

Home Owners Survey Resident Involvement Report

3 November 2020

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Report Purpose

The Home Owners survey is the start of our journey to explore, using residents' feedback, how to shape the new Home Owners (including Leaseholders & Shared Owners) involvement opportunity. The Home Owner Group will ensure residents are represented during our projects to explore service improvements, revise strategies and make changes to policies and procedures. It is important for Southern Housing Group (SHG) to ensure residents' voices are heard by co-creating this group.

Forming this group provides residents with an opportunity to inform us of any specific barriers there may be for Home Owners engaging with SHG.

At this time virtual meetings will be arranged until it is safer for residents and staff members to meet. Residents that are unable to join in virtual meetings will be consulted with by telephone and post for many projects.

Consultation Themes

The theme of this consultation was to explore if there was an interest in forming this group, what it might be called, how the group can engage with Southern Housing Group (SHG), what areas SHG were considering engaging this group with, any barriers, what currently works well and how residents would like to engage to enable SHG to hear about their experiences of being a Home Owner with SHG.

Consultation Methodology.

This report sets out the findings of the review undertaken by residents. Residents that indicated an interest in Home Owner group, where their tenure showed they were a home owner, shared owner, leaseholder or stair-cased were invited to take place in this survey. In addition, we publicised the survey on our webpage.

Residents were emailed the information on why we were undertaking this survey and were asked to give their feedback either by completing a paper survey form, over the phone with the Customer Involvement Officer or by completing an online survey via Survey Monkey.

In addition to this, residents who preferred postal or a phone call were included as the timeline for responses allowed enough time to enable this to be undertaken.

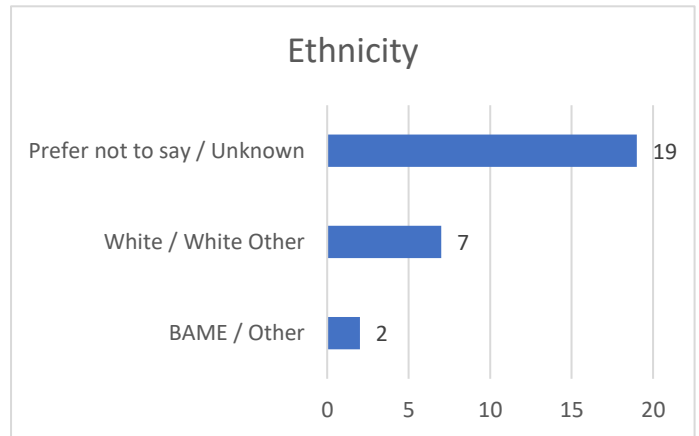
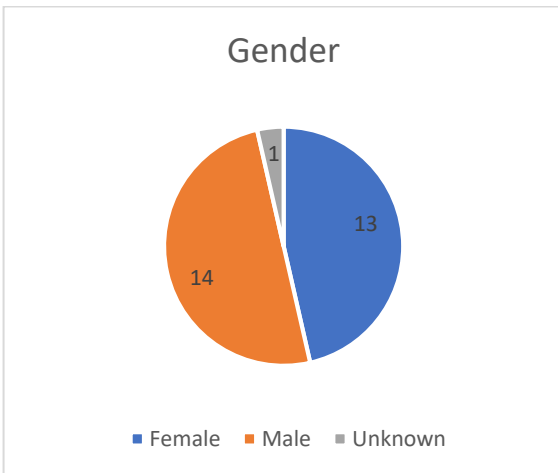
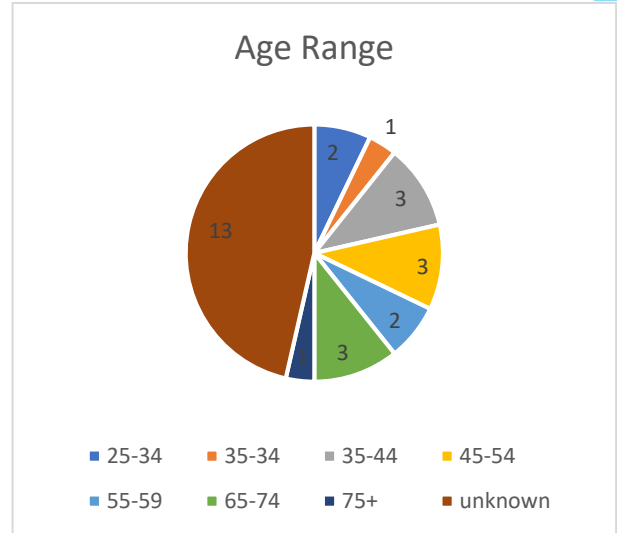
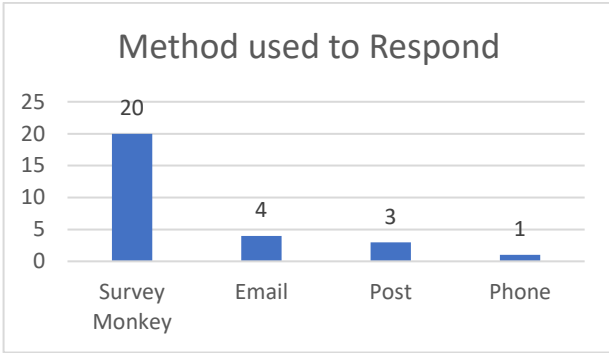
The Customer Involvement team were responsible for the design, co-ordination and delivery of the review and report findings to the Customer Services Improvement Team.

In line with standard research practice, and due to the numbers of residents involved, the findings of this review group cannot be viewed as providing representative feedback on the views of all the Group's residents. These results do provide an insight into the views and opinions of residents.

Respondent profile

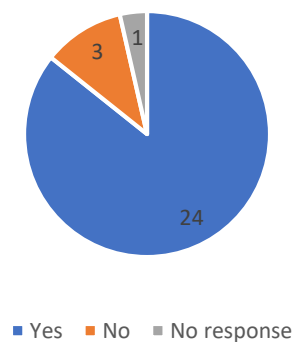
55 residents were invited to take part from our resident involvement list with 28 residents responded:



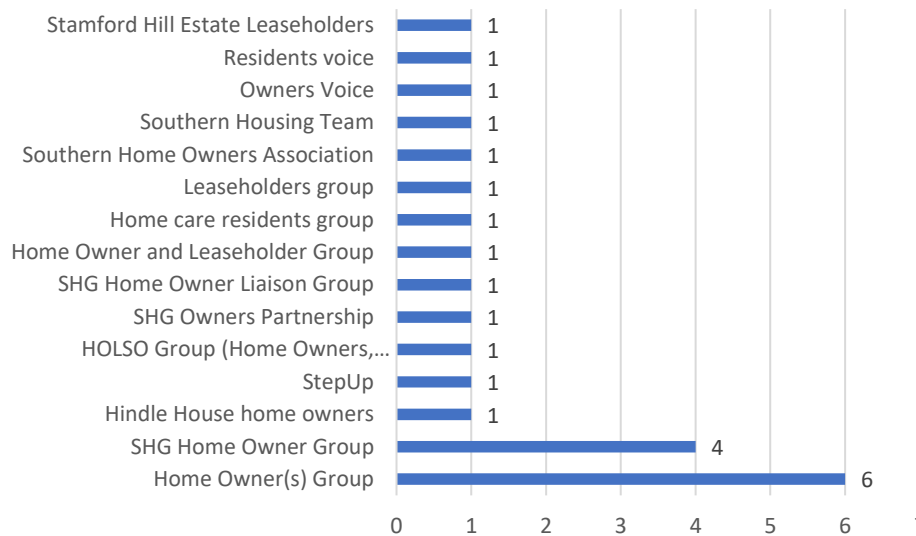


Consultation findings

Question 1 - Please indicate if you are interested in being part of a Home Owner group?



Question 2 – What do you think the group should be called?



Question 3 – How would you like the Home Owner Group to engage with SHG?

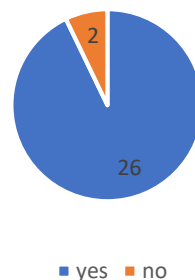
- Depends on the problem that is being addressed. Different engagement approaches and tools need to be selected for different problems
- Online – zoom meeting once a month. Zoom until we can meet face to face and meetings should be minutes with follow up actions outlined.
- Directly
- Letter, phone, emails, blogs, post
- To input/discuss on any upcoming changes especially in relation to changes to service charge etc.
- To be able to provide ideas for consideration/discussion to increase efficiency/reduce costs whilst increasing property value and safety, discussions on most costly areas of maintenance and the reasons why.
- To feedback on maintenance, charges, policies and other factors involved with living in a SHG property.
- In a meaningful way.
- Attend meetings, preview communications but most importantly, contribute to shaping policy and operational procedures so that our interests and the impact of SHG's decisions on our livelihoods is considered
- Help with issues that home owners have regarding their property as well as issues around communal areas/space, e.g. car park, communal, door, hallway and bin areas
- We should engage through a dedicated team in SHG. We should connect via all means techie and where possible face-to-face. **We have a very good Housing Services Manager on our Parkside Place estate and people like him should be aware of the group**
- Hear our problems and answer questions, connecting with neighbours
- Real and meaningful consultations of maintenance and improvement works on the estate. Options and influence on tenures. Fair pricing

- To be able to discuss concerns that relate directly to being a homeowner. For example: The condition and general maintenance of the building. How service charge is being spent. Security and Safety of Homes. Help and information on maintaining your home. Communication, as needs and requirements may be different from tenant residents.
- Could engage with more senior management. Suggested due to own experience as HSM is really busy and takes time to respond.
- In a reasonable world "By co-operation and listening to proposals, both groups not dismissing topics without discussion"

Question 4 - Areas SHG would like to engage with group are:

- **Review of policies, procedures, strategies related to Home Owners** .
- **Finance including payment options**
- **Review major works processes**
- **Identify a process of reviewing and agreeing Reserve/Sinking funds**
- **Communications**

Do you agree with these?



Question 5 - Please let us know if there are any other areas you feel should be covered by this group.

- Specifically, the process for prioritising and scheduling non-major works that are not repairs and may or may not be required to respond to legislation and statutes.
- Complaints and problems with the building and how they can be resolved
- The different liabilities/responsibilities of leaseholders and freeholders and be able to discuss/form agreements on areas not already covered in the lease. Are lease contracts different for different homeowners/leaseholders/shared owners? Something to discuss/understand.
- Building specific issues/ feedback
- Review of all contracts which form part of the maintenance charges
- Overall Building Management (how to improve SHG's ability to manage buildings effectively). For example; introducing a single point in SHG that knows everything about a block and what

different bits of SHG and their contractors are up to and is responsible for coordinating and communicating between SHG and block owners and residents (if different).

- Day to Day Repairs (pretty non-existent management of repairs jobs currently). SHG does not provide access for its contractors to communal areas. Repairs that owners are charged for are often not done or are invariably done to a poor standard and unfinished.
- Service Charge Statements - new booklet format does not get away from the fact that repairs expenditure is not itemised accurately (most recent includes lots of repairs called "Generated From Data Load").
- Forward Planning of Works (e.g. major repairs and fire safety works).
- Cleaning & Consumables - since cleaning has gone in-house there is no way of knowing when it is due to be done and seemingly no way to get blown lightbulbs replaced.
- Disability issues e.g. dropped kerbs
- Estate-wide anti-social behaviour. Communication with adjoining separate housing associations.
- Agreement of monthly service charge payments and contributions to reserve fund.
- Subcontracting and reviewing invoices from subcontractors which are there recovered from our service charges
- Charges and fees, service charge etc.
- Painting of external areas and safety especially now during Corona. I personally do not want scaffolding in my back garden for long periods of time. We are all under enough stress. Letter to residents reminding them of the rules of no smoking no parties where big groups are in and out of the building. No Air B and B residents coming and going. Top flats. Proper cleaning so that we the residents don't have to come and clean up again. Cleaner needs to get off his phone and do the job properly!
- Relations between SHG and tenants/residents groups.
- Current issues?
- Maintenance especially trees and hedges
- Support for long term projects, such as EPC change, cladding and change to electric heating.
- Complaints listened to, taken seriously and actioned quickly and effectively.
- Possible setting up of homeowner sub committees within developments.
- Contact with contractors and sub-contractors around repair calls
- Value for money on contracts awarded
- Reviewing contractor agreements

Question 6 – Please can you tell us if you feel there are any barriers currently for this group with SHG?

- When I have tried to engage to find out the framework within which these decisions are made it was difficult to find out who was responsible, and emails are not answered or answered after a long period.
- Time commitment, knowing what exactly SHG want from residents

- Talking to SHG staff who do not understand the various complexities of the different leases. Continuity of conversations with SHG. Contacting the correct member of staff who can take ownership of the issue and take it forward.
- Services are delivered in such a siloed way that it's impossible to feel that there is actually anyone with any overall responsibility for all the services that SHG should be delivering. Who do you actually contact regarding the management and maintenance of the block? Can anyone you report items to actually be able to get things done. Twice over the last two years it's proven impossible even to get blown lightbulbs in common parts replaced, despite up to six being out. Eventually a contractor replaces the whole unit at a higher cost to owners, presumably to make it worth the contractors while to turn up. Reporting repairs sends you off to contractors who are happy to treat you in the same as they treat tenants (poor) with the assumption that SHG will pay for the shoddy work they do (whether or not a job is complete), with no consideration that we're being recharged for the poor work. After time you only report a repair if it was really important as so many outstanding ones have not been completed properly over the years despite lots of cost.
- Covid 19 has not helped
- The woefully slow and insufficient responses to enquiries that are currently experienced would suggest that a major improvement in staff levels/abilities would need to be made in order for a Home Owners group to operate with any real effectiveness.
- No such group exists presently. Leaseholders need a voice in all areas especially where they are bearing most of the cost.
- Getting more residents involved
- If you're referring to difficulties this group might encounter with SHG, I would say that the main issue is that our interests are systematically neglected and that we are treated less favourably than your tenants
- Communication
- Yes, too many different people taking on roles and posts at SHG. They don't seem to stay long!!!
- I assume that shared ownership and outright leaseholders are relatively small in number in SHG. I also guess that we have only recently been part of SHG's portfolio. Therefore, we are fairly new to the Group's concerns and our needs and issues are not well known. This is a barrier. For example, the problem of selling and moving has become difficult due to the absence of an EWS1 certificate.
- I don't think so as long as SHG is really dedicated to this
- All meetings seemed to be a long way from Durrington. I realise at the moment we cannot be face to face. When we can, could we have local meetings?
- I don't know who to contact
- A large amount of communication is regarding social housing. Sometimes I feel homeowners are lost in the mix.
- Communication. It is very difficult and sometimes impossible to get answers and support. I am currently waiting for roofers to fix a problem that was reported over a week ago and they are late (said that they would arrive between 10 and 12). The problem if the leaky roof has

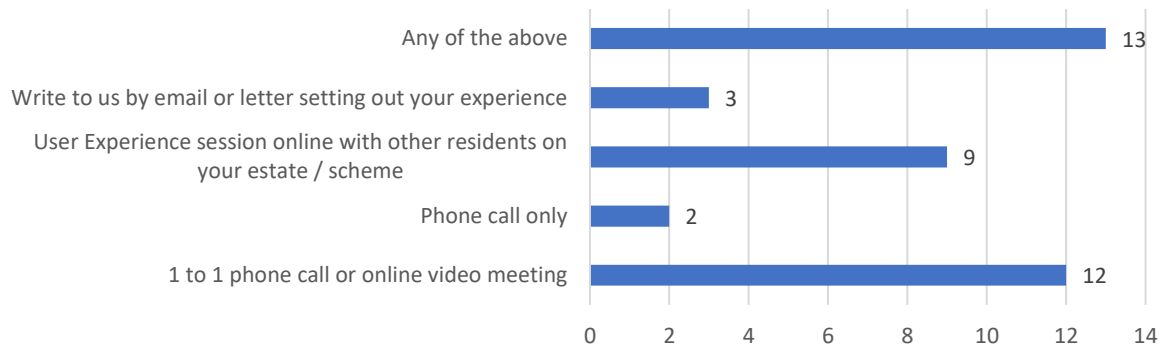
been caused (numerous times) through poor maintenance (the roof has not been cleaned). Although this has been reported several times by many people it has not changed, yet we are still paying a service charge and additional money to fix the internal damage to our property. This poor maintenance and poor communication results in a lack of trust and a lot of anger towards SHG's ability (competency) to run the estate.

- I believe the attitude of SHG may need to change to one more of collaborative working. At the moment if an issue arises it can feel like Southern Housing vs. The Residents. A shift towards a “Do What Is Right” mentality, rather than a “Do What Is Easy”, would go a long way in alleviating some of the issues. There seems to be a certain amount of “Fobbing Off” that happens, e.g. SHG just send a quick answer via WhatsApp or Email, with no real context or follow up. There can also be long delays in getting responses. Often the resident has to chase for an answer if one is not forthcoming within a reasonable amount of time.
- Not being able to get hold of people and right contacts.
- Us and them, instead of being united in their aims. not enough presence from SHG staff at locations.

Question 7 - Please can you tell us what works well currently for this Group with SHG?

- Unfortunately, not a lot. Generally, a steady decline in service over the last 20 years since I've been an owner.
- Information through post
- Nothing. I am constantly frustrated with the lack of communication/information/action that I receive from our Home Services Manager /Maintenance / Customer Accounts
- Nothing - our interests are not considered and there is a culture of institutional bias which prioritises the interests of your tenants, with little consideration for our needs and the impact your decisions have on our well-being. Some SHG call centre staff fail to fully comprehend our relationship with SHG, for instance where service charges are concerned.
- **Gardeners are very good. Jim communicates with us the residents who care and advises us and helps us to care for the plants and grass.**
- Actual interaction with home owners/residents
- I have not had major issues so I have not had to deal much with SHG
- **A really good link with Home Services Manager. This is key to sorting issues, someone who understands the property.**
- Not a lot as far as I can tell
- Going up above HSM for responses and further higher management when required.
- If you have a good SHG staff member visiting locations who doesn't treat residents in an arrogant manner.

Question 8 - As well as undertaking this survey we would like to hear from you about your experiences with SHG. Please indicate below if you would be willing to relay your experiences by:



Question 9 – Any other feedback?

- I'm glad you have identified this as an area that should be addressed.
- My property has been flooded with sewage for the last month continuously, there is an open grey water drain which lets rodents into the property and a neighbours' overflow is leaking onto my property causing damage. All these problems have been reported but no action has taken place to fix them. It is unacceptable.
- I hold a Lease from SHG and require to deal directly with an SHG manager to exercise my rights and to hear how the Landlord requires to exercise theirs. I am not prepared to deal with any intermediary group concerning these rights. For other issues - plans for my building, info about contracts let, warnings etc, I simply want a quarterly report direct from SHG.
- Unclear if this form is seeking responses that imagine the interaction of a theoretical Group that might be established with SHG, or responses of individuals in this group or residents (i.e. owners) about their experiences of dealing with SHG. I've assumed the latter.
- I am still waiting for a dropped kerb close to my house to enable disabled / wheelchair access including buggies.
- There needs to be significant improvements made. I am constantly chasing up important enquiries and am fobbed off / get nowhere. This is very stressful, especially in the current climate.
- Hopefully the formation of this group will go ahead and that it will be done quickly. It is long overdue.
- I hope this is a positive step towards changing the culture of your organisation
- Rents are far too high at the moment especially if residents can't do their jobs, is there going to be any help available for residents?
- **When phoning, SHG are very polite**
- Please contact Ashton roofing and find out where they are. They should be here. They're not. (Lindon House)
- Last time I tried to enter it, Southernn Website it did not recognise my postcode. This does not make you feel like a valued resident. Whenever I have contacted Southern directly there

is always an assumption that I am a tenant rather than a homeowner. Shouldn't this be a question that is asked?

- Experience is that have been able to get things done for building. When reporting a banging door, etc it takes forever to get sorted. We just had a statement of reserved fund Architecture Decorating about cyclical decs and associated repairs but not given a breakdown. Cost £675. Need a more detailed breakdown on the amounts specific about what the works that have taken place. 18/19 queried elect doubled in price and more for other things but no explanation why the increase. Has it doubled in price as it has included electrical costs i.e. replacement of fixtures and fittings of lighting etc. Other things have also doubled in price. Section 20 notice received 19/20 accounts not finalised best guide is £1,671 and more than last year and up by 20%. Too vague even though know it is an estimate. We have been advised that someone is coming to inspect doors to replace to fire doors and so far not seen them on the estate. Followed up with communication to that person but no response. Will they be replaced this year? what is happening? Very poor communication on who is coming in to do what when and where. Greater respect is required towards to leaseholders and home owners. Each building pays a certain cost for repairs so why do the prices go up and down if they are contractual prices potentially 5-year contracts? Why do they come back 2 or 3 times but covered under contract? General works to the building - There are no checks on the work once the contractor has completed it so the work is not always completed correctly or to the standard expected. The best results I have had from a contractors first visit has been when I have sent a picture of the problem area whether this be a lock or the building in darkness.
- Make sure contractors are fulfilling their contracts on property maint. and estate grounds.

Report summary

The key outcomes have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data.

The following themes have been identified from resident responses:

Communication:

- Work more collaboratively with home owners. 'Do what is right not what is easy'
- Use all methods and most appropriate communications depending on the reason for contacting home owner.
- Communicate with home owners.
- Dedicated communication for home owners

Service Charge:

- Understanding and having more input in service charges
- Greater breakdown of costs on service charges
- Agreement of payments for sinking fund
- Sinking fund and having more input

Maintenance:

- Consultation on maintenance issues

- Issues with communal areas
 - Safety and security of areas
 - Car parking
 - Communal doors and hallways
 - Bin areas
- Involvement in the process and scheduling of major and non-major works
- Contract for maintenance charges
- Issues with day to day repairs
- Trees and hedges
- Contracts ensuring value for money and reviewing them

Property:

- Value of property including condition of property
- Overall Building Management (how to improve SHG's ability to manage buildings effectively).
- Use of subcontractors
- Painting of external areas
- Support with long term projects i.e. EPC, cladding, change to electric heating, etc

Policies and procedures:

- Shape policies and procedures
- Understanding of liabilities and responsibilities of home owners

ASB:

- Neighbour issues SHG and other Housing Associations residents

Other

- Steady decline in service over the last 20 years
- Dedicated team for home owner queries who understand the complexities of different leases, not work in silos, respond quicker to enquiries
- Resolution of complaints quickly and effectively
- Cleaning and consumables
- Disability issues i.e. drop curbs
- What is the framework for decision making for home owners?
- Felling home owner interest are systematically neglected and treated less favourably

Question 7 explored what works well with SHG which showed a couple of positive comments, but the rest were negative.

Overall home owners who responded felt there was a need for this group to enable them to address the issues raised within this report. Some commented on this being a positive step towards changing the culture in the organisation for home owners.

Recommendations

These recommendations have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

Recommendation 1

Work with home owners to set up group to explore the issues raised within this report with other relevant departments

Recommendation 2

Work with the Service Charge Team to explore how home owners can be supported with the concerns raised with service charges and sinking fund. This will include engaging with home owners in their preferred method as per question 8 to understand their experiences with SHG.

Feedback from Project Lead

Following responses to question 2 around name the majority preferred 'Home Owners Group'.

Draft terms of reference have been created setting out how SHG will work with Home Owners to explore the issues raised within this report.

The overarching theme of 'communications' has occurred throughout the report and SHG will explore this further as the first service area we will review with the Home Owners Group.

