

2011/12

ANNUAL REPORT

to residents

How are
we performing?

Southern
Housing
Group





Welcome



Welcome to this year's annual report which provides an overview of how we have performed in delivering high quality homes and services to residents over the past year.

Throughout this period our Resident Services Panels (RSPs) have played an ongoing role in scrutinising performance at a regional level. You can find out more about RSPs, and other ways to get involved, on page 20.

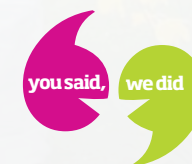
The report also looks ahead at how we intend to continue working with our residents, to improve and shape services, based on what you have told us is important to you. Over the coming year we will be introducing a new set of service standards, which will set out what you can expect from us. We are currently consulting with residents about the new standards and will launch them in the coming months.

We are also changing the way we measure performance. We will examine how we handle a query or deliver a service, focussing on the quality of our work in a way that traditional number-based targets sometimes overlook.

Resident feedback from last year's report and, focus groups about communicating with residents, have helped to shape this report. As ever we welcome your feedback and a comment form is enclosed for you.

Tom

Tom Dacey, Chief Executive



Look out for the 'You said, we did' image throughout the report showing how we have responded to resident feedback.

We have also colour coded our performance information: **green** shows where we are doing well; **red** shows where improvement is needed; and **yellow** indicates either a new performance measure or where performance has stayed the same.

This report relates to the period of 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

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How we spend your rent to manage the business

Southern Housing Group owns and manages around 26,000 homes in London and the south east of England. We provide housing for over 66,000 residents offering a range of housing options and services. We invest every penny we make back into our business, using this money to build new homes and to maintain or improve existing homes for residents.

In 2011/12 we created a section on our website called 'efficiency and transparency' which provides details about what we spend and how we manage our business.

In this online section you can find out how we are continuing to reduce waste, increase productivity, improve the quality of our services and provide value for money to you.



Delivering value for money for our residents is at the heart of what we do, meaning we can invest more in residents' homes and communities.

In 2011/12 we reduced the cost of managing our social housing properties by 17.5% compared to 2010/11, while our Group-wide satisfaction rating from residents has increased by 8% to 77.5%.

Keeping overdue rent down

It is important that residents pay their rent on time for them to keep their home. It is also important to our business, as it means we are able to invest more money in homes and services.

This year we maintained a good level of performance in managing rent arrears – the amount of rent payments overdue. Rent arrears at the end of 2011/12 were 4%, compared to 3.8% in 2010/11.



How every £1 of your rent is spent



Customer service

In 2011/12

We have continued with our 'Excellence Matters' approach to improving the customer service we provide.

This has included;

- Renewing focus on the quality of the service that our customer service advisers provide.
- Making improvements in our initial response to complaints. This has already led to improved customer satisfaction.
- Introducing new services for residents to pay their rent via text message, online or via a smart phone application. See the 'paying rent' section of our website for more information.

2010/11	2011/12
The number of formal complaints received	
1887	1143
Average time taken to investigate and handle complaints	
56 days	54 days
Service feedback*	
N/A	454
Satisfaction with overall complaint handling	
41%	47%
Satisfaction with the way we kept you updated on progress	
34%	44%

*** In 2011/12 we introduced a new service feedback process, enabling residents to feedback without the need to complain.**



Outcomes of those cases closed during the 2011/12 year

Complaint not upheld	241
Complaint upheld	714
Complaint withdrawn	78
Complaint partially upheld	196
Total	1229

The top three issues complained about were tenancy management, customer service and repairs.

Looking ahead



We are reviewing how we measure customer service, moving away from

number-based targets. Instead we are focusing on how our staff can provide a more effective 'first point of contact' service, so that residents do not have to make repeat calls.

We are also changing the way we track a customer's journey when they contact us. This will give us greater insight into what residents call us about, how effectively we respond and where we need to improve. All of which will lead to better services for residents.

Maintenance and repairs

In 2011/12

The last of our regions, the West, switched over to Calls Direct enabling residents to contact contractors directly to make appointments and arrange repairs.



Residents told us they wanted improved

communications about appointments. Residents in the Thames Gateway and South regions have been receiving appointment confirmations and reminders via text message as part of a pilot project which we hope to roll out across the Group.



2010/11	2011/12
Customer satisfaction with repairs	
84%	89%
Annual gas safety inspections completed	
99.8%	99.8%
Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	
95%	94%
Number of repairs	
49,814	53,967
Repairs completed first time	
89%	88%
Average time to complete a job	
11 days	11days



Looking ahead

Residents have told us they want reporting a repair to be even easier and so we plan to look at how we can best use digital media and new technologies to do this.

We are also keen to develop how we collect resident feedback and have begun a pilot in the Isle of Wight with contractors using handheld computers to gather instant feedback on the service provided.

We are developing a new approach to how we carry out repairs in communal areas to improve communication with residents and reduce the time taken to complete works.



Images left to right: resident consultation about the repairs service; garden improvements in Kent.

Managing homes

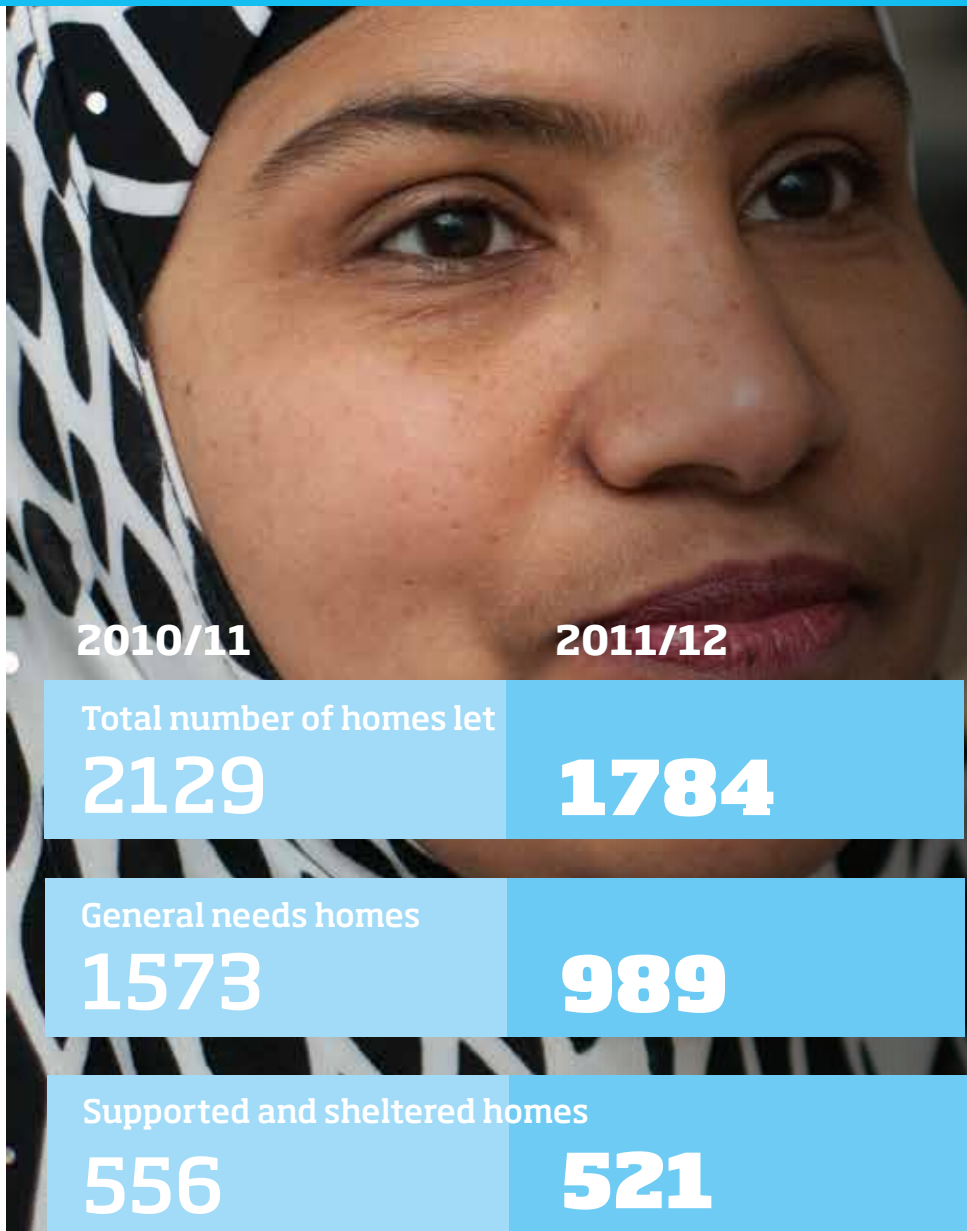
In 2011/12

We have improved the way we let homes to ensure we continue to deliver value for money. This has resulted in a reduction in the time it takes to re-let a home, helping to save money and reduce waiting times for homes.



We also introduced the use of starter tenancies for new residents. They are useful in helping new residents to understand their responsibilities before we offer a more permanent tenancy.

In 2011/12 we built 380 new homes for rent and shared ownership.



Average number of days it took to re-let:

2010/11

2011/12

General needs homes

29

20

Supported and sheltered homes

47

28

Resident satisfaction with the lettings service

91%

85%

A new type of rent

The Government has made changes to the way it funds social housing and has introduced a new 'Affordable Rent' tenancy (AR). This allows housing associations to charge a rent of up to 80% of a local market rent.

In looking to embrace the new AR tenure the Group has introduced the use of tenant reference checks and deposits. AR provides an opportunity for working households on low incomes to gain access to high quality housing at sub-market rents. Current tenants are not affected by these changes and we will continue to provide housing for our core client group, social rented tenants.

Looking ahead



We will be asking residents for feedback about our lettings

service on a more frequent basis. This will provide us with more timely information allowing the flexibility to respond more quickly.

We are also focusing on how we can support residents who are under occupying their homes and might be affected by welfare benefit changes.

In addition we will be reviewing our general approach to transfers to ensure we are delivering value for money and meeting the needs of residents.

Improving where you live

In 2011/12:

We spent £14.67 million carrying out improvements to residents' homes including new bathrooms, kitchens, boilers, windows and doors.

We also spent £2.94 million on external decorations, including communal areas.

We also invested £321,940 on environmental improvements across all five regions.

Local offers:

These are a way of working with residents to understand what estates need at a local level, to plan how services are provided and how improvements will be made.

Over the past year, residents who receive communal services have been sent details of their Local Offer.

Caretaker service review

Feedback from residents showed very high satisfaction with repairs carried out by caretakers and that having a local presence was of real value.



Building on this experience we have created 'local teams' of caretakers to make better

use of their time and skills. These improvements should lead to savings (which we can reinvest in other services) and improve the quality of the service to residents.



Kitchen renewals and re-wires



Built in 1981, Brain Court in Swindon is a block of studios, and one and two bedroom flats offering a mix of sheltered and general needs homes. A survey in July 2011, prompted by resident feedback, confirmed that the kitchens were in poor condition and that much of the wiring in the block needed replacing.

Combining plans to renew the kitchens with a full re-wire to each property made sense, minimising the long-term disruption to residents. An experienced site manager and resident liaison officer helped the project very smoothly, and resident feedback has been very positive.

The cost of the work was around £354,000.

Looking ahead

Residents have also told us that we need to respond quicker to issues raised through estate inspections and so this year we will be reviewing our approach and how we keep residents informed about what is happening.



Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

2011/12

We have seen a reduction in the number of noise complaints and have provided funding for noise reduction measures providing practical solutions such as carpets and dog handling training where appropriate.



Despite this we have seen a reduction in the overall satisfaction

with the way we deal with ASB and have taken steps to address this. We have provided more training to service centre staff on ASB to enable us to respond more effectively when residents first call. This also allows regional teams to spend more time on complex cases.



2010/11

Total number of ASB cases reported

2189

2011/12

1928

Satisfaction with how we are dealing with ASB

77%

59%

Satisfaction with outcome of case

65%

53%

Tenancy fraud

Tenancy fraud continues to remain a focus for the Group to ensure that social housing goes to those who are most in need. We aim to investigate suspicions of sub-letting and recover as many sub-let properties as possible.

This year we recovered 20 homes through a variety of methods.

We also introduced a dedicated confidential 'hotline' telephone number where residents can report suspected tenancy fraud.

Looking ahead

We will be gathering more regular feedback about the way we handle ASB cases. This will enable us to respond more quickly to your feedback and to focus on continual improvement.

The introduction of starter tenancies in the last year is proving an effective approach to addressing potential causes of ASB early on. This results in less money being spent on more formal actions such as court cases. This money can then be spent further enhancing the services offered by the Group.



Keeping it local

We work with our residents to understand local needs and expectations. This flexible approach means we are able to respond and deliver a range of projects. Here are some examples of our work in the regions for 2011/12.



We also hosted our first Group-wide youth conference.

Six young residents developed the content for the day and delivered the event itself. More than 80 young residents attended to provide a young person's perspective on housing.



West ● Oxford Road community fun day

We supported an event for local residents where they were able to find out about local services and support available.



South ● Garden improvements

We worked with residents and contractors to improve the garden and entrance at Beaver Court in Ashford. This included replacing the entrance paving with tarmac, improving the dropped kerb, introducing raised flower beds and a new patio area with seating.

South and West region ● ●

We have developed a 'handyman service' for our supported schemes. This service includes minor repairs or improvements for some of our older residents who may not be able to complete these jobs themselves.

London ● Developing community facilities

We have been working with residents of Latham's Yard in Hackney to form a youth committee to help develop new community facilities.



London and Thames Gateway ● ● Health and well being

As part of Activate London project over 200 residents took part in a sports day at Mile End Stadium.

Thames Gateway ● Cycle lockers

Following resident feedback we installed cycle lockers at Fieldgate Mansions in Tower Hamlets.

Isle of Wight ●

We provide wide ranging care and support services to 529 residents living in our properties and 380 people in the wider community.

The Monday Group provides residents with learning disabilities the opportunity to socialise, make new friends and develop life skills. In 2011/12 the Monday Group planted and tended a vegetable garden at the Quarr Abbey site and won the local communities category at the Community Action Awards.

Investing in people and places

We recognise the value of supporting our residents and communities, beyond providing homes and housing services. We have a dedicated Social and Economic Regeneration Department (SERD) which is focused on investing in our communities.

This work has increasingly focused on supporting residents to become economically active through development of their financial, digital and employment skills, alongside our more traditional community investment work.

Over the next year this important aspect of our work will continue as we look to develop our response to the Government's welfare reforms.



Getting residents online

We have installed computers and provided training to residents in four sheltered schemes in London and the South East as well as training for a further three schemes in Hackney. To date we have trained a total of 89 people providing our older residents with the confidence, skills and opportunities that encourage independence and integration. The project was part-funded through the Get Digital Programme and BBC First Click.



Over the past year we have invested **£1.4 million** in our communities.

We have supported **12,340** residents through a variety of projects.

Southern Works

This year **626** residents benefitted from our training and employment advice service – Southern Works.

Launched in summer 2011, the service sees a team of employment advisers working one-to-one with residents to move them closer to employment.

Financial inclusion

This year **416** residents benefitted from our financial inclusion work.

Our financial inclusion team helps residents to manage their finances, offering training and practical advice to ensure greater financial stability for the future.

Let's get digital

This year **339** residents benefitted from our digital inclusion work.

Our 'computers in communities' programme brings together our volunteer programme, community spaces and our work with residents to increase access to and knowledge of the internet.



How residents scrutinise and shape services

Our Resident Service Panel (RSP) members work alongside staff to understand our performance and explore key service improvement opportunities.

The RSPs work with the group to identify areas for improvement

and the way these improvements are applied.

This year we have developed the work of our panels (RSPs) through our effective scrutiny programme.

During 2011/12, we worked with residents to:

- Update our Resident Handbook, making the information more accessible. Next year a video version of the handbook will be available.
- Make better use of our web-based resident information through a series of quick guides on a wide range of tenancy issues.

Panel members scrutinised our performance in:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Complaints
- Anti-social behaviour
- Estate services
- Lettings
- Income collection
- Regional specific issues
- Estate service local offers



Image: residents and staff at an estate inspection in Reading.

Looking ahead

Our priorities for the year ahead are shaped by residents, staff and the external environment. One of our main priorities for this year will be to review and publish a new set of service standards for the Group.

To find out how to get involved visit www.shgroup.org.uk, or contact the Service Centre.

Iris Hunt, pictured far left, from Reading, is Chair of the RSP in the West region.

“Being a member of the Resident Service Panel offers me the chance to bring to the table a resident’s point of view of standards of service. For instance, we are able to challenge the staff about their performance on anti social behaviour, repairs and maintenance and income recovery.

“The result has been positive due to the opportunities to challenge.”

We also reviewed our approach to lettings and income recovery and found that overall our services are fair and accessible to all residents. The reviews did show we have more work to do around our knowledge of our residents’ circumstances, wants and needs to ensure we continue to respond effectively.

Resident involvement

Resident involvement plays a vital role in shaping our work and the way we improve our services. We offer a range of opportunities for residents to get involved, providing different options for residents to influence and shape our services.



2011/12

- We carried out 5,700 interviews across 12 of our key service areas through our 'What Matters to Residents' survey.
- We delivered 22 involvement projects, capturing resident feedback on affordable rent, ASB and caretaking services, the Open Door newsletter, estate inspection work, our new resident handbook, sustainability work and starter tenancies.
- Our customer service monitors undertook 71 independent estate inspections across the group, quality checking our estate standards. We also trained a team of our monitors to play a role in helping us improve services.
- We supported 44 tenant and resident's groups across the regions.



Reg Burbidge from Islington, is an RSP member in the London Region.

"I realised many years ago that the only way to improve where I live is to get involved and have my say. I helped recruit the current contractor for the London Region and have a regular voice at review meetings.

"Being involved makes me feel as though I can make a difference."

Looking ahead



Residents have told us that local issues and communication is important.

This year we will be running a series of local roadshows to understand and tackle local issues and to encourage resident involvement.

Open Door Newsletter

This year we reviewed the Open Door newsletter to residents which resulted in a new design.



Next year we will be looking at improving our website for residents.

Contact us

Each region has its own dedicated service centre number.

Service Centre opening hours are 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday.

London

0300 303 1061

Thames Gateway

0300 303 1062

Kent

0300 303 1773

South West

0300 303 1063

Isle of Wight

0300 303 1772

West

0300 303 1064

Other ways to contact us

Email: service.centre@shgroup.org.uk

Write to: Service Centre, Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ

For help with translations, or if a large type, Braille or taped summary would be useful, contact the Service Centre.

Arabic

لتلقي المساعدة في الحصول على نسخ مترجمة أو إذا كان من المفيد بالنسبة لكم تلقي نسخ مطبوعة بطباعة مكبرة، أو بطريقة برايل للمكفوفين، أو مسجلة كملخصات على شريط تسجيل صوتي، فيرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة Service Centre.

Bengali

অনুবাদে সাহায্য পেতে হলে অথবা বড় অক্ষর, ব্রেইল অথবা টেপে রেকর্ডকৃত সারসংক্ষেপ শুনতে চাইলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারকে 0300 303 1682 নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।

French

Contactez le Centre de services pour obtenir de l'aide sur les traductions, ou si un résumé en gros caractères, en Braille ou enregistré s'avère nécessaire.

Somali

Si lagaaga caawiyo turjumista ama haddii aad jeclaan lahayd farta waaweyn, farta indhoolayaasha (Braille) ama warbixin kooban oo cajilad ku duuban, la xiriir Xarunta Adeegga.

Spanish

Si necesita traducciones o resúmenes en letra grande, Braille o casete, póngase en contacto con el Centro de Servicios.

Turkish

Tercüme konusunda yardım için, veya iri puntolu, Braille körter alfabesi ile yazılmış ya da ses kaydı olarak bir özet isterseniz, 0300 303 1683'ten Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.

me&shg



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Me&shg resident portal

Don't forget, if you wish to email the Service Centre with any enquiries, or to report a repair online, you need to have registered with me&shg, our online resident portal, for your enquiry to be processed.

The portal gives you access to your rent information, repairs history and account details. Visit www.shgroup.org.uk/Reslogin

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