



A snapshot of the year

Annual report to residents 2010/11

Unlocking the potential
of people and places

Southern
Housing
Group



The production of this year's annual report has been heavily influenced by residents from across the Group and we would like to thank everyone who has got involved.

They include members of the Communications Customer Involvement Panel, which meets up to four times a year to help direct and shape the way that Southern Housing Group communicates with its residents. A further 36 residents also got involved in focus groups held in each region. They all advised us on the overall design and helped guide us on how to make this a more interesting and readable annual report.

Photographs taken and submitted by residents are also included, making this well and truly a report that has been designed and edited with the help of residents.



Tom Dacey
Chief Executive



Thousands of different views.

Unlocking the potential of people and places. How are we doing?

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One mission.

- * Emily Shepherd resident photo competition winner.
- ** Emily's winning images.

Repairs and maintenance

Calls Direct

We introduced Calls Direct in 2010 so that residents could arrange repairs more quickly, by phoning our contractors directly, rather than the Service Centre.



Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours

2010/11

95%

2009/10

94%

Customer satisfaction with repairs

2010/11

84%

2009/10

84%

Annual gas safety inspections completed

2010/11

99.8%

2009/10

99.3%

Benefits of Calls Direct :

- Contractors carry out repairs at a time that suits you.
- Call handlers can tell you exactly what to expect and when.

We regularly assess the quality of the call handlers to ensure contractors are giving you the best customer service.

The service is now operating in most of the Group's regions and will be available to all residents by January 2012.

No. of repairs

2010/11

49,814

2009/10

45,172

Repairs completed 1st time

2010/11

89%

2009/10

72%

Average time to complete a job

2010/11

11 days

2009/10

15.9 days

Improving the service

You said:

- Complete more jobs first time.
- Reduce the time to complete a job from start to finish.

We:

- Worked with day-to-day contractors to improve performance, as the figures on this page show.
- Made sure that the quality of our services kept getting better.



Property Services Customer Involvement Panel

Residents from all five regions make up the Property Services Panel, which meets quarterly. Many of the panel members also sit on the contractor review panels, which meet monthly.

During the last year the panel has looked at:

- ▶ The Southern Standard booklet given to residents whose homes are undergoing major works.
- ▶ The Health and Safety policy.
- ▶ Environmental sustainability.
- ▶ The development of Local Offers.
- ▶ The work that the Group should prioritise.
- ▶ The sale of properties by the Group.

Case study: Robert Heath Heating - improving the service

We have been working with Robert Heath Heating to improve the repairs service. This has included looking at the availability of spare parts, improving the engineer's skills and the suitability of some of our boilers.

In the Thames Gateway Region this has led to nearly 30% fewer repeat visits. We are rolling this process out to other regions during the next 12 months.



Repairs and maintenance

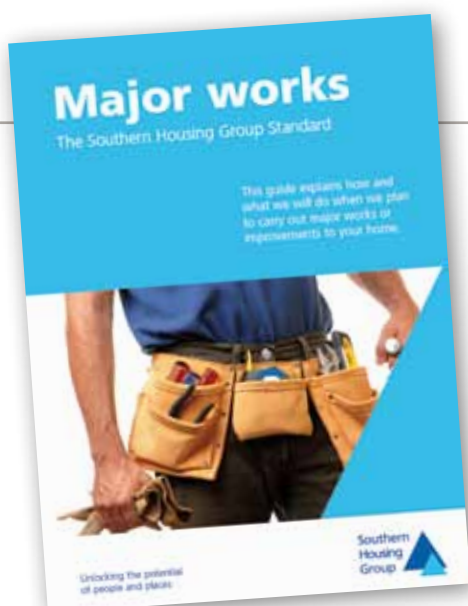
Decent Homes

- ▶ All our homes met the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2010, apart from four schemes that will be redeveloped.
- ▶ We spent over £14 million carrying out more than 5,000 improvements in residents' homes, including 746 new bathrooms, 711 new kitchens, 972 wiring upgrades, 1,248 replacement boilers or complete heating systems and 386 new windows or doors.
- ▶ We received more than £850,000 in funding for energy efficiency measures, including cavity insulation, from utility companies and the Government. This helped the Group to improve the efficiency and comfort of its homes for residents.



Planned maintenance

- ▶ We spent £2.75 million on external decorations, including communal areas, benefitting almost 3,500 properties.



Improving the service

- ▶ **Better communication.** We produced a new Major Works booklet to better explain what residents can expect and the type of repairs and improvements planned for their home.
- ▶ **Value for money.** All Major works contracts are awarded following a competitive tender to make sure that we are getting the best quality at the best price.

Aids and adaptations

Wherever needed and possible, we make adaptations to properties and communal areas to ensure residents can live independently in their homes.

We do this by working with local authorities and occupational therapists.



Case study: Snowdown Court, Ashford

We've installed bases and lockable charging powerpoints so that residents at Snowdown Court have somewhere to store their mobility scooters.

This has freed up more space in the communal lounge for group activities and addressed concerns about the safety of charging scooters in communal areas.

The improvements give residents with mobility issues greater freedom and independence by enabling them to move around the scheme and visit local facilities.

**Snowdown Court resident
Mrs Walsh said:**

"The new mobility scooter bases and powerpoints have been fantastic, they've really given me my independence back. Now I can come and go where and when I like without worrying about when I have to be back."

Estates and neighbourhoods

We are committed to looking after where you live by making sure that estates, schemes and neighbourhoods are clean, tidy and safe.

We often work with local agencies and consult residents about the improvements you feel need to be made in your community.

Improving the external space and raising standards

- ▶ We spent £242,288 on environmental improvements across all five regions.
- ▶ We are looking at how we buy in cleaning and gardening to make sure that these provide good quality services and value for money.
- ▶ We are developing 'Local Offers' on a number of schemes, tailoring the service to local expectations.
- ▶ We are developing gardening projects in various locations, with residents playing an active role.
- ▶ We are encouraging more residents to get involved and provide feedback.
- ▶ We are looking at how estate caretakers and cleaners can be more effective as part of a review of these services.



Estate Inspections

Estate Inspections help illustrate the standards of cleaning and gardening on estates and schemes.

- ▶ **We carried out 3,020 inspections.**
- ▶ **28% of these involved residents.**
- ▶ **In 2011/12 we aim to increase resident involvement to 30% or more because you said it was important to you.**

Each scheme is given an average score out of 10.

2010/11

8.1



2009/10

7.9

Target

8.2



Case study: Vacant Lot

Vacant Lot is a three-year Lottery funded project, run with London housing associations, which transforms unused areas into communal food growing plots.

Over the last two years, the Group has worked with Groundwork London and What If Projects on four sites in Hackney and Islington. Residents and volunteers helped clear the sites before large, compost-filled bulk bags or wooden planters were installed. Gardening workshops were held, showing residents how to look after the new plots.

Young people from the Samuel Lewis Trust Estate on Amhurst Road attended workshops to learn how to do stencil designs, which they then used to decorate the surrounding garden walls.

Resident Paola Hayward said:

"The Vacant Lot project has allowed us to grow vegetables and introduce our children to planting seeds and see how food is produced on a small scale. I also saw so many neighbours I'd never met before."



Estates and neighbourhoods

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We received 2,189 reports of ASB. The most common types of ASB reported to us were:

Noise

818

Verbal abuse/harassment/intimidation/threats

379

Misuse of communal areas or public space / loitering

216



Tackling Noise

We are improving our approach to dealing with reports of noise.

- ▶ Each region now has equipment to monitor noise levels.
- ▶ We are looking at how sound insulation in new schemes can be improved.

Case study

The Family Intervention Project

The Family Intervention Project in the Thames Gateway region ran two successful 'strengthening families' courses in Tower Hamlets and Greenwich during the year. Financed by the Group, with additional Government funding, the project provides support for families whose tenancies are at risk from ASB.



Resident feedback

Satisfaction with how we are dealing with ASB

2010/11

77%



2009/10

53%

Satisfaction with outcome of case

2010/11

65%



2009/10

48%



You said:

- Improve the way we communicate.

We now:

- Make sure that we agree the steps to be taken with the resident at the start of an investigation.
- Respond more quickly when an incident is first reported.

Case study

Myddleton Grange,
London

Myddleton Grange had experienced repeated vandalism and ASB, with large groups of youths gathering outside the community centre.

We replaced a low wall that had been vandalised and knocked down with a more substantial metal fence and lockable gate. This had made the area more secure, deterred ASB and will reduce future repair costs.

Since the gate has been put up, residents have planted a raised vegetable patch for everyone in the community to use.



Customer service

Service Centre

Improving customer care:

- ▶ Multi skilling of our customer service advisors has enabled them to answer and take action on a wider range of enquiries.
- ▶ A 'call back' service is now available for residents who don't want to wait in a call queue.
- ▶ We've also introduced Calls Direct so that residents can arrange for repairs to be carried out more quickly and at their convenience, by phoning our contractors directly. All residents will have access to this service by 2012.



Service excellence

Last autumn we asked a company called Steps to run an innovative workshop for 600 staff, as part of our Excellence Matters training programme.

The workshops aimed to ensure that all staff provide the same level of excellent customer service to residents.

Calls made to the customer service centre

2010/11

239,102

2009/10

260,953

Calls answered

2010/11

97.1%

2009/10

97.1%

This years target

95%

Calls answered in 20 seconds

2010/11

74.4%

2009/10

75.2%

This years target

80%

Tailoring our service

We offer a translation service for residents who don't speak English as their first language.

We currently have dedicated telephone numbers for our Bengali and Turkish speakers and are able to translate calls made to the Service Centre in any other language by using a translation service. Any written correspondence can also be translated and large-print, audio or Braille versions can be requested by blind and partially-sighted residents.

Service Centre staff can also communicate with residents with hearing difficulties by using the Minicom system.



Complaints

The Group values the feedback it receives from complaints and uses this to improve the services that are offered.

The Group received 1,887 complaints in 2010/11, compared to 2,371 the previous year.

Average time taken to investigate and handle complaints

2010/11

56 days

2009/10

63 days

Satisfaction with overall complaint handling

2010/11

41%

2009/10

41%

Satisfaction with the way we kept you updated on progress

2010/11

34%

2009/10

39%

Listening to what you told us

- ▶ We are making sure that staff are better at keeping residents up-to-date on what is happening with their complaint.
- ▶ We have new arrangements for recording and monitoring progress.
- ▶ We are reviewing our initial response to when a complaint is received.



Resident empowerment

► **5,618**

'What matters to residents' satisfaction surveys took place in 2009/10, shaping our service improvement works



Resident involvement

New in the last year:

Resident service panels

To make sure that residents across the Group have a say in our decision making and policies, we set up Resident Service Panels for each of our five regions.

These comprise up to 12 residents from the each region and the Chair is also a resident. The panels meet quarterly to discuss regional performance. The Chair of each panel also sits on the Group's Customer Service Committee, which reports to the Group's main Board.

You can find out more about getting involved in our work and about how residents have shaped our work over the last year in our 2011 Resident Involvement Review. You can find this on the Group's web site. Alternatively you can contact us for a printed copy.

If you are interested in sharing your views to help shape our services, please contact the Service Centre and ask for the Resident Initiatives team.



Our priorities

- ▶ Employment and training - providing advice, support and guidance to help residents get back into work.
- ▶ Improving internet access for residents.
- ▶ Providing debt and benefit advice for those with financial difficulties.
- ▶ Developing the skills and opportunities for young people.
- ▶ Supporting resident groups and projects which benefit the wider community.
- ▶ Improving the external environment.
- ▶ Supporting families to help strengthen communities.

Making a real difference

Our social and economic regeneration work focuses on the wider positive impact we can make to residents' lives and the way we build and manage homes and communities. We invested half a million pounds in social and economic regeneration activities, benefitting more than 12,000 residents, 2,500 more than the previous year.



Case study Computers in community



Many residents don't have Internet access. The Group received £75,000 funding from UK Online to help us to install computers and provide training in various locations.

The centres aim to address the isolation and loneliness faced by some residents, develop their skills and knowledge and give them access to the opportunities and information that many people take for granted.

Resident Sandra Nedd said:

"Now I am able to send emails without help from anyone and search online as well. I like what I am learning and I learn something new about computers every time I come for my appointment."

Tenancy management

Letting homes promptly reduces the income lost by the Group, but more importantly ensures that families have somewhere to live as soon as possible.

Total number of homes we let

2010/11

2129

2009/10

2244

General needs homes

2010/11

1573

2009/10

1749

Supported and sheltered homes

2010/11

556

2009/10

495



Improving mobility

We are making it easier for residents to move by:

- Promoting HomeSwapper, a web-based scheme that enables residents to arrange mutual exchanges.

Average number of days it took to re-let empty general needs homes

2010/11

29 days ✓

2009/10

41 days

This years target

26 days

Average number of days it took to re-let empty sheltered/ supported homes

2010/11

47 days ✓

2009/10

72 days

This years target

44 days

Resident Satisfaction with the letting service

2010/11

91% ✓

2009/10

87%

Housing Services Customer Involvement Panel

The Housing Services Customer Involvement Panel is a group of residents drawn from across the Group.

It makes sure that residents have a real say in how we develop and improve our policies. This enables us to focus on what is important to residents and make sure that our priorities are the right ones.



In the last year the Panel has asked us to prioritise our consideration of the following areas:

- ▶ Dealing with unlawful occupiers.
- ▶ Taking in a lodger or subletting a room.
- ▶ What happens when someone is absent from their property.
- ▶ Help for residents who are under occupying their property.
- ▶ Help for residents who are overcrowded.
- ▶ Keeping pets.
- ▶ Medical assessments of residents' housing needs.
- ▶ Swapping homes with another resident.
- ▶ Managing services in communal areas.



Tenancy management

Understanding who you are

Knowing more about our residents helps us to provide a better service. For example, we are keen to have information on any disabilities, how residents prefer us to communicate with them and their employment status.

This information proved to be valuable on one of our London estates. We identified a large number of residents who were in rent arrears and decided to hold rent surgeries, and produce posters to publicise that they needed to come and talk to us. As a result the level of awareness increased and rent arrears on the estate fell by 15%.



Tenancy audit and subletting

You said:

- ▶ We should take a firm line and improve how we investigate and prevent unlawful subletting.

We now:

- ▶ Take photos of residents when they sign a new tenancy agreement. This enables us to identify who we are speaking to when we carry out home visits and tenancy audits.
- ▶ Provide better guidance for staff.
- ▶ Raise awareness through newsletters, leaflets and posters.
- ▶ Make unannounced tenancy audits, to help us to gather information on possible subletting.
- ▶ Have a dedicated hotline number 0300 303 1774 to report suspected subletting, with the option to remain anonymous.
- ▶ Work closely with local authorities to investigate cases.
- ▶ Have a new system to record cases of subletting.
- ▶ Take part in the National Fraud Initiative and share information with other organisations to combat fraud.



Case study

Partnership Working

Resident Michael Chambers suspected that the property next door was being illegally sublet after a series of neighbour nuisance issues.

"A young family moved in, but they suddenly moved out and new people started arriving who would never answer the door", he said. "At one point a gang of about ten builders moved in and kept my family awake all night."



Our staff worked closely with Hammersmith and Fulham local authority and the National Fraud Initiative. We traced the absent tenants to a large house in Essex and Michael received a £500 reward.

Supported and sheltered housing

We transferred the support service for residents living in our sheltered housing schemes to new specialist providers in all regions, apart from the Isle of Wight.

While the new support providers are best placed, because of their expertise, to offer specialist support to residents, the Group's Resident Services Officers (Sheltered) continue to ensure that schemes and services are of a high standard.



Isle of Wight care services

On the Isle of Wight we provide care and support services to 529 residents living in our properties and 310 people in the wider community. These include services for older people, people with learning and physical disabilities, people with mental health needs, young people and young mothers.



Case study Promoting independent living

James is in his thirties, with a history of drug and drink abuse. He was on probation, unemployed, suffering with mental health issues and under the care of the Mental Health Services.

James was referred to us by his community psychiatric nurse. With the help of his Group Support worker, he found a new place to live and enrolled in a college course to study horticulture.

In just 18 months James has been discharged early by the Probation Service and is no longer a client of the Mental Health Services. He has completed his Level One Certificate and received an award from the college for the support and encouragement he has given to fellow students.

Rent and service charges

Keeping rent arrears down

Group rent arrears %

2010/11

3.8%

2009/10

4.2%

Target for this year

3.7%

Intermediate rent arrears %

2010/11

1.2%

2009/10

1.4%

Target for this year

1.1%

Service charges - how we are improving our services

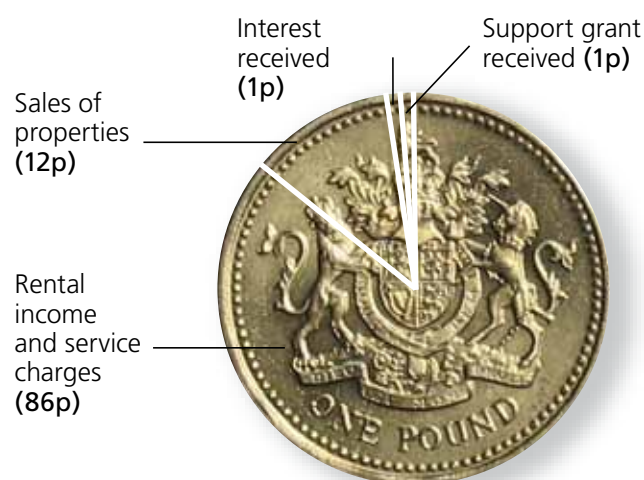
We are carrying out a fundamental review of our service charges to make sure we are charging you the correct service charge and meeting our legal requirements.

This includes developing a Group-wide approach to make sure that services charges are calculated fairly, using the same process for everyone.

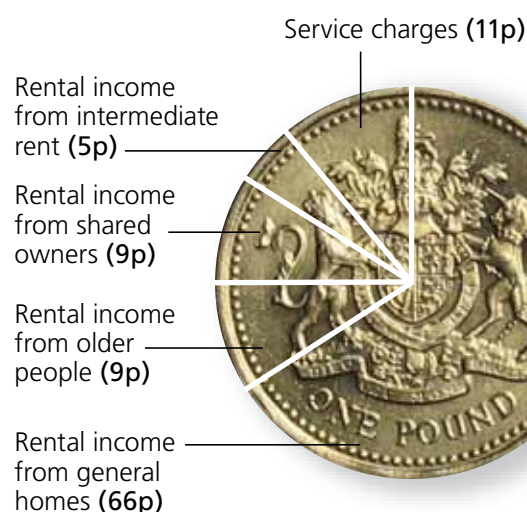
At the end of the review you will notice significant improvements in the information provided.



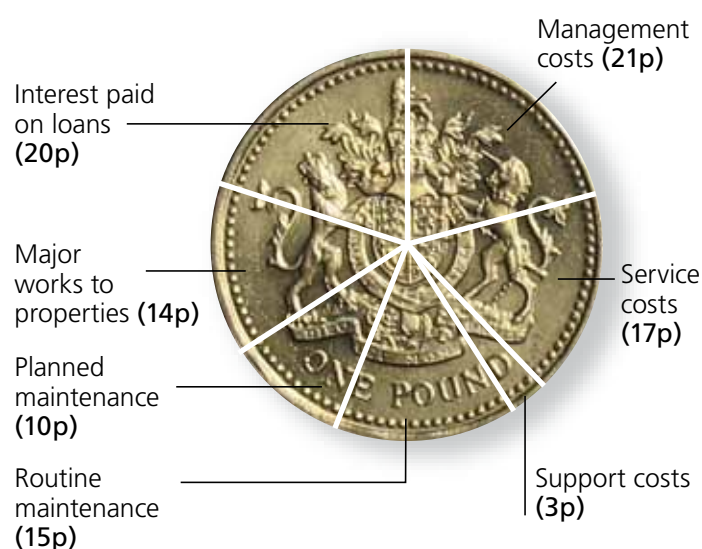
Where every £1 comes from



Where every £1 of rent paid comes from



How every £1 of your rent is spent



Jargon buster

Customer service standards

The commitments we make to residents so that you know what can be expected from us.

Customer involvement panels (CIP)

Four separate panels of residents that work with us to improve our services and policies.

Decent Homes Standard

Minimum standard for the quality of residents' homes introduced by the Government to make sure all council and housing association homes are a similar high standard.

Local offers

This is where we work with residents to agree how we will deliver essential services including cleaning and gardening. Our 'service standards' form the basis of all local offers.

National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

An initiative set up to help government agencies and landlords to share data on tenants to prevent fraud.

General needs housing

This is housing for the general population – it has not been designed to meet any special needs of any particular group.

Shared owners

People who have bought a share in their property and pay rent on the percentage they don't own.

HomeSwapper

A company that helps residents to find someone to swap homes with if they want to relocate or their home no longer meets their needs (also known as a mutual exchange).

Intermediate rent (IR)

A type of tenancy that we offer on some properties. These properties are offered to people who would hope to buy a property through shared ownership but need time to save a deposit before they can get a mortgage.

Customer knowledge

The Group must collect information about its residents to help us understand what services you need, making sure we are providing the right support to residents.



Translations

Arabic	لمساعدتك في الترجمة يرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة على هاتف 0300 303 1771.
Bengali	অনুবাদ সাহায্য পেতে হলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারে 0300 303 1682 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।
French	Si vous souhaitez recevoir de l'aide avec vos traductions, appelez le 0300 303 1771.
Somali	Wixii ah caawimo turjumaan ka soo wac Xarunta Adeegga telefoonka 0300 303 1771.
Spanish	Si necesita que le ayudemos con alguna traducción, llámenos al 0300 303 1771.
Turkish	Tercüme konusunda yardım için 0300 303 1683 'den Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.





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