



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TOGETHER



INTRODUCTION

We know how many of you have struggled through the past year. It's been a challenge in so many ways, and our thoughts are especially with those who have lost loved ones to Covid-19.

2020 gave us all cause to reflect on who we are, and what we want to achieve.

We know that some of you didn't get the service you expected this year. We're sorry for that, and hope you will understand that Covid-19 affected our staff and their families just as hard as it did many of you. 70% of staff moved to home-working almost overnight, many community services moved online and our Estates Teams were on-site for the duration. We did our best, and learned lessons, and hope that our services will be back to normal as soon as possible.

This annual report is therefore different to past years. We wanted to show you what Poplar HARCA has been doing to support our community, to tell you what has been achieved and to share plans for the future.

Poplar HARCA's Board, staff, partners and volunteers share a common purpose – creating opportunities together that realise community potential through exceptional homes and thriving places with social justice at our core.

To help us understand what you need from us, we want your views on how we're performing and how you feel about where you live – check out page 22 to take part in our resident survey.

A special thank you to all of the volunteers and involved residents who continue to support our community, and help us to improve.

Steve Stride
Chief Executive, Poplar HARCA

HOW WE PERFORMED 2020/21

Covid-19 affected us all this year. We're very proud of how our teams adapted quickly and prioritised support to residents affected most by the pandemic.

We set our targets for 2020/21 before the pandemic hit us all so hard; inevitably we didn't meet them all.

- ▶ Because the law changed so that we could not let homes, we lost more rent through empty homes than usual.
- ▶ We really struggled with the increase in the number of ASB cases reported to us through lockdown, at a time when we also had staff shortages in our ASB team and that's reflected in the lower satisfaction levels.
- ▶ We had to close our centres and move services online, which means that the number of volunteers and young people engaged were lower this year.
- ▶ And the challenges of fewer local jobs is reflected in fewer local people supported into employment.
- ▶ We know many of our leaseholders were furloughed so agreed service charge payment plans with them, which shows in the lower % collected this year.

Corporate

Number of Ombudsman cases received:
(No maladministration findings)

4

Escalated Complaints

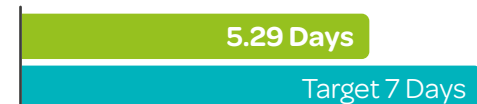


Technical

% overall compliance



Average calendar days for repairs completion



Satisfied with last repair



% of disrepair cases responded within time



Estate cleaning rated A or B



Housing

Number of lets:

213

% of tenants supported by safeguarding team:

4.64%

Rent arrears (all tenures)



Service Charges collected (leasehold)



Rent loss on empty properties



Satisfied with ASB case handling

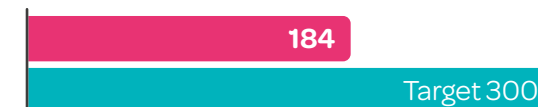


Communities & Neighbourhoods

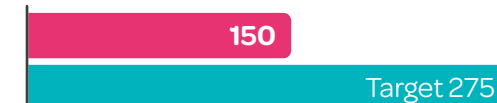
No. engaged in events



No. of volunteers



No. of local people into jobs



No. people completed accredited training



No. young people engaged in youth service



No. accessing health related activities



Coming Soon



Real-time stats on our website, so you can always see how we're performing
poplarharca.co.uk

HIGHLIGHTS 2020/21

Supporting those who most need it during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Housing Management

- **93% of Estate Board and Gathering members** feel they work well with us to ensure resident voices are heard
- **Nearly 70% of staff moved to home-working** ensuring residents could continue to access services
- Letting homes through virtual viewings and online sign-ups
- Almost **5,000 households** now have a MyHARCA account
- **1,200 older residents were contacted** at the start of lockdown to ensure they had support
- We **reached out to residents** who had previously reported domestic abuse to check-in on how they were during lockdown
- We **worked with local charities** Neighbours in Poplar and First Love Foundation to ensure food and other essentials were delivered to elderly residents in need
- We opened **179 new safeguarding cases**
- We opened **1,223 new anti-social behaviour cases**, and increased Parkguard estate patrols
- We now have 11 Housing First tenancies, with previously street **homeless clients being supported** by St Mungo's and Spitalfields Crypt Trust
- **55 homes were provided** to Tower Hamlets Council as emergency homeless accommodation
- We **supported residents experiencing financial hardship**, including repayment plans and specialist support and advice

HIGHLIGHTS 2020/21

Supporting those who most need it during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Technical & Estate Services

We **completed 18,000 repairs**, focusing on emergency and essential repairs

We carried out **12,000 safety checks**

283 boilers were replaced

98% of those who had a repair done were satisfied

99% of the repairs were completed in target

The average time from repair **report to completion** was **5.3 days**

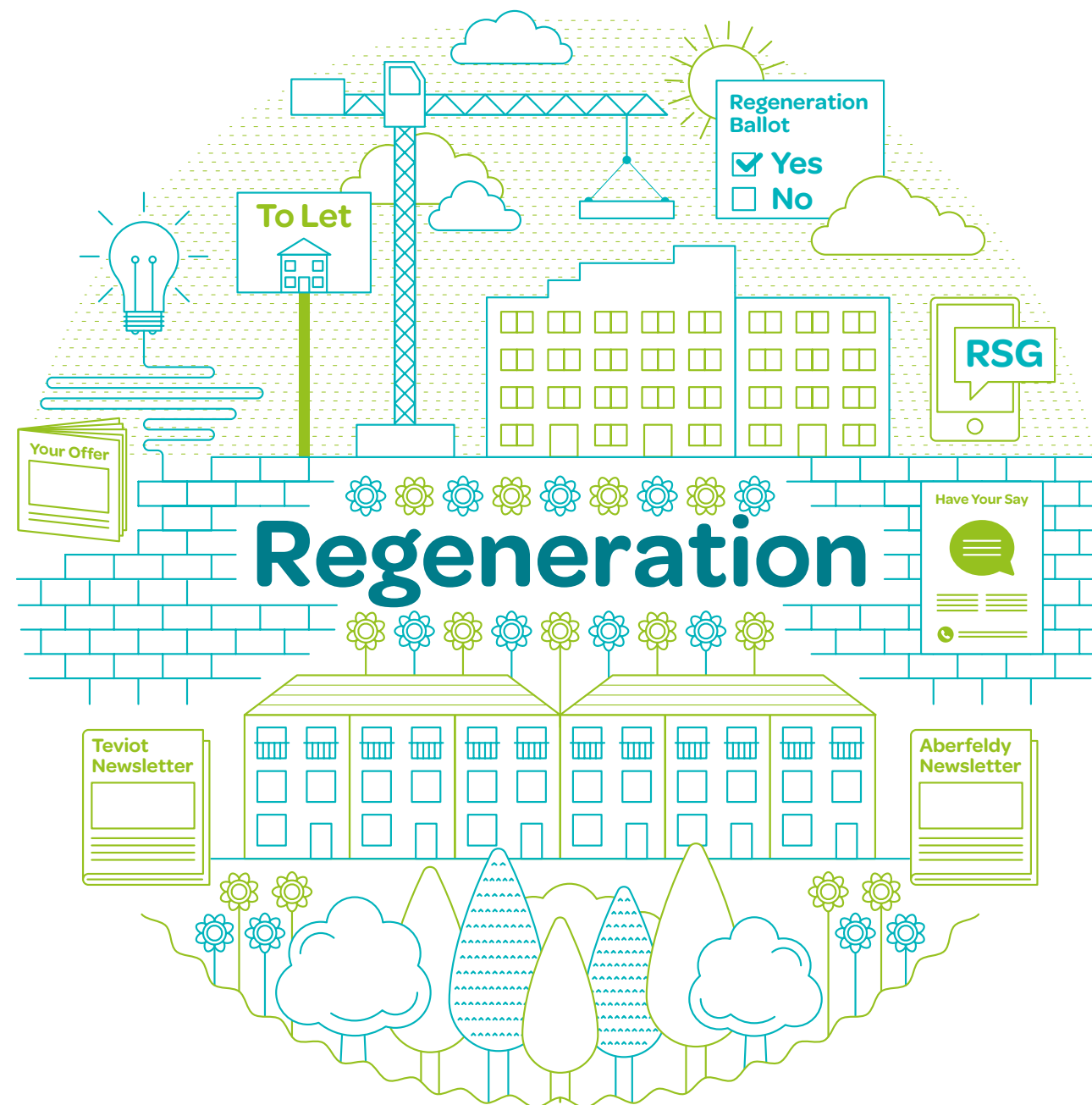
We conducted hundreds of daily block spot cleans, continued bulk waste collections and health & safety checks to **keep estates clean and safe**

800 tonnes of dumped bulk rubbish was safely disposed of

Our Estate Services Team **looked after green spaces** which became such an important support to residents' wellbeing during lockdown

HIGHLIGHTS 2020/21

Supporting those who most need it during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Regeneration

- 160 new affordable homes were built and let
- 93% of Aberfeldy West residents voted in favour of regeneration proposals, on a 91% turnout
- 2,200 ideas and suggestions were generated by the 80% of Aberfeldy households who participated in the Planning for Real exercise; with an 80-strong Resident Steering Group
- Teviot residents appointed a Joint Venture partner to deliver the ambitious regeneration proposals for where they live; and a 76-strong Resident Steering Group
- 500 residents are keeping in the loop through Regen WhatsApp groups
- 274 new homes (with 50% affordable) got planning permission to be built at Stroudley Walk
- 41 early-stage fashion and creative businesses are operating from Poplar Works, 50% of which are run by individuals from Poplar or Tower Hamlets
- 12 local residents gained qualifications in garment manufacturing and production through the Making for Change programme at Poplar Works, run by London College of Fashion

Spotlight on Fire Safety

The fourth anniversary of the tragic Grenfell Tower Fire was a reminder of the awful impact on survivors, and those who lost loved ones. Since then, Poplar HARCA has been continuing to make sure we understand and mitigate fire and building safety risks; and staying compliant with emerging legislation and best practice.

Fire risk assessments are carried out annually on all blocks, and every six-months on blocks assessed as a higher risk due to height and layout.

We have prioritised fire safety works for buildings with external wall systems and balconies; carried out 112 External Wall System Assessments and secured fire safety certificates (EWS1 Forms) for 80 buildings. 7 buildings over 18m high, and 24 under 18m need remedial work. We have a programme of works in place, and are applying for all available grant. We're on track to complete the majority of works by March 2023.

HIGHLIGHTS 2020/21

Supporting those who most need it during the Covid-19 pandemic.



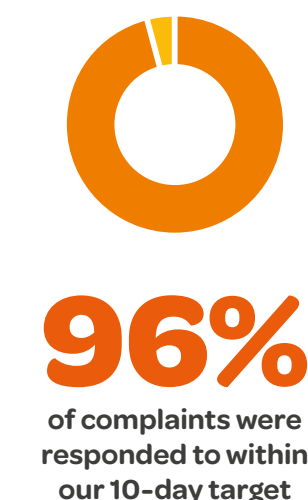
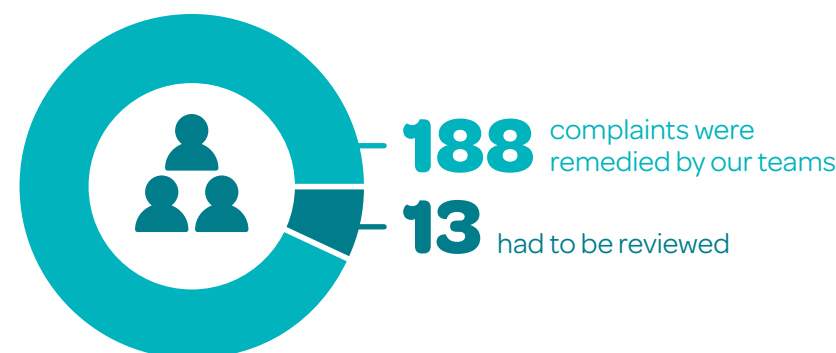
Communities & Neighbourhoods

Behind all these numbers are individuals and families supported when they needed it most:

- **45 hours per week** of detached & outreach youth work across 11 wards
- **96 Christmas meals** and goodie bags delivered to elderly residents
- **150 people supported** into employment
- **184 volunteers engaged** during the pandemic
- **230 young people getting work experience** through referrals to our Kickstart programme
- **Over 240 laptops and tablets distributed** to families in difficulty
- **388 local people** got basic digital skills training
- **448 people achieved** at least 1 accredited qualification
- **1,600 meals given out** to 250 young people in the summer holidays
- **1,963 young people supported** remotely, online or in person
- **8,666 food interventions made**
- **21,290 views of online health & wellbeing sessions** via HARCA Centres Unlocked on Facebook
- **£84,105 grants awarded** to mutual aid groups to deliver emergency services
- **100s of masks and scrubs produced for local hospitals** and community groups by businesses and staff at Poplar Works through the Emergency Designers Network

WHEN WE GET IT WRONG

No matter how hard we try, things sometimes go wrong. When they do, we want to put them right and make sure things are back to where they should be as quickly as possible.



We want to do better when things go wrong, and this is what we changed this year:

- ▶ If you make a complaint, someone will speak to you. It's the best way for us to understand your concerns.
- ▶ We should be clear about what we can and can't do. We should explain why if we have to say no.
- ▶ We've trained more staff on how to investigate a complaint.
- ▶ Complaints are discussed at team meetings so everyone understands issues of concern, we can pick-up on trends, and we can change how we work if there's a better way to do things.
- ▶ There's a lot more about complaints at poplarharca.co.uk.

VALUE FOR MONEY

We know it's important to work efficiently and maximise the money we spend, so we can invest more in the services that make a difference.



Our approach is as much about value as it is about money.

- ▶ **Spending less:** Minimising cost
- ▶ **Spending well:** Getting the best results
- ▶ **Spending wisely:** Achieving what we said we would

This year we:

- ▶ Increased online transactions with 4,853 registered MyHARCA users, saving £150k - £564k every 3 months
- ▶ Launched an automated online payments option, collecting £100k in first 10 days and saving £72k - £270k per year.
- ▶ Implemented a digital mailroom, saving £40k a year on dealing with post manually
- ▶ Introduced more online forms, saving approx £6k - £24k each year
- ▶ Found an opportunity to build 7 new affordable homes on Sturry Street, which will bring increased revenue and approx. £3.5m of assets
- ▶ Worked with Tower Hamlets Council to secure funding for an electric-cargo bike delivery hub that will offer a free, zero-carbon delivery service for Chrisp Street businesses, traders and shoppers
- ▶ Supported local businesses on Aberfeldy Street to secure £50k worth of finance to enable their businesses to grow

Social Value generated by Communities and Neighbourhoods work:



Employment & Training **£2.9M**



Health & Wellbeing **£3.2M**



Youth Service **£2M**



Volunteering **£656K**



Digital Inclusion **£2M**

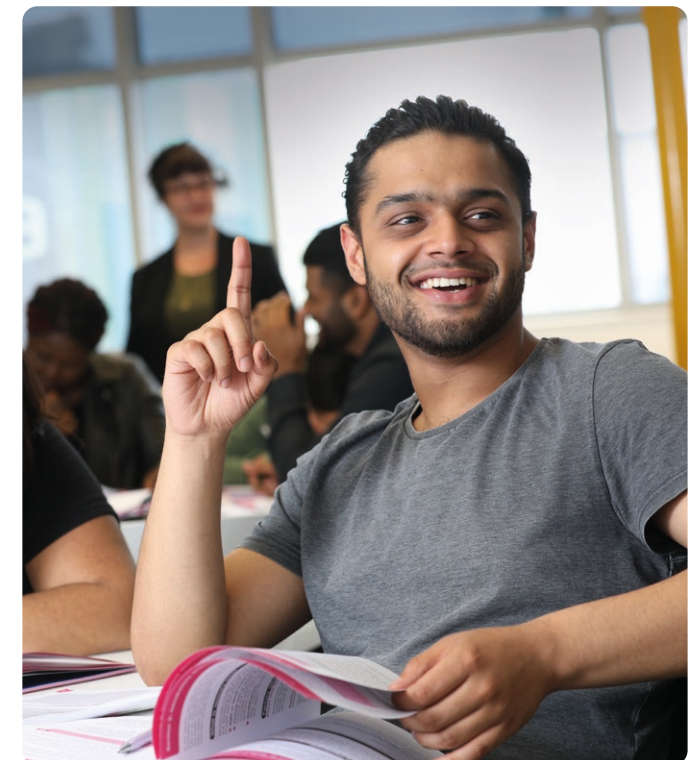


- **Development 39 %**
Construction of new homes, sales and marketing
- **Housing Management 21%**
Frontline services including lettings, collecting rent, ASB, safeguarding, horticulture and estate services
- **Interest 13%**
Interest on loans to pay for new homes
- **Repairs & Maintenance 11%**
Responsive repairs to homes & communal areas and major improvements. e.g. replacing boilers, new lifts
- **Other 10 %**
Office and other equipment, lease costs, commercial property and market rent running costs
- **Social Investment 7%**
Community centres, youth service, health and wellbeing, employment and training and volunteering programmes

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Our plan for 2021-26, Creating Opportunities Together, sets out our ambitions for the next five years.

Our staff, our partners and our community all contribute to making our vision a reality.



Service Satisfaction

Service satisfaction relies on listening and responding, being open to challenge and doing what we say we will.

In 2021-26 we will **increase satisfaction** by:

- ▶ Involving more residents in more decisions
- ▶ Technology that makes it easier to access services
- ▶ Understanding residents' experience; and acting on what they tell us
- ▶ Providing residents with the means to scrutinise performance



Successful Places

Success is people feeling proud of where they live. It's a secure affordable home, enjoying good health, and being able to take-up opportunities.

In 2021-26 we will create more **successful places** by:

- ▶ Building homes to meet need and aspiration
- ▶ Reducing our carbon footprint
- ▶ Partnering for cultural, environmental and industrial infrastructure
- ▶ Investing for health and local prosperity



Committed Workforce

We need talented people to want to work for us. People who live by our values and are motivated by our purpose.

In 2021-26 we will **attract and retain talented people** by:

- ▶ Enhancing equity and diversity at every level of every team
- ▶ Providing personal development for every staff member
- ▶ Creating a flexible, agile, safe working environment
- ▶ Focusing on health and wellbeing



Strong Foundations

Financial capacity determines what we can achieve, and how long it will take us to achieve it.

In 2021-26 we will secure our **financial future** by:

- ▶ Reducing operating costs
- ▶ Sustaining quality
- ▶ Increasing surplus
- ▶ Increasing efficiency through smart technology



WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

There are lots of inspirational local people who give their time and energy to making Poplar a better place to live. Why not join them...opportunities advertised at poplarharca.co.uk

Youth Empowerment Board

16-21 years old? Committed young people passionate about local, social issues and keen to have their voices heard step forward.

- ▶ Expenses covered
- ▶ 1 to 1 professional mentor
- ▶ Personal development and employability skills
- ▶ FREE 2-day residential

Interested? We'd love to hear from you.
#CreateRealChange
harry@wearespotlight.com

Estate Boards & Gathering Groups

Neighbours have been coming together to hold us to account, help us improve and have their say since Poplar HARCA was set up in 1998.

Find out how you can join in
dave.tull@poplarharca.co.uk

Board & Committees

Local experts with skills, knowledge and experience are always sought to join our Board and Committees and set Poplar HARCA's strategic direction.

If you live or work in Tower Hamlets, are committed to community-driven decision making, and have an interest in great governance, we'd very much like to hear from you.

Resident Steering Groups (RSGs)

Big changes are happening on the Teviot and Aberfeldy estates. The residents affected by the changes are crucial to making sure that the decisions taken about where they live are the right decisions.

Contact Fintan on **07852 998 909** to find out more. New members can join any time.

Volunteering

The last 18 months have shone a spotlight on the value of local heroes. Volunteers offer their time, expertise and energy to support their community.

Poplar HARCA has a variety of volunteering opportunities to suit all sorts of interests, career aspirations and experience.



YOUR VOICE MATTERS

20 changes you made happen this year.

- 1 You wanted better facilities in Crisp Street**
We have started on site to provide new homes, shops, restaurants, cinema and a refurbished market place
- 2 You wanted a regenerated Aberfeldy Estate**
We are submitting exciting proposals for over 1600 new homes, community facilities, new parks, shops and east / west connections

- 3 You wanted a regenerated Teviot Estate**
With residents we have appointed a developer partner and design team to start to work up plans
- 4 You wanted new affordable homes**
We have recently completed 146 affordable new homes and we have nearly 2000 in our pipeline

- 5 You wanted us to let homes safely**
Viewings and sign-ups can now be done online
- 6 You were worried about elderly neighbours**
Our Safeguarding Team and local charities are making sure elderly tenants get support if they need it
- 7 You were worried about paying your rent or service charges because you were furloughed**
We've agreed over 1,000 affordable repayment plans
- 8 You were fed-up with people parking selfishly**
We have a new parking contractor enforcing parking on all our estates
- 9 You wanted to be able to access information 24/7 and easier ways to make payments**
We added new options to your online MyHARCA account
- 10 You were worried by antisocial behaviour**
We increased the number of estate patrols carried out by ParkGuard, and recruited additional ASB officers
- 11 You wanted to know how to do some basic maintenance yourself**
We created some simple How To videos
- 12 You wanted extra cleaning and information in communal areas to protect against Covid**
We conducted additional cleaning of high touch points and displayed safety advice posters in blocks
- 13 You wanted to return to Centres**
We re-opened centres for community activities, following Government guidelines to bring people together safely
- 14 You wanted more online activities**
We have expanded our offer of online courses and activities through HARCA Centres Unlocked
- 15 You wanted more activities for our children**
We are delivering range of after school activities such as sports, games, arts & crafts
- 16 Older people wanted to have fun again!**
Line Dancing, Bingo, Coffee Mornings, Men's Cabin and Knit and Natter are back.
- 17 You wanted more variety in Community Cafes**
Our weekly menus offer affordable and healthy food from around the world with vegetarian and vegan options
- 18 You wanted face to face employment support again**
We put in new protective features at The Hive so we could reopen safely
- 19 You needed more support to access online services and training**
We introduced more one to one support for digital skills
- 20 Young people with additional needs wanted a safe space to get together**
We created the Spotlight Superheroes group to make our youth service more inclusive

WIN £100 AMAZON VOUCHER

What
are your
priorities?

How do you
feel about
your home?

Rate our
services

Is the area
improving?

**HAVE
YOUR
SAY**

**We need 10 minutes of your
time to tell us what you think**

Fill in your contact details at the end of the survey to be entered into a prize draw to win a £100 amazon voucher. For every survey completed we will also donate £1 to local charities.

Closing date for survey: 30th November 2021

Scan the QR code or visit
bit.ly/harcasurvey2021
to give us your views.



**BEST OF
POPLAR**



**Snap & share to
win lunch for 2 at
the Spotlight Café**

We want to see photos of
Poplar's best green spaces,
community activities,
businesses and buildings.

For your chance to win:

- ▶ Follow our Instagram account
@poplar.harca
- ▶ Post your best picture of
Poplar and tag us in
- ▶ Use the hashtags **#WelcomeBackTH**
& **#BestOfPoplar**

We will also feature the winning
picture on our channel.

**Competition closes on
Friday 19th November 2021**



**Spotlight
café**



Do it online

You can manage your account quickly
and easily with MyHARCA



Account balance updated instantly



**Pay towards multiple accounts
via a single transaction**



**Request and pay for a fob key,
parking scratchcards and more**

So simple - you don't need your
reference number or payment card

myharca.poplarharca.co.uk