

Housing 21 Community Voice is a group of residents representing their schemes who meet quarterly with Housing 21 employees, serving as a key point of contact for residents to voice concerns or provide feedback. Their involvement is integral to the Housing 21 community.



## Sandra, Victoria Gardens

Sandra has been a Housing 21 Community Voice representative for the last few years, representing Victoria Gardens in Shaw. She regularly attends the quarterly Community Voice meetings ensuring the concerns and needs of her community are heard and addressed.

Sandra's commitment to her local community extends beyond the meetings. She runs the Over 50's Club on a Thursday morning at the Victoria Gardens Community Bungalow. The club, which began 10 years ago in the Parish Room at St Paul's Church before moving to Victoria Gardens, serves as a vital hub to integrate the local community and Housing 21 residents. Open to everyone, it offers a welcoming environment where people can socialise and enjoy unlimited tea, coffee, biscuits and toast. In addition to bringing the community together, this group can provide significant help to anyone who is struggling with the cost of living as a warm drink and a light meal is available to all.

Sandra is also involved in the bingo club held on a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning, and leads a Tai Chi group on Thursday afternoons. Both Sandra and her husband, John, play an integral role in the local community and together they manage the group's finances to ensure the smooth running of the social club. They organise trips, adapting to rising costs by switching between coach trips to Southport to local outings and entertainment at the local bowling club to accommodate everyone.

Sandra's commitment highlights the spirit of a Community Voice representative, she said: "I feel that residents are well supported by Housing 21 and are happy with the services, feeling comfortable voicing any concerns. My advice to those considering becoming a Community Voice representative would be to give it a try! Attending a couple of meetings can provide some insight, even if you don't have specific issues to raise, it allows you to hear feedback from others and understand how any potential problems are resolved."

Sandra's dedication and proactive approach makes her a key figure in the Shaw community, demonstrating the positive impact Community Voice can have in bringing people together and enhancing their quality of life.

# Extra Care

## Extra Care: Transforming Lives

Extra Care properties offer independent living with a supportive, secure and socially enriching environment that significantly improves the quality of life, making it a valuable option for residents with care needs.

Residents maintain autonomy in private apartments while accessing tailored support for daily activities and healthcare needs. This balance ensures they continue to live independently but with assistance readily available should they need it.

Designed for safety with features like level access showers, grab rails and emergency call systems, the six Extra Care schemes across Oldham have Care Workers available, providing peace of mind for residents and their families.

There are communal spaces for residents with some schemes even having their own sensory garden. The teams organise activities to encourage social interaction, combat loneliness and enhance mental wellbeing. Care plans are tailored to individual needs to ensure that residents receive appropriate and effective support, enhancing their quality of life.





**Over the past year, we have witnessed remarkable transformations among residents in our Extra Care facilities. Here is one such story:**

A resident with learning difficulties, mobility issues and sensory impairment moved into one of our Extra Care schemes following the passing of a close relative with whom he had lived with for most of his life. Initially in his own home, he had struggled to live independently despite family support, which led to severe health complications and an unhappy stay in a care home.

His family, with the assistance of a Social Worker, successfully applied to one of our Extra Care schemes. Since moving in, he has found an environment that is well-suited to his wheelchair needs, including an automatic door that provides easy access to all amenities. His overall health has significantly improved, thanks to regular meals at the on-site restaurant and support from Care Workers for meal preparation and medication reminders.

Socially, he has thrived, engaging with other residents and participating in on-site events in a welcoming communal setting, which has greatly reduced his isolation. Additional safety measures, such as a vibrating pillow to alert him to fire alarms, have further improved his wellbeing.

His family are relieved, as the scheme's Care Team closely monitor his health, addressing their concerns about his physical wellbeing and any risks of further health complications. He is now content, sociable, independent and living a much happier life.

This story demonstrates the significant positive impact our Extra Care facilities have on residents, promoting better health, increased social engagement and enhanced overall wellbeing.



... The teams organise activities to encourage social interactions, combat loneliness and improve mental wellbeing.

# Fundraising

## Residents' Dedication to Charitable Causes: A Year in Review

Throughout the year, residents have consistently demonstrated their commitment to supporting charities that are close to their hearts.

In September, Walton House hosted a Macmillan Coffee Morning featuring a variety of exciting prizes with the help of resident, Ann. Their efforts raised an impressive £1,183.61 for the charity.

At Aster House, residents, Ann, Helena and Dorothy participated in a sponsored walk around the scheme to raise money for Children in Need. With the support of their fellow residents and Local Housing Manager, Julie, they successfully raised a total of £407.

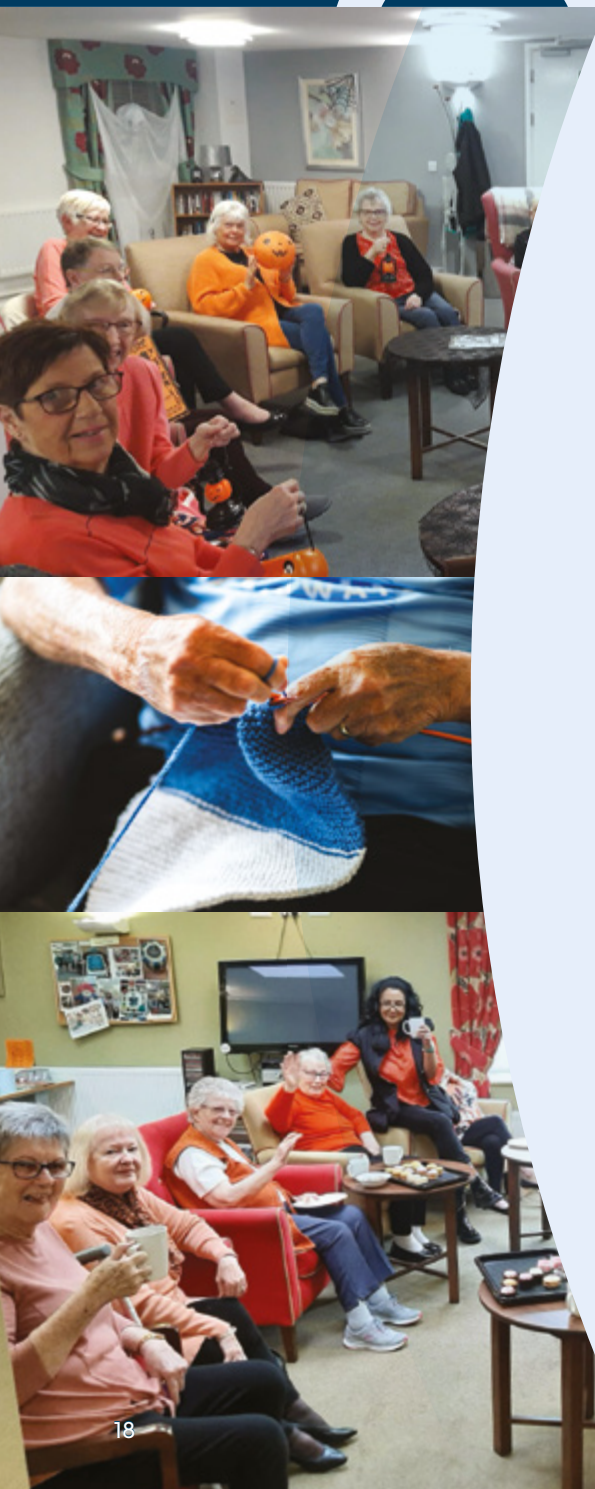
Throstle Court resident, Audrey dedicated her time to knitting baby items for the premature baby unit at the Royal Oldham Hospital. Audrey, along with other residents, often delivers these handmade crafts to the hospital where they are always gratefully received. Additionally, the Knit and Natter Group at Throstle Court creates dementia dolls, which are donated to a local care facility specialising in dementia care.

These are just a few examples of the positive contributions residents are making across Oldham.

## Orange October

Throughout the month of October, Housing 21 raised money for Macmillan Cancer Support and Breast Cancer UK in support of employees' and residents' friends, family and colleagues who have been affected. Across the organisation more than £3,300 was raised for the two charities, with an impressive contribution of £850 coming from Oldham employees and residents.

Residents at Old Mill House and Brown Edge Road held a tabletop sale to raise money while Chew Vale residents turned their Halloween party into a fundraiser. Hopwood Court, Springlees, Dunsford Court and Millgate residents all got involved by hosting a coffee morning while residents at Violet Hill Court and School House Flats opted to meet up and wear orange. Both Throstle Court and Tandle View Court residents also got involved with some fundraising, as did employees in the office who got together for breakfast and wore orange. This is an excellent example of the positive impact that Oldham residents and employees can have when working in collaboration towards the same goal.





## Housing 21 Community and Wellbeing Fund

The Community and Wellbeing Fund was set up by Housing 21 to assist with starting or developing an existing project at our schemes. The aim of the fund is to help residents build connections with their neighbours and the wider community to reduce social isolation and improve wellbeing.

Violet Hill Court applied for a proportion of this funding to purchase a Nintendo Switch and a pool table, which would be predominantly used by the 'Men's Group' who get together fortnightly to socialise and play games. Joanne, Local Housing Manager has been keen to encourage this group as it has previously been difficult to motivate the men within the scheme to get involved in activities. When Oldham Athletic ran sessions at the scheme using a Nintendo Switch, the 'Men's Group' was formed and any perceived social barriers for the male residents were broken. The Community and Wellbeing Fund provided a lifeline to this group to continue their fortnightly get togethers and strengthen their friendships even further.

As part of the initiative, residents needed to match fund the contribution from Housing 21, so they raised a very impressive £230! The fund then directly paid for the pool table and also provided a voucher to go towards the cost of the Nintendo Switch. Overall, this project has been highly successful and has provided some great new additions to the lounge at Violet Hill Court.

Another beneficiary of the Community and Wellbeing Fund was Trinity House. Over the winter months, the restaurant at Trinity House hosted a subsidised Sunday lunch for residents to get together and enjoy. Residents raised money, which was then match funded by the fund, which meant that residents were able to enjoy a nutritious meal for just £3 per person. The lunch was a huge success with residents due to the commitment of Jodie, Local Housing Manager and the on-site caterers at Heather's Kitchen.



### Want to stay connected throughout the year?

If you enjoy the content of this report and want to see more content like this all year round, be sure to follow us on our Housing 21 social media channels. We share resident stories, scheme events, organisational initiatives, and more!



### Feedback

We hope you have enjoyed reading the Oldham Report 2023/2024. We'd love to hear your feedback and any suggestions you have for next year. Please get in touch by emailing **communications@housing21.org.uk** or speak to a member of the Housing 21 team.

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