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Annual Report to Customers
2014/2015



CONTENTS

4	Value for Money
6	Customer Service
7	Addressing your Concerns
8	Involving Customers
10	Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)
12	Supporting Customers
14	Care and Supporting Independence (CASI)
16	Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT)
18	New Homes
22	Customer Satisfaction with our Lettings Service
23	Repairs and Maintenance

This year's Annual Report to Customers lets you know how we performed during the 2014/15 financial year.

Throughout the year we've been concentrating on improving our services and we're determined to continue this. Some of our successful projects this year include:

- Launching our in-house repairs service and improving customer satisfaction with repairs
- Working with customers to make sure they're prepared for the Government's welfare reforms
- The introduction of our Home Energy Advice Team, which has helped customers save money on their energy bills
- Offering our customers help with managing their finances and support to get into work

We're now building on the work we already do and making it easier to do business with us. We've already increased the number of ways you can contact us by opening customer service Twitter and Facebook accounts and we're introducing a webchat service on our website.

Our aim is to ensure that you're at the forefront of everything we do and to improve customer satisfaction.

I hope you enjoy our look back on the year.

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Tom" with a horizontal line underneath and a period at the end.

Tom Dacey
Chief Executive



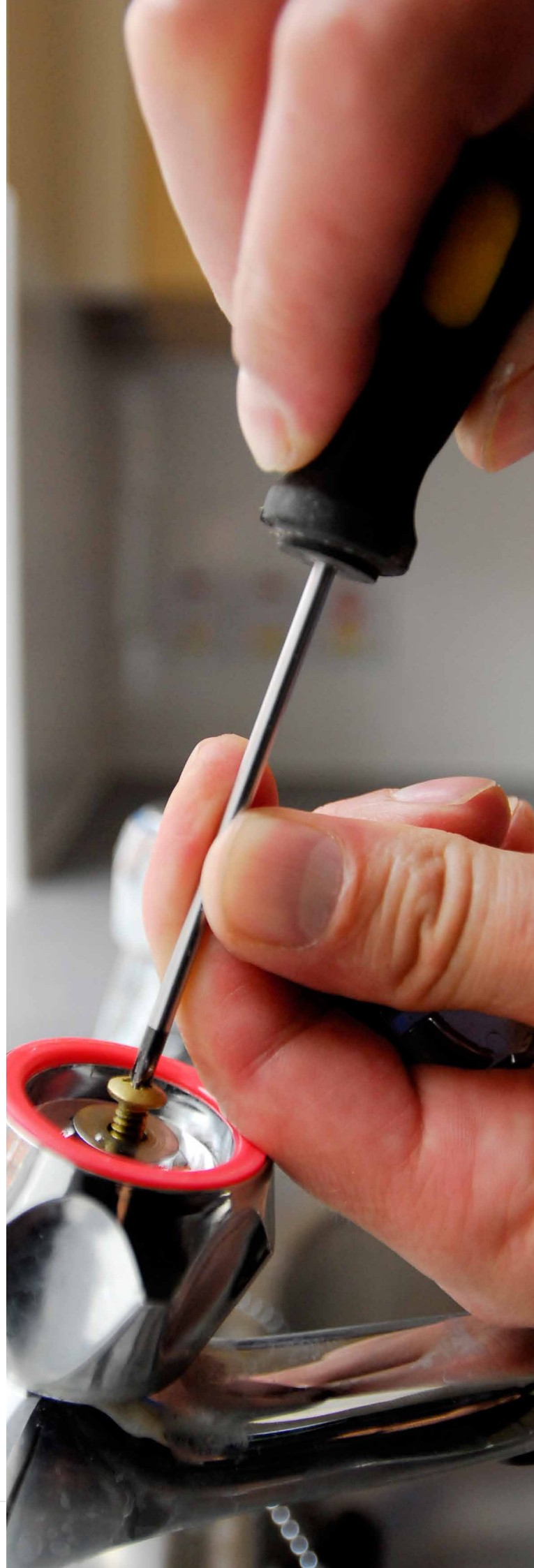
Value for Money

We're one of the largest housing providers in London and the South East and manage more than 28,000 homes. During the 2014/15 financial year we made some changes to help deliver excellent services while maintaining great value for money.


Here are just some of the things we did:

- We developed an in-house repairs and maintenance service, which saved us around £200,000 on day-to-day and void repairs
- We changed how we tender for lift replacements and reduced overall costs by 10%
- We'll save £276,000 on our software licences over the next six years

Making savings and thinking about how we spend every penny will enable us to keep our charges to a minimum and invest in new homes.



Here's **how we spent** every £1 of **your rent**:

33_p 
Repairs, planned
and **major works**

12_p 
Service costs*



28_p 
Managing homes**

26_p 
Interest on loans***

* Service costs include things like maintaining shared areas, heating and hot water.

** Management costs include staffing, office running costs and investing in communities.

*** We borrow money to invest in building more homes. Due to our good financial situation, we're able to get low interest rates on loans we take out.

Customer Service

Overall customer satisfaction this year is **75%**. That's down from the previous year and we're working to improve it.



We want to give you the best service possible and make it easy for you to get in touch with us.

Phone is still the most popular way for you to contact us. This year our Customer Service Centre handled on average 660 calls each day. Our Customer Service Team handled 77% of these while the rest were passed on to specialist teams to resolve.

Social media is growing more and more popular as a way to contact us so this year we opened our customer Twitter account for you to connect directly with our Customer Service Team. Go to **twitter.com/SHGCustomers** to follow us. In addition to online customer service we offer tips, advice, and chances to win our great competitions.

We also have a Facebook account that you can use to contact us. Go to **facebook.com/southernhousing** to get in touch.

We're continuing to use social media to promote what we do. Here's how many followers we've gained on our social media channels in the last financial year:

2013/14		2014/15
630		952
20		83

We're also launching a new webchat service where customers visiting key pages on our website can instant message our Customer Service Team to deal with issues as quickly as possible.

Of course, good customer service is not just about good communication. We are working hard to ensure that we deliver all of our services well, that we respond to you quickly and can resolve any issues or concerns to your satisfaction.

Addressing your Concerns

If you're having problems with our services we want to hear from you. We welcome your feedback and aim to learn from any comments that you may have. Here's how we performed last financial year:

	Number of complaints received	Satisfaction with being updated about a complaint*	Satisfaction with complaint handling	Average time taken to deal with a complaint*
2013/14	678	32%	40%	102
2014/15	608 ✓	43% ✓	47% ✓	111 days ^

* Figures are different to those published last year as we've moved to a new method of data collection. We've provided like-for-like figures in this report.

We want to get better at handling complaints. We now measure our performance to stricter standards, especially around how frequently we update customers. We hope that over the next year this will help us to continue to improve our performance.

	Complaints not upheld 121	Complaints upheld 380
Complaints partially upheld 114	Complaints withdrawn 24	

Involving Customers

Customers' ideas and input have a big impact on how we deliver and improve our services. There are a number of different ways that you can get involved with us:

Become a Customer Service Monitor

Last financial year 23 Customer Service Monitors visited more than 60 estates to report on the quality and standard of estate services including:

- Cleaning of shared areas
- Gardening
- Repairs to shared areas

Join a review panel

We have regular panels that meet to ensure that we're getting good and consistent customer service from our contractors. Six customers sat on the review panels for our maintenance contractors last year.

Give us your views

We ask customers for their input into a lot of our projects. In 2014/15 we received more than 12,000 responses from customers giving feedback through satisfaction surveys, attending focus groups or in-depth interviews. Issues we received feedback about included repairs, service charge notices and a text message service to remind customers about rent payments.

Join a residents' association

Residents' associations are groups of customers from a particular estate or local area who meet regularly to discuss and act on local issues. There are 34 active residents' associations across the Group at the moment, but we're keen to support more.

Come to a customer event

In 2014/15 our teams met with you informally at 21 different events to highlight services in the local area and to listen to feedback about local issues.

Join a Resident Service Panel

Last financial year 35 customers participated in Resident Service Panels to look at our services in-depth and suggest ideas for improvements. Simone Buckley was a Resident Service Panel member; she is now the Chair of the South Region Panel and has gone on to become a member of the Southern Housing Group Board.

Your views are important to us and help us improve our services. We always welcome customers' involvement in our work.

If you want to get involved, contact our Resident Initiatives Team to find out more

getinvolved@shgroup.org.uk

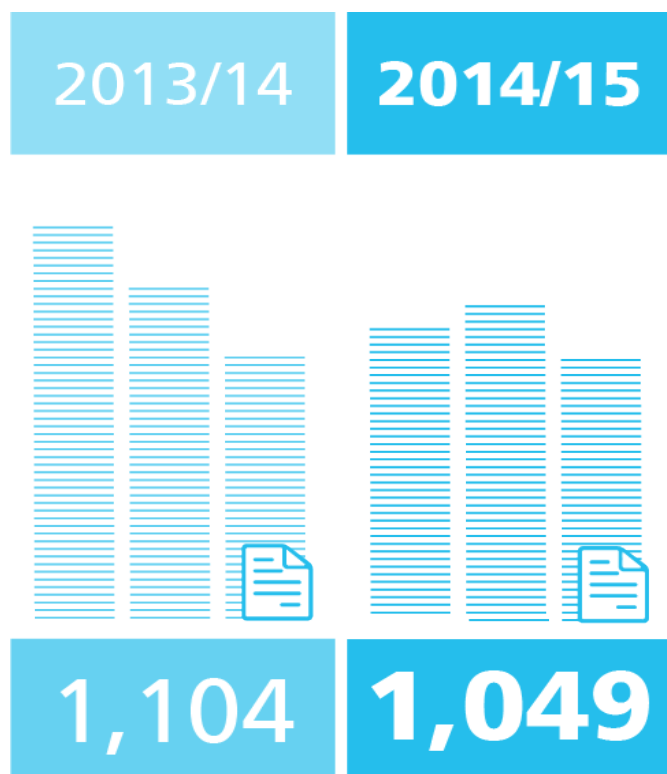
or visit our website

www.shgroup.org.uk/getinvolved



Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)

Number of cases reported



How you thought we handled ASB cases

We were sorry to see satisfaction drop in this area of our work, particularly as ASB can affect customers' well-being. We have looked at your feedback and are working hard to improve our ASB service.

You say you want more effective and regular contact during an investigation, more information about the action we take to resolve a case and for us to finish dealing with ASB issues more quickly. We have reviewed our processes so we can improve the service we provide.

	2013/14	2014/15
Overall satisfaction with service	59%	49% ↓
Satisfaction with reporting ASB	71%	65% ↓
Satisfaction with investigation	51%	49% ↓
Satisfaction with case outcome	57%	43% ↓

The Crime and Policing Act 2014, which came into force last year, gives us access to new legal powers to deal with ASB. Staff have been trained on the new legislation and are now using these new powers to help deal with ASB more efficiently.



The most common types of cases reported to us were:



Noise

326



Verbal abuse

170



Drugs

119



Alcohol

77



Domestic abuse

77

We deal with ASB as quickly as possible and work with the police and local authorities to do this. For more information on our service, visit www.shgroup.org.uk/asb or contact our Customer Service Centre to report antisocial behaviour in your area.

Supporting Customers

We support customers in many ways, including helping them to find work or giving advice about managing money. We also offer our vulnerable customers more intensive care and support and give grants to organisations and groups to fund community projects that benefit our customers.



How we supported customers in 2014/15:

For help building your skills to get a job or to find a training or volunteering opportunity that suits you, visit www.shgroup.org.uk/southernworks

For support with financial issues such as rent arrears or debt management, visit www.shgroup.org.uk/moneymatters or call our Customer Service Centre and choose option two.



149

customers helped into work this year



500

customers given employment support



317

customers taking part in volunteering, work experience, education or training opportunities with our help



119

community projects funded

£105,000

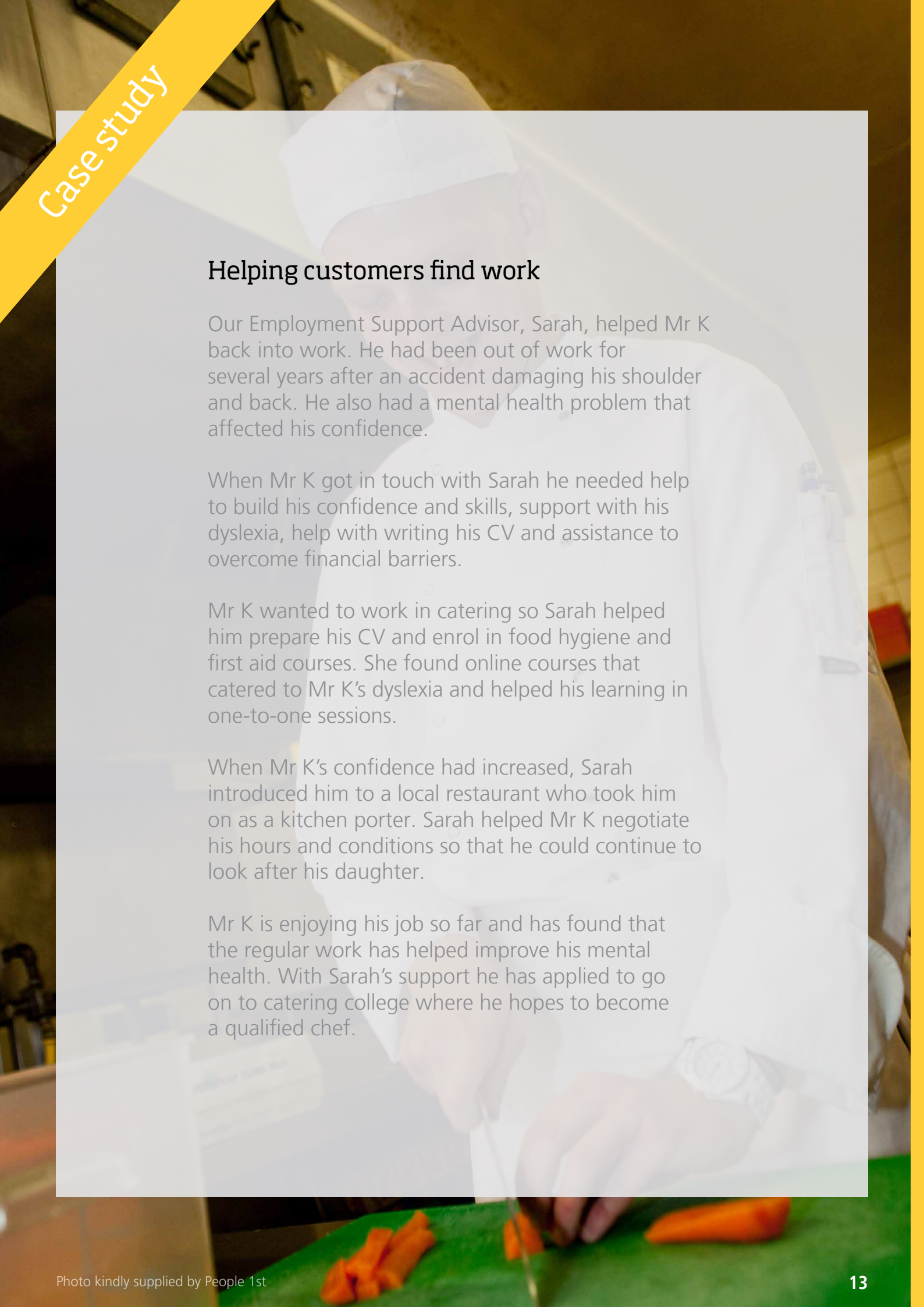
donated through our small grants programme



we've helped customers access

almost £1m

in benefits and grants



Case study

Helping customers find work

Our Employment Support Advisor, Sarah, helped Mr K back into work. He had been out of work for several years after an accident damaging his shoulder and back. He also had a mental health problem that affected his confidence.

When Mr K got in touch with Sarah he needed help to build his confidence and skills, support with his dyslexia, help with writing his CV and assistance to overcome financial barriers.

Mr K wanted to work in catering so Sarah helped him prepare his CV and enrol in food hygiene and first aid courses. She found online courses that catered to Mr K's dyslexia and helped his learning in one-to-one sessions.

When Mr K's confidence had increased, Sarah introduced him to a local restaurant who took him on as a kitchen porter. Sarah helped Mr K negotiate his hours and conditions so that he could continue to look after his daughter.

Mr K is enjoying his job so far and has found that the regular work has helped improve his mental health. With Sarah's support he has applied to go on to catering college where he hopes to become a qualified chef.

Care and Supporting Independence (CASI)

We have a dedicated team on the Isle of Wight that helps customers who have support needs. This includes people with mental health issues, young people who are homeless or leaving care, and older people who require extra care, CASI is there to help. The services are funded by the local council and health services.

- Last financial year the Quarr Abbey gardening project continued its success. Volunteers helped customers with support needs to maintain an allotment. The fruit and vegetables they grow are sold through the Abbey shop and this year made more than £800, which is reinvested into the project.
- We built three new units at our St. Helena facility in Sandown with funding from the Fair Haven Housing Trust. These will provide semi-independent living for adults with autistic spectrum disorders.
- GROW is a resident-led initiative in our young people's accommodation, which has supported more than 100 young people since 2011. In 2014/15 the project raised more than £5,500 through fundraising activities, community projects, and a bid for grant funding to support employment and training for our customers.

For more information on our care and supported services on the Isle of Wight, visit our website

www.shgroup.org.uk/casi





Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT)

HEAT is busy visiting customers' homes providing advice to help people reduce gas and electricity bills. HEAT is available to all customers who would like to know more about how to reduce their energy and water use and save money.

If you would like a HEAT advisor to visit your home please call the Customer Service Centre or email energy@shgroup.org.uk

In the last financial year:

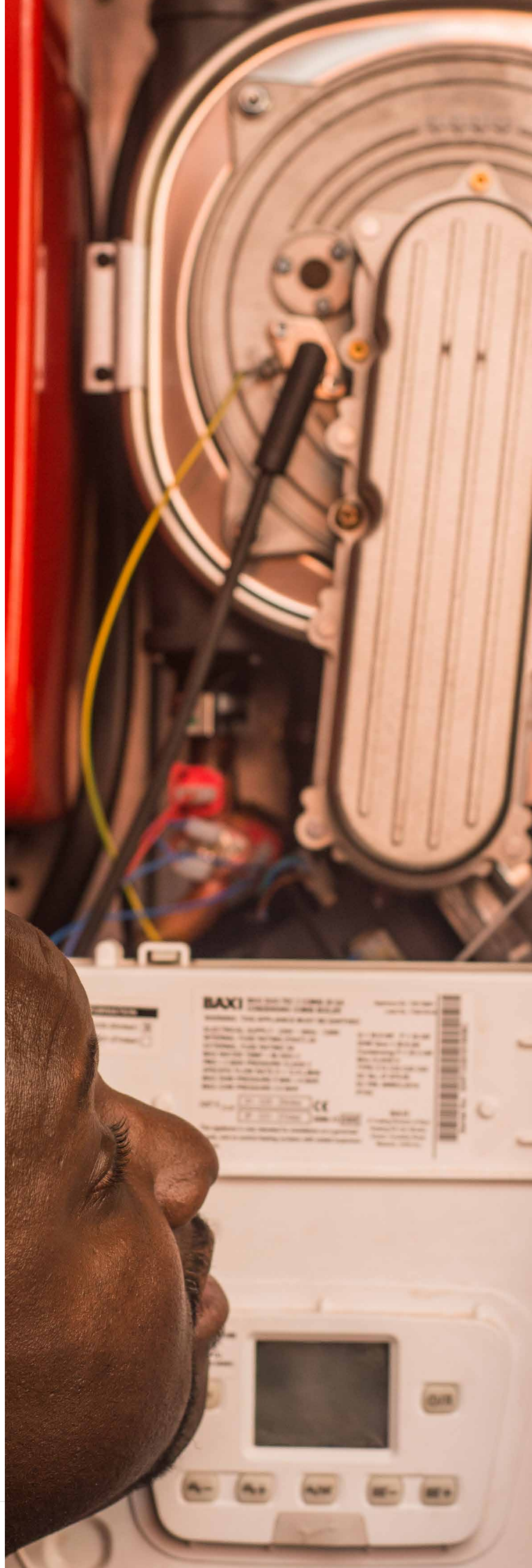
 **HEAT**
saved an
average of

£226

for each customer visited

94 ^{% of them} **said**
they would

recommend a visit from **HEAT**



Providing value through HEAT

Mrs S was referred to HEAT with a Southern Water debt of £420 and a British Gas debt of £305. She was having difficulty with her repayments and was on an expensive tariff due to her pre-payment meter.

HEAT worked with Mrs S to clear her water and gas debt through applications to the Southern Water trust fund and the British Gas trust fund. HEAT was also able to arrange for a credit meter to be installed free of charge and changed her to the cheapest fixed tariff and payment method. In addition, she was awarded a £140 Warm Home Discount towards her electricity bill, which means she won't have to pay anything towards her electricity bills for the next five months.

Mrs S said "I am delighted with the help given to me by the Home Energy Advice Team. I was struggling to pay my bills and having your support really made a difference. Without this help I would still be in the same situation and feeling desperate. I am now able to look forward to the future, which has greatly relieved my anxiety problems. Thank you so much, this is a wonderful service."

New Homes

We are committed to building good quality new homes. We build a range of different types of homes to meet the needs of people who require affordable housing options. We also build homes for market rent and private sale. We are proud that the profits made are used to build low-cost homes.

Types of new homes we built

130 

Social rent

126 

Shared ownership

99 

Affordable rent

42 

Market rent

53 

Open market sale

Southern Space Ltd, our commercial arm, sold 44 homes on the open market, with an average sale price of £307,500. Southern Space reinvests its profits back into building affordable homes.

Shared ownership in 2014/15:

We also offer customers the chance to buy shares in a home through shared ownership (also known as part buy, part rent). We had a successful year and many customers also increased their share in their homes.



128

new homes sold for shared ownership



41%

average initial share purchased



215

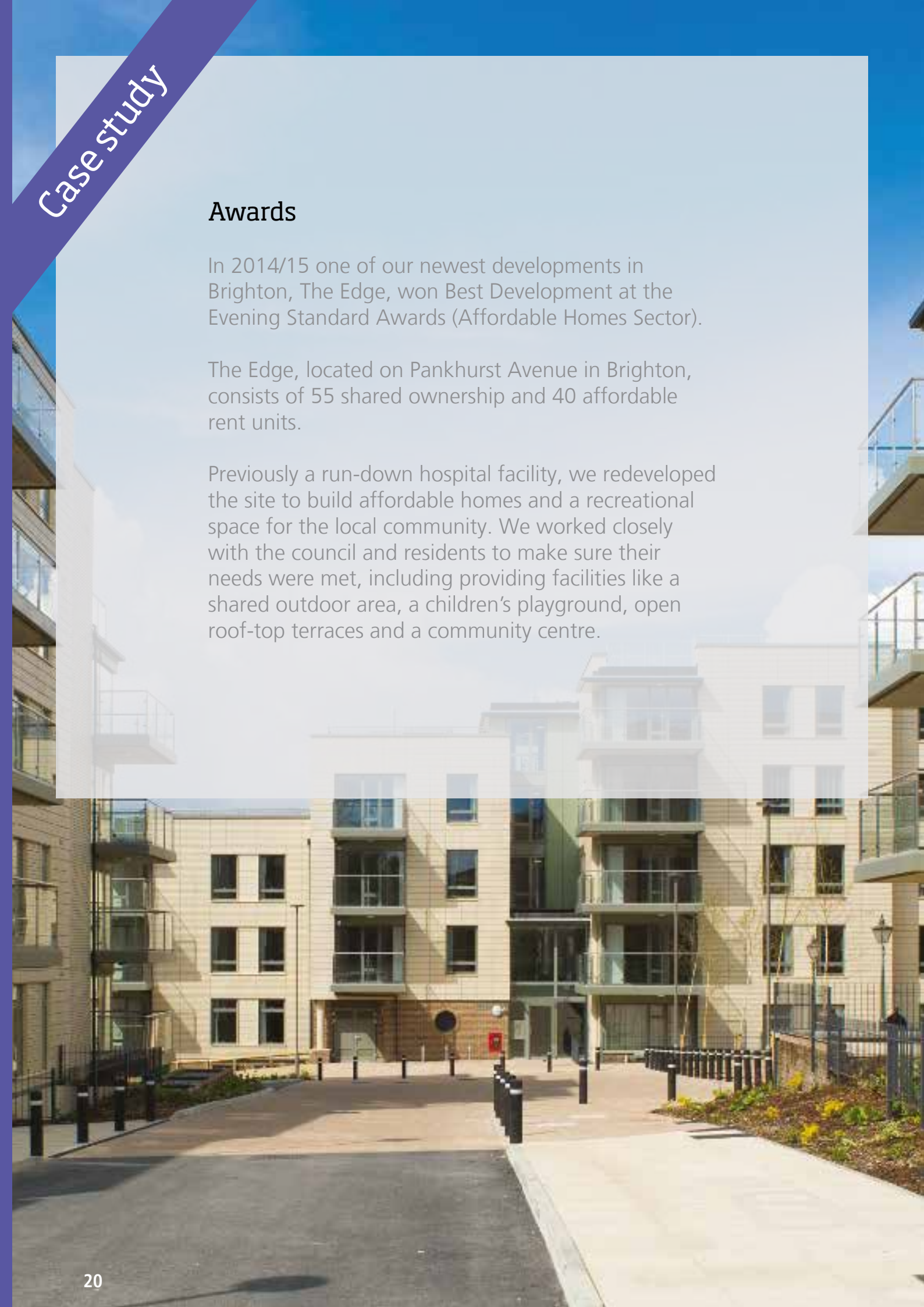
shared owners bought more shares in their home



155

of these increased their ownership level to 100%





Awards

In 2014/15 one of our newest developments in Brighton, The Edge, won Best Development at the Evening Standard Awards (Affordable Homes Sector).

The Edge, located on Pankhurst Avenue in Brighton, consists of 55 shared ownership and 40 affordable rent units.

Previously a run-down hospital facility, we redeveloped the site to build affordable homes and a recreational space for the local community. We worked closely with the council and residents to make sure their needs were met, including providing facilities like a shared outdoor area, a children's playground, open roof-top terraces and a community centre.

Cameron Close

We're always looking at how we can improve the quality of the homes we build and this year we built our first development to the PassivHaus standard. The development is located in Freshwater on the Isle of Wight.

A PassivHaus home is environmentally friendly and sustainable. The homes are so well insulated that the need for heating is reduced to virtually nothing.

We worked closely with the local council who gave us some extra funding so that we could make sure these new homes were built to the PassivHaus standard. Not only does the development provide an environmentally friendly and sustainable approach to building homes, but residents at Cameron Close should benefit from much lower energy costs.

Customer Satisfaction with our Lettings Service

2013/14

2014/15

Time taken to re-let empty general needs homes

43
days

✓
30
days

Time taken to re-let empty supported housing

35
days

✓
26
days

Overall resident satisfaction for our lettings service

88%

✓
87%

We have improved our system to let homes quickly. This means we collect more rent and are more efficient. There is still some way to go.

To help improve the service we've established a task force to monitor how we work with our contractors to improve our standards.

For more information or to explore your housing options, visit <http://www.shgroup.org.uk/rentahome>

Case study

Mutual Exchange

A mutual exchange gives customers the opportunity to swap their home with another social housing tenant in the UK.

One of the key benefits of the scheme is that it can help people affected by the 'bedroom tax'. For example, someone living in a property with an extra bedroom could swap with a family in an overcrowded property.


We offer support to help customers search for a property that meets their requirements through an online system. We currently have 2,853 customers signed up to the system and more than 335 customers have moved home in the last year through the scheme.

To find out more about mutual exchange, visit www.shgroup.org.uk/exchange









Repairs and Maintenance

In most areas an external contractor working on our behalf carries out your day-to-day repairs work.

This is how we've improved properties this year:

We carried out a total of
 **58,664**
 repairs in the last financial year

How our repairs service is doing

	2013/14	2014/15
 Repairs completed in 24hrs	96.53%	 97.89%
 Annual gas safety inspections completed	99.76%	 99.54%
 Repairs completed first time	89%	 87%
 Average time to complete a job	11 days	 11 days



4,075

properties redecorated as part of our ongoing programme



£10.8m

on improving homes (including bathrooms, kitchens and heating upgrades)



£3.3m

on external decorations



£1.2m

on new boilers



£882,000

on planned maintenance (major repair works across multiple properties)



£377,000

on environmental improvements

Southern Maintenance Services

In April 2014 we launched Southern Maintenance Services (SMS), our in-house repairs team serving the Kent region. Before SMS we'd relied on external contractors to deliver repairs to customers' properties, so this was a big change.

As well as delivering great savings, the introduction of SMS led to much improved resident satisfaction with 95% of residents rating the service 8 out of 10 or better, and 88% rating it 10 out of 10.

The service was a great success, saving the Group around £200,000 on day-to-day and void repairs within the first 12 months.

SMS also took on some larger planned works projects, saving a further £165,000. All the money we've saved from this project will be reinvested back into other services for our customers.

Following the success of SMS in Kent, we have extended the service to customers in Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Greenwich, Thurrock, Brentwood and Basildon. We have already seen improvements in customer satisfaction.

Thanks for reading our Annual Report to Customers.

We hope you've enjoyed our look back at the last financial year. This year we're committed to building on the improvements we've made and delivering great services to you.

We're always interested in hearing your feedback, so if you think there are things we can improve, please get in touch.

