



Annual Report
to Residents
2020



Craig Moule, Group Chief Executive Sanctuary Group



Wendy Burrige, Chair of the NRSP

Welcome from **Sanctuary Group**

Welcome to this year's Annual Report to Tenants. This year, we've done things a little differently with a video conversation between Wendy Burrige, Chair of the National Resident Scrutiny Panel (NRSP) and Craig Moule, our Chief Executive.

In the video, Wendy and Craig chat about the highlights and inevitable challenges during what has been an unprecedented year for everyone due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

You'll find the video [here](#).

Regulation and our Local Offers

Sanctuary Housing Association is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) who ensure that we are doing what we say we will, against two sets of standards: economic and consumer. Our commitment to delivering value for money and meeting the consumer standards is demonstrated by our Local Offers.

Economic standards

- **Governance** and Financial viability – this looks at how well we manage risk, how we manage our money, how we plan for the future, whether we comply with laws and whether we deliver the right services.
- **Rent** – this sets out what changes we can make to levels of rent.
- **Value for money** – this examines whether we offer good value for money

The RSH rates all organisations like us. We are rated 'G1' and 'V2' for governance and financial viability respectively.

Consumer standards

- **Home** – this is about the quality of your home, and whether it is safe and well-maintained. This includes the 'Decent Homes' requirements.
- **Tenant involvement and empowerment** – this looks at how well our residents are involved in our services and how we respond to their diverse needs.
- **Tenancy** – this examines how homes are allocated and for what type of tenancy.
- **Neighbourhood and community** – this explores how well we manage neighbourhoods and prevent or respond to antisocial behaviour.

The regulations cover services to our tenants who rent their home from us, as well as shared owners.

Did you know?

Sanctuary's Homeowners Forum ensures that all homeowners (and leaseholders) have an opportunity to influence our services.

Social Housing White Paper

The Social Housing White Paper is due to be published by the end of 2020 and we await to see if this has any impact on how we regulate our services. We are confident that we have a strong approach to resident engagement, However, we plan to strengthen this further by providing more opportunities for a wider range of residents to scrutinise our service performance and shape our service delivery, including taking more advantage of technology for engaging 'virtually'.

Our Local Offers

We have received feedback about our services from around 10,000 residents nationwide this year. The feedback continues to reflect the relevance and importance of our Local Offers.

We plan to embark upon 'A Conversation with Sanctuary' next year, our most ambitious programme of resident engagement to date, as we continue to make sure our service standards reflect what is most important to our residents.

Home

- We will respond to emergency repairs within 24 hours.
- If a repair is not urgent, residents will be offered a morning or afternoon appointment.
- If we fail to fix a repair on the first visit, we will provide the date of a further appointment.
- We will make sure properties are safe and compliant with health and safety law.
- We will make sure properties are maintained to the Decent Homes Standard.

Customer service

- We will make it easy for our residents to contact us if they have a problem or want information or advice.
- If a staff member cannot resolve a query immediately, they will explain the process and the timescale for resolution.
- If a resident has a problem, we will keep them regularly informed about how we are dealing with their query or complaint, and the reasons for any changes.
- If a resident cannot get through or has to leave a message, someone will call them back within one working day (Monday to Friday).
- Information on the level of service that can be expected from us is available on our website.
- We will provide training for staff to ensure they are competent, knowledgeable and treat everyone as a valued customer.

Neighbourhood

- We will make it clear what somebody should do if they experience antisocial behaviour.
- We will also respond within one working day if a serious incident is reported.
- We will make sure our neighbourhoods are well maintained.

Moving home

- If a resident wants to move home, we will help them identify options to meet their needs.

Value for money and governance

- We will provide an annual assessment of our performance against plans and objectives.
- We will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation and remain accountable to our residents and partners.
- We will use external credit rating companies to check our performance and make sure we continue to be financially strong.
- Our Group Board is committed to effective leadership and controlling the organisation and supporting residents to shape and scrutinise the services we provide.

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2018/2019	2019/2020
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	93%	93%
Residents who said we gave a date of the next repair if we couldn't complete it first time	87%	91%
Residents who said they were satisfied with the repairs service overall	93%	94%

We completed in excess of 335,000 repairs across England this year, an increase of about 5,000 compared with the year before. Satisfaction with the repairs service has remained high, with more than nine out of 10 residents again satisfied with the service overall. We completed 88 per cent of all repairs (emergency and routine) within the target time. This reflects the impact of about 82 per cent of all repairs to our homes in England being completed by our internal teams. We are pleased that where we couldn't complete the repair first time, we were able to confirm the date for any follow up booking more often this year.

We spent £86.3 million on the routine maintenance of our stock in the last 12 months. In addition to this, we have committed to increasing investment in our homes by £100 million to a total of £370 million by 2023. The average spend on repairs to each home this year was £1,257.

A great example of where we have increased the use of our internal maintenance service is with our gas team with 99 per cent of gas repairs and servicing now being carried out in-house. To support the initiative further, a pilot is currently underway in the North to look at the possibility of bringing commercial gas repairs inhouse as well. The pilot is ongoing and is being regularly reviewed to decide if further roll outs would offer value for money.

We are committed to playing our part in responding to the climate change emergency by increasing our energy rating year-on-year via the annual SAP declaration. The work to achieve this includes:

- Loft and cavity wall insulation
- External wall insulation
- Managing the Energy Performance Certificate process
- Investigating low SAP-rated properties
- Costing and managing the improvements to increase the SAP rating to a reasonable level
- Managing legislation changes to ensure compliance
- Managing the feed in tariff from photo voltaic installations
- Advising on renewable technologies.

We are also working hard to fight fuel poverty for residents by offering advice on how to use energy more efficiently. The average EPC rating for our homes is 71, which equates to band C. This compares favourably with the average energy efficiency rating for a dwelling in England of band D (rating 60).



Case Study

Keeping in Touch calls and food parcels

We ensured residents were safe and well during the Covid-19 lockdown by making Keeping in Touch (KIT) calls.

Our Housing and Neighbourhoods teams made more than 12,000 of these calls to residents over the age of 70 as well as to other vulnerable groups.

We were able to check on the wellbeing of residents as well as offer a friendly voice to talk to; a service that has been greatly appreciated.

We received a lot of positive feedback through social media, with one resident from the Midlands saying he was “very emotional and blown away” to receive a call.

Feedback was equally encouraging following the delivery of more than 150 food parcels through our Emergency Food Parcel service across our Housing, Maintenance and Supported Living teams. Approximately 100 parcels were also donated to local foodbanks.



How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2018/2019	2019/2020
Residents who found it easy to contact us	86%	93%
Residents who said we provide staff who are knowledgeable and treat you as a valued customer	93%	94%
Residents who said we told them if we cannot resolve their query immediately, we will explain the process and the timescale for resolution	91%	89%
Residents who agreed we keep you informed regularly of how we are dealing with your query or complaint	67%	81%
Number of complaints received*	2,137	2,294
Number per 1000 properties	32	33
Percentage of complaints upheld	63%	64%
Percentage of complaints responded to on target	93%	92%

*Includes housing, supported living and retirement living complaints

Our focus is to make sure it is easy for our residents to contact us and that queries are quickly resolved. We have a Customer Service Centre (CSC) that is available to call or email 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Our staff at the call centre deal with around one million calls every year. The quality of this service is recognised by us being independently accredited for Customer Service Excellence for the third year running. We are very pleased that satisfaction with how we deal with calls is high, and has improved notably regarding how we keep residents informed. There has been a small decline in satisfaction with how we explain the timescale and we are absolutely committed to ensuring that we are clear with everyone who contacts us. The content on our website has also been regularly updated in light of Covid-19.

Our latest resident scrutiny of the CSC directly involved 40 residents in examining how calls and emails were dealt with. This showed more improvements across the board from when this study was carried out the previous year. Residents were very impressed with the skills, knowledge and professionalism of our customer service officers.

We continue to improve access to our services. Individual repairs can now be reported online and a service has also been introduced so residents can track repairs in communal areas via our website.



Case Study

Pennysmart in Chester

Our commitment to customer service goes beyond ensuring our vital frontline and back office operations are as efficient and effective as possible. Through supporting programmes such as 'Pennysmart', we aim to help our residents in many other ways.

Pennysmart is a project supporting residents in the Blacon area of Chester to reduce financial exclusion and poverty by providing money, debt and benefits advice.

Jon* was registered unemployed due to poor health including suffering with his mental health. He was initially referred to Pennysmart for help with budgeting. However, when we completed a Money Health Check with him, we discovered he was also struggling with debt.

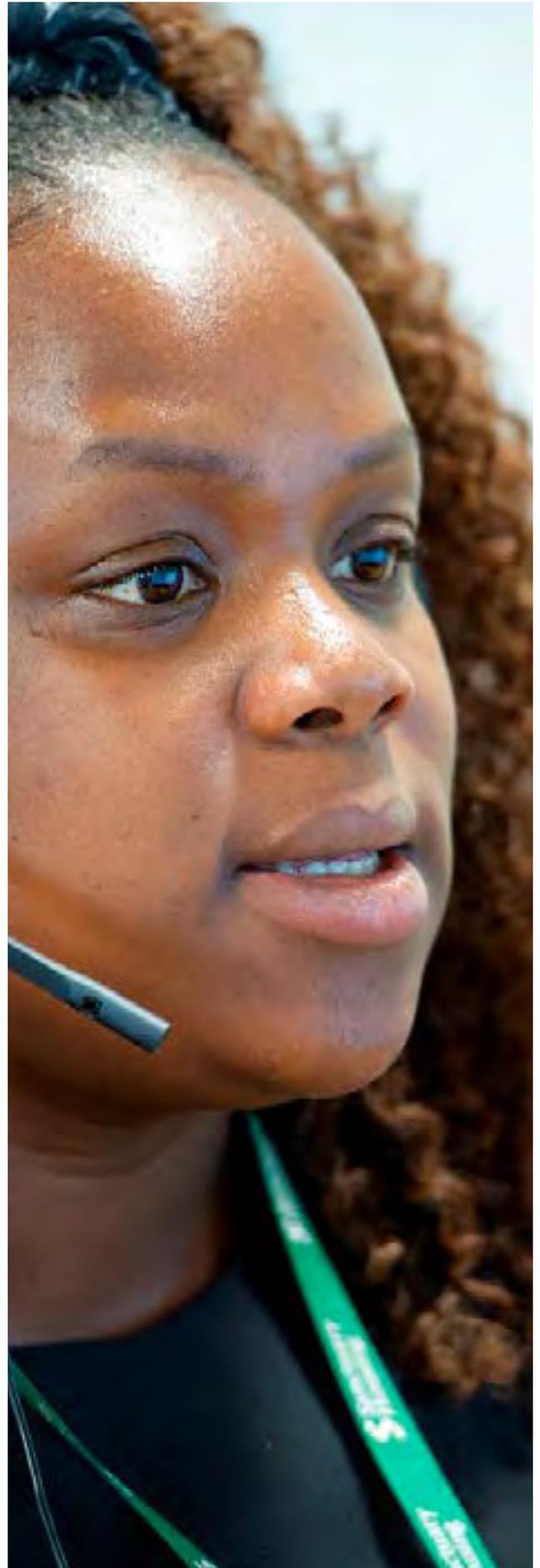
After working through Jon's budget, we managed to reduce his bills and maximise his income enough to leave a reasonable disposable income. We used this money to make offers to each of his creditors including his priority payments such as rent and council tax.

We successfully set up arrangements covering over £5,000 of debt, with Jon now secure in his home.

*Name has been changed

More than eight out of 10 complaints continue to be resolved at the first stage. We have continued to promote our complaints process to ensure residents have the opportunity to tell us when they think our service has not met their expectations.

Over the past 12 months, we have undertaken a number of new measures to develop and enhance the ways we communicate with our residents. While the national issues arising as a result of the coronavirus pandemic pose their own challenges, we have taken active steps to make sure we are able to stay connected with our residents.





Complaints feedback form

We want to continue to make sure that residents are listened to and can provide input into how services are delivered. One of the most recent examples of this approach is the complaints feedback form. Suggested by residents and designed in conjunction with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), this form provides a way for residents to have their say on how a complaint was handled. In return, we will provide clear and full explanations and reasons for any issues that arose during the handling of it – as well as what we will be doing to change this. Over the next year, we'll be focusing on how complaints are handled at the very beginning of the process to make the most of this feedback. We would always encourage residents to get in touch whenever they feel we have let them down.

After a complaint has been placed, we aim to contact the resident within two working days to acknowledge the complaint and go through any concerns. We will then explain how we intend to remedy the situation within a maximum of 10 working days.

New Wellbeing Service

We are committed to making sure residents have the support they need. After undertaking a review of complaints, we learned that while the processes we have in place to deliver our services were being followed, there was a need for additional support for some vulnerable customers.

In response, we have created a wellbeing service for our residents as part of our Customer Service Centre. This service has been able to talk customers through topics such as benefits, make sure work moves forward and provide regular communication and assurance. This extra level of contact for our residents has proved helpful throughout the year but has also been a vital part of how we have responded to the challenges of coronavirus to ensure we provide high levels of service.

Housing Ombudsman Service

We have recently been selected to work with the HOS to develop wider support in the housing sector for the handling of complaints.

As part of this, the HOS has reviewed our policies and procedures, been involved in staff training and engaging with our communities of interest (A community of interest is a group of residents who want to work together with us to improve a service). The project has also helped us to further build on the ways we respond to complaints, and we will be able to provide more information on this in the future.

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2018/2019	2019/2020
Percentage of residents who said we make it clear what to do if they experience antisocial behaviour	78%	86%
Percentage of residents who said they received a response within one working day of reporting a serious incident of antisocial behaviour	77%	67%
Percentage of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	85%	83%

We make it clear what to do if a resident experiences antisocial behaviour, and this guidance can be found on our website, in newsletters, social media channels or by speaking to our Housing Officers and Customer Services Officers. We are pleased that more than eight out of 10 residents felt our guidance was clear.

It is however disappointing that a smaller percentage of residents said we didn't respond within the timescales expected, and we are striving to improve. However, we resolved approximately 6,000 cases of antisocial behaviour this year and average resolution times reduced by more than 10 per cent.

While there has been a slight fall in satisfaction with neighbourhoods as a place to live, we are committed to

Case Study

Neighbourhood Team helping residents in Plymouth to deliver community initiatives

Sanctuary funds the STAR (Savage, Talbot & Roope) resident group in the Barne Barton area of Plymouth, which has been delivering a variety of socially distanced outdoor activities, including weekly bingo.

The group uses a garage which Sanctuary provided to store donations of essential supplies, which are available to any residents in need.

In addition, we provided funding to Tamar View Community Centre to purchase emergency supplies of hygiene and sanitary products, including nappies and antibacterial wipes.

ensuring our neighbourhoods are where people choose to live. One way of achieving this is through our estate inspections. This is where residents join our housing and maintenance teams to look at the condition of an estate and suggest improvements where necessary. Of the 340 estates inspected this year, 271 (80 per cent) were rated 'green' by residents with no improvements identified. For the other estates, a clear set of actions were agreed with residents as well as regular feedback being provided by staff until the actions were completed.

We support a wide range of neighbourhood projects in addition to our frontline services. In the last year, there were more than 56,000 instances where residents participated in these activities. There are two great examples below.

Case Study

Summer Youth Activities in Lache

The Mersey Forest worked with us, Cheshire West and Chester Council, The Welcome Network, and other partners involved in alleviating school holiday hunger, to deliver Horticultural Therapy sessions. The aim was to enable families to engage in gardening activities and form a link between growing food and a potential reduction in food poverty and improved health.

The sessions were extremely well attended, with numbers ranging from 20 to 40 for virtually every session.

Sessions involved using food from the Mersey Forest's garden to create attractive meals for adults and children who previously had limited variety in their diets. Participants grew in confidence, interacted more positively with each other, engaged in new physical activities and enjoyed more time outdoors.

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2018/2019	2019/2020
Number of days to re-let a home	25	24
Number of residents registered with Homeswapper	6,089	5,855
Number of successful swaps on Homeswapper	474	403

We proactively communicate how somebody can apply for a home with us through our website, social media, Housing Officers and Income Officers. Methods include applying directly to us or, in many places, through the choice-based lettings schemes that are run by local authorities. We work with local authority partners to make applying for a property as straightforward as possible. Full details on the options available are in the 'Applying for housing' leaflet on our website.

We continue to improve how quickly we re-let our homes and, while there was a slight reduction in the number of our residents registered with Homeswapper for mutual exchanges this year - at about one in 10 of all eligible residents nationally - this remains higher than our peers.

In response to Covid-19 related restrictions in Spring 2020, we only let homes in emergency situations for a temporary period and made a number of properties available to support those who had been homeless. Our lettings service has subsequently resumed viewings and sign ups, ensuring the safety of both our residents and staff through social distancing and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). We are also piloting 'virtual viewings', particularly in areas where homes can typically be more difficult to let. We are conducting the pilot to make sure we can benefit from any learning before deciding whether to roll it out more widely.



How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2018/2019	2019/2020
Percentage of residents who said their rent provides value for money	91%	90%
Credit rating (Standard and Poor's)*	A+	A+

*Standard and Poor's assess the credit worthiness of an organisation that takes on debt.

Our Value for Money principles are:

Economy Achieving the best value from our inputs, that is, when items were purchased did we get them for the best possible value?

Efficiency Maximising the outputs for a given level of inputs, that is, how good are we at creating the output?

Effectiveness Ensuring the outputs deliver the desired outcome, that is, was what we delivered at the correct standard and did it achieve the desired outcome?

Equity Ensuring the distribution of resources is equitable. That means; are our services equally available to, and did they reach, all the people that they are intended for?

Rent arrears have reduced throughout the year, even taking into account the impact of Universal Credit, and void losses (where rent is lost through homes not being let) are at historically low levels at the end of 2019/2020. This in turn reflects the performance of our operational teams.

The average cost per responsive repair has increased slightly to £122 from £119, but this mitigated significant increases in the costs of fuel and materials.

We provide details of how we are doing against our service standards in this report which complements our Group Annual Report and Financial Statements.

We remain financially strong and this is reflected in our credit rating. We are also pleased that our G1 status for Governance was confirmed by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2020, and that we continue to be compliant with a V2 rating for Financial Viability. While our viability has been regraded from V1, this is in part due to our increased reinvestment programme in homes. We believe that increased expenditure is the right thing to do to ensure our residents are safe and secure in their homes.

Case Study

Sanctuary Supported Living has worked with Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) to secure the purchase and transfer of 813 supported and affordable homes in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.

With the sector facing unprecedented challenges amid the coronavirus outbreak, the deal was successfully completed following strong collaboration from both organisations.

The agreement means that Sanctuary Supported Living now offers bespoke support to homeless people across the three counties as well as working with people at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The transfer will also benefit a number of residents who rent homes around Essex on a general needs basis.

Sara Keetley, Operations Director – Sanctuary Supported Living, commented: "We continue to be committed to finding more ways to support vulnerable adults, by growing our portfolio through further acquisitions, developing our assets, and through the traditional tender process.

"This is really positive news for Sanctuary and we look forward to welcoming new colleagues to our team."

Group Chief Executive Craig Moule said: "This is a significant purchase and it confirms Sanctuary's continued focus on supporting as many vulnerable people as possible, especially in these challenging times."

Getting involved

We believe our residents should play an active part in driving our improvement.

We thank every resident who has given up time and engaged with us. It's an exciting time to get involved and help shape and scrutinise our services, and we have developed opportunities for residents to engage in scrutiny virtually without leaving their home and at a time convenient to them.

To get involved in any of this work, or suggest ideas about how we should engage, residents can email **scrutiny@sanctuary-housing.co.uk** or call us on **0800 131 3348** (**0300 123 3511** from a mobile).

'Engage' is one of the four pillars of our Corporate Strategy and our governance structure enables and empowers residents to engage and participate in decision making at the highest levels of the organisation. Two of our residents are members of our Group Housing Committee, the sub-committee of Group Board which has strategic oversight for housing. The National Resident Scrutiny Panel (NRSP) reports directly to the Group Housing Committee. The panel is responsible for scrutinising policy and performance to ensure greater accountability around service delivery.

Our approach to resident engagement has been recognised with the Housing Quality Network's 'Resident Challenge' award. Our 'communities of interest' are groups of residents who have experience of a service and want to work with us to improve it. Currently more than 500 residents are involved, and the number is growing all the time. Taking part in a community of interest is a great way of doing practical scrutiny work with services. At the moment, there are communities of interest that cover:

- **Estate inspections** - Reviewing the condition of housing estates with staff and recommending any improvements. About 340 inspections were completed last year and we are developing virtual approaches to this.
- **Resident inspectors/service reviews** – Over the last 12 months, this has included reviewing how calls are handled by the repairs call centre. There were 40 residents involved in this work and the feedback was that the level of customer service was excellent. Service reviewers are currently working with us on our approach to resident communications.
- **Family and Friends tests** - Visits to about 25 retirement living and supported living services to consider whether the member of the group visiting would want a family member or friend to live there if they were in need of a similar service. Any improvements identified during these visits were completed promptly, sometimes within 24 hours. Again, we are developing virtual methods for this.
- **Procurement** - Work with the Group's Procurement team on the tenders for waste contractors and replacement kitchens. Feedback was invaluable to identify the priorities the tenders need to cover for price, quality and responsiveness.
- **Homeownership** – A specific group of homeowners/ shared owners whose work over the last year has included supporting the Head of Homeownership to review how service charge information is presented.
- **Complaints reviews** – Most recently this group has focused on the implementation of the Housing Ombudsman Service's new code of practice for landlords.

Listening to residents is not just about governance or scrutiny. We recognise that, every day, our residents give us information about the condition of our homes, communities and performance of our services. We survey approximately 10,000 residents each year regarding their experiences and satisfaction with services.

To further enhance our engagement with residents, we are planning to launch an ambitious listening exercise. A Conversation with Sanctuary will canvas the views of a significant number of residents so that we can better understand the biggest challenges they face, and how we may be able to support them and their communities.



This document can be translated into other languages, large print and Braille or recorded on to an audio CD. Please contact us for details. If you need to speak to a Sanctuary member of staff in your own language, please contact your local office and they will arrange an interpreter for you.

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