

Annual Report

to residents

How are we performing?

2012/13



Southern
Housing
Group





Welcome to our annual report which looks at how we performed over the past year.

This year we saw the beginning of changes as a result of Welfare Reform. As we are only at the start of this journey the real impact is yet to be seen. This year we have focused on preparing both our business and our residents for the expected changes to benefits. We have dedicated teams working with our residents to help them manage their money and improve their training and job opportunities.

This year we also introduced a new Service Offer which outlines what residents can expect from us. The Offer was created in consultation with staff and residents including discussion with our five Resident Services Panels, online consultation with members of our e-panel and a workshop with residents. The new concise Offer makes clear our commitment to delivering high quality homes and services to our residents now and in the future.

Resident feedback from last year's report has helped to shape this year's and, as ever, we welcome your feedback on this report. Visit www.shgroup.org.uk/feedback to tell us what you think.

Tom Dacey
Chief Executive



Don't forget
to look out for
the '**You said,
we did**' image
which shows
how we have responded to
resident feedback.




Contact us



You can find your number to call us on at
www.shgroup.org.uk/contact
Our 0300 numbers are charged at the same
rate as standard landline numbers, whether you
make a call from your landline or mobile.



At the **me&shg**  section of the
website you can report a repair online,
check your rent statement and
view your account.

Our Service Offer

This year's report is divided up into the
Service Offer areas as shown below:



04 Delivering
value for money



06 Providing good quality
homes and services



16 Acting promptly
and effectively



19 Treating you with
fairness and respect



22 Keeping you informed,
listening to your views

We have also colour coded our
performance information:



Green shows where we are doing well.



Yellow shows either a new
performance measure or where
performance has stayed the same.



Red shows where improvement
is needed.



Deliver value for money



To view our Annual Accounts go to www.shgroup.org.uk

We have 66,000 residents and manage more than 26,700 homes. We have built a strong business over the last 110 years, by being both careful and responsive to changes in the housing market.

We manage:
20,729
Social Rent homes

229
Affordable Rent homes

958
Intermediate Rent homes

3,260
Shared Ownership homes

1,528
Leasehold/Freehold

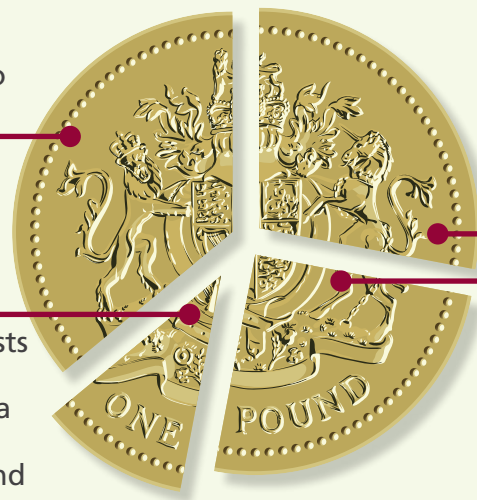
Overall resident satisfaction this year is
77.5%

For more information about the types of homes we manage, visit our website.

Our focus is on running an efficient business and achieving value for money. We reinvest the money we make back into your home, new homes and improved services to residents.

How every £1 of your rent is spent

36p Repairs, planned and major works to your home



28p Interest paid on loans that we have taken out to support the delivery of new homes

11p Service costs (this includes communal area maintenance and heating and hot water)

25p Managing your home (this includes dealing with anti-social behaviour and investing in communities)

Helping residents to manage their money

To prepare for Universal Credit we invested in more staff to help residents manage their money and access employment. This played a part in ensuring the amount of rent payments overdue this year (called rent arrears) stayed the same as last year at 4%.



This year we launched our Sustainability Strategy. Available on our website, this sets out how we plan to tackle fuel poverty and provide comfortable, energy efficient homes. This was developed in consultation with residents.





Provide good quality homes and services

Homes

We are committed to developing new affordable homes now and in the future. We do this because the need for housing is so great and construction of new homes is not keeping up with demand.

We provide a range of homes to meet different housing needs. Over the last year we built:

822

new homes, made up of:

434

Social Rent

55

Affordable Rent

63

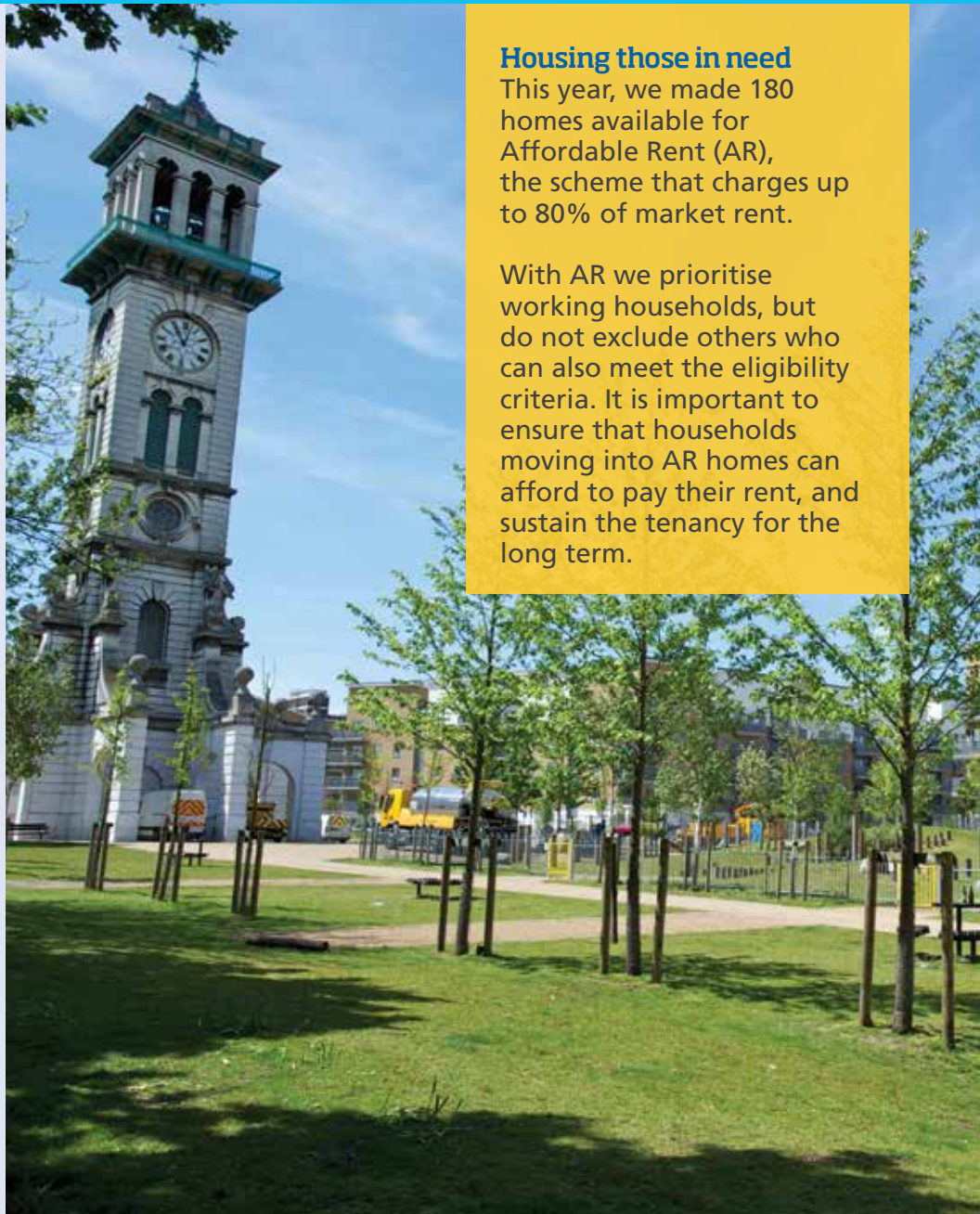
Intermediate Rent

155

Shared Ownership

115

Open Market Sale



Housing those in need

This year, we made 180 homes available for Affordable Rent (AR), the scheme that charges up to 80% of market rent.

With AR we prioritise working households, but do not exclude others who can also meet the eligibility criteria. It is important to ensure that households moving into AR homes can afford to pay their rent, and sustain the tenancy for the long term.

This year we sold:

150

shared ownership homes and

93

for outright sale

31%

is the average initial percentage bought by shared owners

102

shared owners bought additional shares in their homes this year (this is called staircasing)

88

of these staircased to 100% ownership of their home

47.5%

is the average additional share bought

87

shared owners sold their home this year. We helped to find buyers through the Help to Buy process for 45 of these homes



Find out more about our shared ownership homes at www.shgroup.org.uk

Getting on the property ladder

Emma Heard, 28, and Bill Rollin, 27, bought one of our shared ownership homes in Hackney, north London.

"We wanted to buy a property in London but could not afford to buy on the open market; it was a way of getting on to the property ladder.

"We looked at renting a one bedroom property on the private market and it worked out cheaper to own a percentage of a two bedroom property through shared ownership. It almost works out the same as what I was paying before, but at least we now own some of the property."





Provide good quality homes and services



To book a community centre visit
www.shgroup.org.uk/centres

Improving where you live

This year we invested:

£2.87m

on planned maintenance and external decorations, including communal areas, involving 5,137 homes

£14m

carrying out improvements to residents' homes including new bathrooms and kitchens

£1.2m

in replacing and installing new boilers

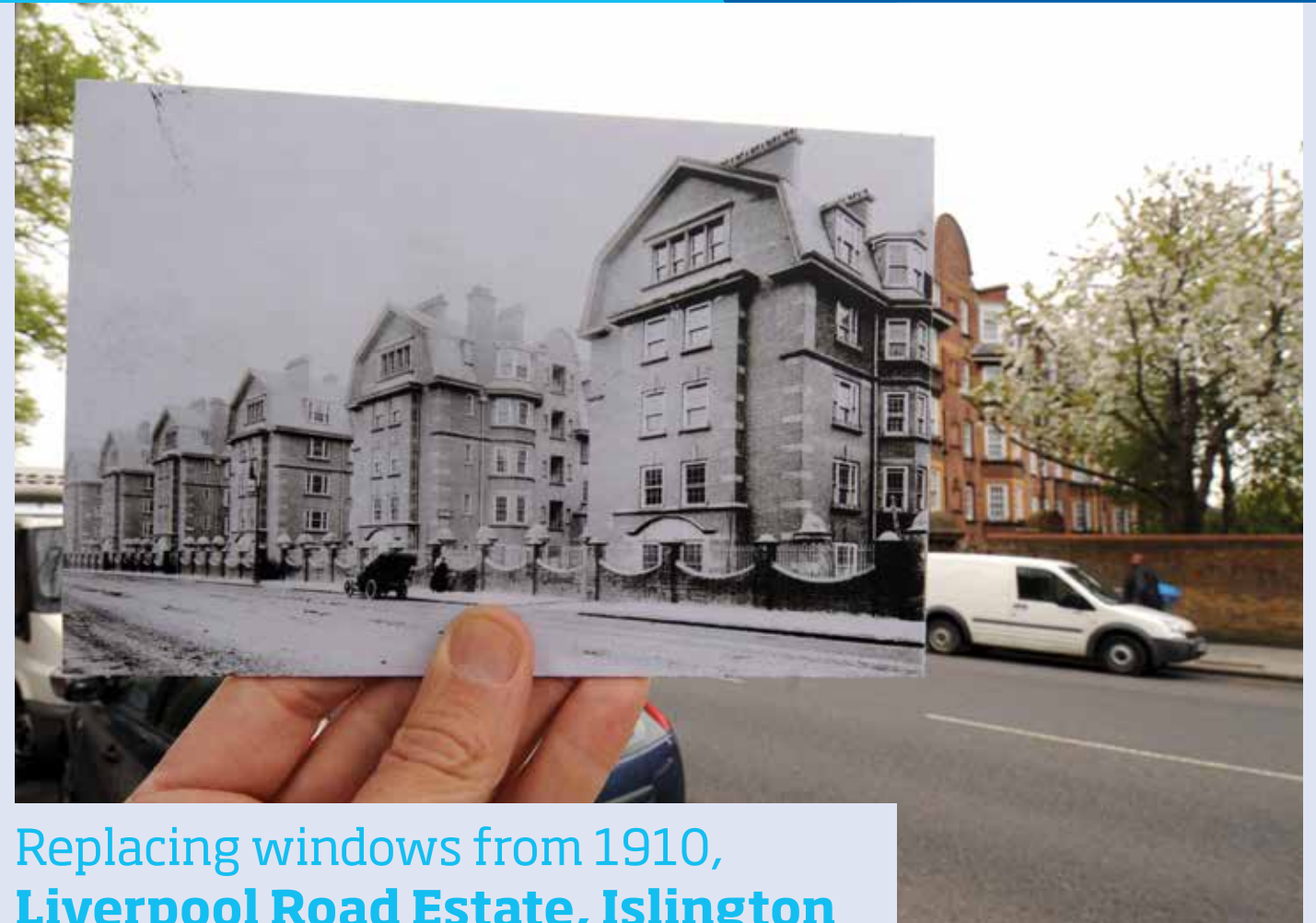
£341,248

on environmental improvements

Community centres

We consulted with residents and other local groups about our community centres to improve our understanding of who uses the centres and what their needs are. This year we invested £66,000 improving our community

centres and we developed a new booking system to make them easier to use. We are now looking at the possibility of resident groups taking on the management of some aspects of their centres.



Replacing windows from 1910, Liverpool Road Estate, Islington

We are refurbishing windows at our first housing scheme, built as part of the Samuel Lewis Trust. Liverpool Road is a listed building, so the repairs and replacements have to meet the conservation standards of the local authority. Each window frame is being taken out, paint stripped, restored, re-glazed, redecorated and refitted,

and secondary glazing installed to bedrooms and living rooms to improve insulation. Window frames found to be beyond repair are all being replaced with replicas to match the 1910 designs. This £3 million project will be completed in 2014.

Improving estate inspections



In response to resident feedback we have recently changed the way we manage estate inspections. Instead of using a ratings system to assess the

estate, we now give more focus to acting promptly on actions and areas for improvement arising from the inspection.



Provide good quality homes and services



You can report a repair online visit the **me&shg** section at www.shgroup.org.uk

Repairs and maintenance

We have been working with our contractors to improve how we fix repairs, starting with how we diagnose the repair when a resident first calls, all the way through to what equipment is carried on our contractors' vans.

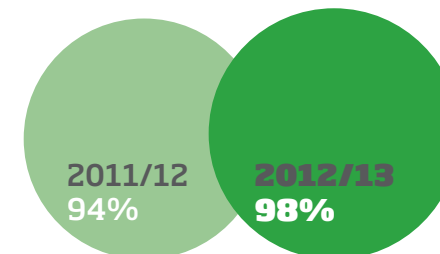
This has led to:

- an increase in the number of repairs we are able to fix first time, and
- an increase in resident satisfaction.

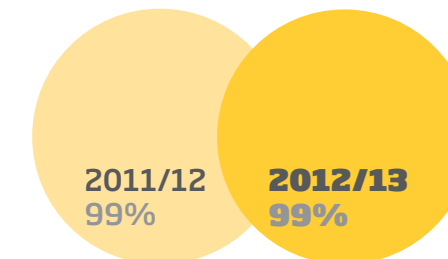
We have also improved:

- how we manage repairs to communal areas, with dedicated teams to carry out the repairs where it is needed, and
- how we report back to residents about how these repairs are progressing.

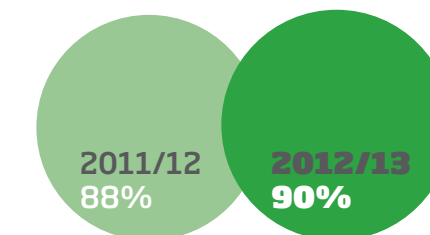
Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours



Annual gas safety inspections completed



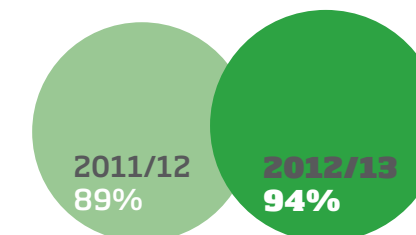
Repairs completed first time



Average time to complete a job



Customer satisfaction with repairs



60,505

Number of repairs in 2012/13

Looking ahead, we are examining the results of a pilot project on the Isle of Wight, where contractors used mobile computer devices to collect resident satisfaction feedback.

We are also working with our contractors to improve communications with residents.





Provide good quality homes and services



For more information on the changes to benefits visit www.shgroup.org.uk

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We work with our residents and partner agencies to prevent and tackle ASB. We aim to take appropriate, effective and quick action when ASB is reported to us.

you said we did

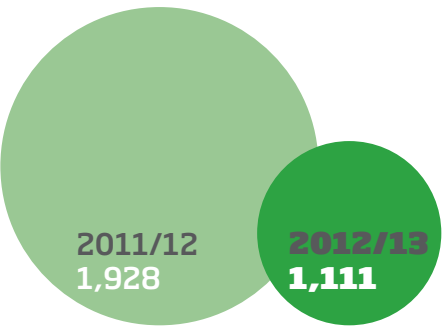
Over the past year we have consulted with residents and redesigned our

ASB process to make it more responsive.

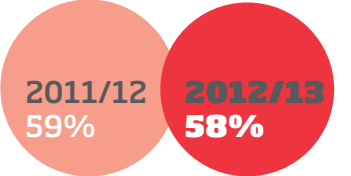
Staff in our Service Centre are now trained to handle ASB calls, reducing the number of cases that needed to be referred to our specialist team.



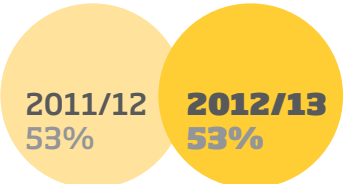
Total number of ASB cases reported



Satisfaction with how we are dealing with ASB



Satisfaction with outcome of case



The most common types of ASB reported to us were:

430
Noise

172
Verbal abuse/harassment/intimidation/threats

106
Drugs/substance misuse/drug dealing

72
Domestic abuse

72
Alcohol related

This year we will be:

- reviewing the way we deal with hate crime to ensure we meet the needs of residents, and
- looking at resident satisfaction with our new ASB process to see if we can improve it further.

Preparing for reform

In November, around 17,000 residents received our Welfare Reform leaflet, which outlined the changes to the benefits system due in April 2013.

- This year we have:
- supported around 2,000 residents we have identified as being affected by the changes in benefits, and
 - prepared for the impact of welfare reform on our business.

In the lead up to the Government's Welfare Benefit reforms in April 2013, we added more staff members to our Financial Inclusion Team. This increased our capacity to help residents facing difficult financial times.



Tackling housing fraud

We want to ensure our homes are lived in by those who need them and those they are intended for. We work hard to combat housing fraud. We work with councils and other agencies to take action when residents are found to be subletting their properties.

23 homes were recovered this year through a variety of methods, including legal action.

This year we supported 4,316 residents with our grant funding programme. This ranged from individual grants to support residents into work, through to funding for various community based activities.





Provide good quality homes and services



To find out more about the support we can offer visit www.shgroup.org.uk

Helping residents into work

Southern Works is our employment advice service offering one-to-one employment advice, empowering residents to find work.

This year we have worked with over

500
residents

144

residents signed up for work experience, volunteering, education and training opportunities

81

residents found paid employment



Patricia Charles

Patricia, from Hackney, north London, had been unemployed for just under a year when she found out about Southern Works. With our support Patricia began work as a Resident Liaison Officer at Robert Heath Heating in January 2013.

"My adviser was amazing. She was so supportive and encouraging and really helped me. I have recommended Southern Works to my friends and neighbours. Everyone was really supportive as I settled in and I have been here over eight months now. I am really enjoying the role and like how varied the work is."

Helping residents to get online

We continue to help our residents get online through our **Computers in Communities** project.

This involves community volunteers teaching residents basic computer skills such as accessing the internet, sending emails and creating a CV.



So far
2,164
residents have signed up for our digital help.



Valerie Lockett

Valerie volunteered to become a Digital Champion, helping other residents to get online in September 2012.

Valerie says: "It is really rewarding work. It is great to be able to share my knowledge and help others to get online."

"I really like it when someone comes into the centre and is hesitant about using a computer, and by the end of the session they are sending emails to their family, looking for jobs and finding ways to save money online."

"It is great to see that transformation and the confidence they develop."



Act promptly and effectively



Ten years and two million calls later

In May 2002, our Service Centre opened its lines for the first time. Ten years on we marked both its tenth birthday and also celebrated receiving its two millionth caller.

The Service Centre has become an integral part of our business, being the first point of contact for residents. The Service Centre handles all telephone, website and email enquiries. On average we receive 750 enquiries a day.

In recognition of its high standard of customer service, the Service Centre was awarded accreditation from **Mpathy Plus**

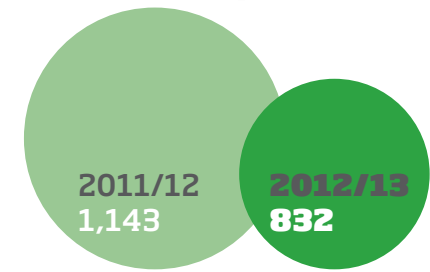
who specialise in measuring the performance of customer service centres.

We have been looking at why residents contact the Service Centre and if their needs are being met. By identifying common themes in the services we offer and improve residents' experience of contacting us.

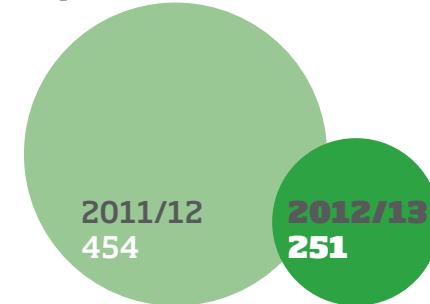
79%
of enquiries were handled directly by the Service Centre

Customer service

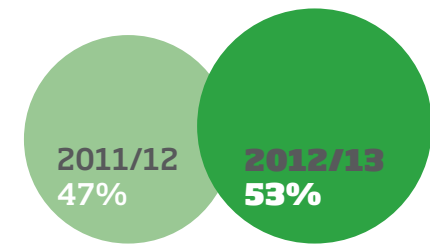
Number of complaints received



Service feedback - for residents to report an issue or area for improvement



Satisfaction with overall complaint handling



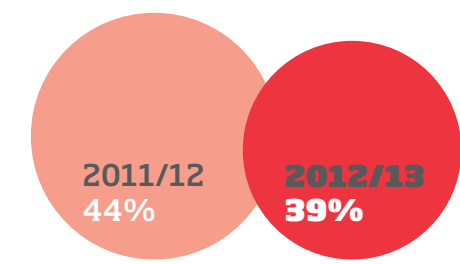
This year we changed our complaints process and now handle all repairs complaints instead of our contractors. This helps us to identify any common issues and improve the repairs service. This has led to an increase in the average time taken to close a case while repair work is completed.

At the same time, satisfaction with our complaint handling has increased and over the next year we will be looking at how we can improve the way we communicate with residents about their case.

Average time taken to investigate and handle complaints



Satisfaction with the way we kept you updated on progress



Outcomes of those complaint cases closed during the year:

209
Complaints not upheld

590
Complaints upheld

66
Complaints withdrawn

141
Complaints partially upheld

325
Service feedback closed



You can contact us via the website at www.shgroup.org.uk



Act promptly and effectively

Managing homes

This year we looked at the way we manage lettings, and created a new Housing Options Team (HOT) for all residents and new applicants with lettings enquiries.

HOT is now the main point of contact for lettings enquiries, and will also

give advice on housing options, advertise all available properties, and arrange viewings and pre-moving out appointments.

Over the next year we will be improving how we market available homes to ensure we deliver value for money and reduce the amount of time it takes to let a property.

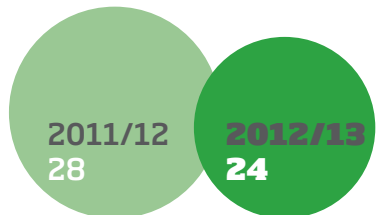


Average number of days it took to re-let:

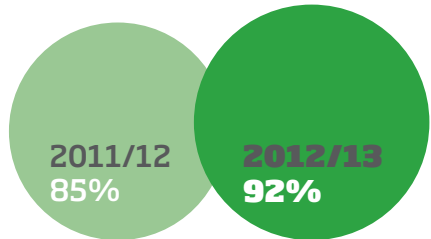
General needs homes



Supported and sheltered homes



Resident satisfaction with the lettings service



Treat you with fairness and respect

We aim to provide services that respond to the varied needs of our residents. To do this we need to know who our residents are and what they want.

Over the past year we have been working to improve the level of information we hold on our residents and the requirements they have of our services. This work will be an ongoing process.

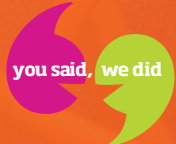
We also use this information to look at satisfaction among different resident groups, for example, shared owners or sheltered residents. This helps us to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our customers.

Fair services

This year we assessed different services to make sure that they are delivered fairly. This year we looked at:

- Affordable Rent lettings
- Day to day repairs services
- Complaints
- Anti-social behaviour
- Estate services
- Southern Works

The assessments found that these services are fair to our residents and customers, and do not discriminate or generally deliver unequal treatment.



Younger residents wanted more ways to get involved with shaping services, and so this year we created a youth forum. This helps us to improve what we do and helps to increase the skills and opportunities for young people.



Treat you with fairness and respect



For more information on our care and support services visit www.shgroup.org.uk



Finding out **what matters** to our **sheltered residents**

This year we surveyed our sheltered housing residents to find out their views of our services.

Key findings

The great majority of residents (75%) are satisfied with the services provided by the Group and think their rent is good value for money (84%). They rate highly the quality (86%) and condition of their homes (83%) and the scheme where they live (75%).

Residents are very positive about the standard of communal areas, with 87% satisfied with cleaning and 80% with maintenance of communal areas.

Around one in four said that they had had some training to get online and a similar level would like support to do so. As a result, our digital team will continue to work with older residents in sheltered housing to help them get online.



To date we have set up computer banks in nine of our sheltered schemes, providing personalised support to help residents with online training. Over the past year nearly 700 sheltered residents have taken part in some form of digital training with us or one of our partner organisations.

Care and support on the Isle of Wight

Our registered care services on the Isle of Wight have fully met all of the standards assessed by the Care Quality Commission, the regulator for health and social care. They are Byrnhill Grove, 22 Argyll Street and our Home Care Service.

A common theme across all three inspection reports is that people's diversity, values and human rights were respected with clear plans in place that enabled customers to live independently.



Supporting People accreditation results

The Isle of Wight Council's Supporting People team completed an assessment of the services we provide.

The results were outstanding, with our teenage parent, young people and learning disability services all achieving five A grades. Mental health, community outreach, sheltered and homeless family services all scored a combination of As and Bs.



Keep you informed and listen to your views



Get involved with shaping services and improving where you live at www.shgroup.org.uk

The year in numbers

153 residents were estate inspectors and there were 2,648 estate inspections across the Group

46

resident focus groups or workshops were held

8,563

surveys were carried out as part of the What Matters to Residents programme

43

residents were members of our five Resident Service Panels (RSP)



22 residents were involved in our Service Forums

21

consultation projects were held with residents

6 maintenance contracts were reviewed by residents

2,306

interviews were held with residents as part of the surveys we run

980

residents attended 20 local consultation events

17 residents inspected our services as customer service monitors

Your involvement helps us to:

- understand and meet residents' needs
- ensure residents are shaping how we deliver and improve service
- deliver value for money

There are many ways to get involved, depending on what time you have available and what you are interested in doing.



Local roadshows

This year we have been holding local events on our estates.

These are an easy way for residents to:

- meet their local team,
- give views on improving the estate,
- get repairs sorted or inspected,
- find out how to get involved or access our support services.



Over the next year we will be looking at new online ways for residents to get involved, making it even easier and quicker for you to have your say.

Communicating with residents

Residents told us that they wanted improved communication, so this year we launched:

- a new look residents' magazine – with shorter articles and an improved design
- a new website – offering improved access to online services

- online videos of the Residents' Handbook – showing residents their rights and responsibilities.

This year we also joined the Plain English campaign which aims to reduce the use of jargon. It provides training to our staff to help us write clearly to residents.



We continue to work with local communities to develop opportunities and respond to local issues. This year we invested £140,000 in local projects, supporting over 1,600 residents. Here are some of this year's projects.



Outdoor gym



Timebank



Quarr Abbey



Sports Challenge



Mobile food shop



Residents' awards

Annual Report to Residents
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