

Stevenage Borough Council's Housing Annual Report 2023/24

Introduction

Good quality, affordable and sustainable homes are essential for healthy, happy and secure lives. That's why the standard of the 8,000 homes the Council manages is so important.

Following the Grenfell Fire tragedy in 2017, the Government introduced a range of regulatory and legislative measures to ensure that engagement with tenants and safety of council homes were prioritised by landlords. This has included the revision of the 4 Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards in April 2024. The standards have been updated to give more focus on the voice of tenants, the quality of homes and strengthening the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing, so that they are able to hold Registered Providers (RPs) to account.

To help inform the RSH understanding of compliance, in April 2023 all RPs with over 1000 social housing properties were required to start collecting 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for annual reporting purposes. The central aims of the TSMs are to provide tenants with greater transparency about RP performance and to inform the regulator about the Councils compliance with the consumer standards. The TSMs consist of:

- 12 perception measures
- 10 management information measures

There are five key themes that the measures relate to:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighbourhood management

This report provides our tenants and leaseholders with an update on the Councils performance in relation to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). It provides an opportunity to be transparent about our performance and to be clear about the measures that have been put in place to tackle damp and mould, repairs backlogs; and the numbers of homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard.

This report sets out a summary of the activities delivered as part of the housing improvement programme for 2023/24 and the areas of focus for 2024/25. The activities outlined are aligned to the Consumer Standards High Level Action Plan presented to the Executive in March 2024.

In addition, to ensure that tenants are aware of the findings of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) and the improvement work that has been delivered in 2023/24 and planned for 2024/25, the Council will launch a new Resident Engagement Strategy in Summer 2024 which will set out the range of

ways in which the Council engages with tenants and the opportunities for tenants to get involved.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey Report 23/24

The results of the 12 perception measures have been obtained through a quarterly TSM survey, the questions cover tenants' overall satisfaction with the above 10 management data areas, as well as the Council's fulfilment of asset and communal area maintenance, and tenant engagement.

Stevenage Borough Council commissioned Housemark to carry out the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) survey in line with the regulatory requirements provided by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

All social landlords in England with over 1,000 units must submit results to the regulator for 2023-24 financial year by 30 June 2024. Satisfaction scores should be interpreted carefully as they can be significantly impacted by:

Landlord context – for example they are significantly lower for large landlords with dispersed stock or operating in primarily urban areas.

Survey method – for example, some landlords achieve higher scores through carrying out the survey face-to-face.

As a result, satisfaction scores reported to the regulator will vary significantly. For the tenant perception measures and based on 1,000 respondents consulted during 2023/2024, the following key points can be noted:

- Overall satisfaction (TP01): This measure is often used as the main headline measure of service performance - Stevenage Borough Council achieved a score of 56.0%.

- Highest scoring TSMs: The top scoring Tenant Satisfaction Measures were identified as:
 - i) TP08: 70.2% - Residents who agree that Stevenage Borough Council treats them fairly and with respect.
 - ii) TP05: 69.9% - Residents who are satisfied that their home is safe.
 - iii) TP02: 62.7% - Residents who are satisfied with the overall repairs service.

- Lowest scoring TSMs / high dissatisfaction: Satisfaction with complaints handling presented relatively low levels of satisfaction (22.8%) combined with relatively high levels of dissatisfaction (60.6%).

- Benchmarking: When benchmarking overall satisfaction, all measures ranked below the Housemark mid-year TSM scores (November 2023).
- Identifying what drives overall satisfaction: Based on the results, the top three service areas driving satisfaction are:
 - i) TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
 - ii) TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
 - iii) TP08: Satisfaction that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

Investing time and energy in these areas of service will help drive overall satisfaction for most residents.

Stevenage Borough Council TSM scores

Measure	Stevenage TSM score results
TP01: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from Stevenage Borough Council.	56.0%
TP02: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall repairs service from Stevenage Borough Council over the last 12 months	62.7%
TP03: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after they reported it	52.4%
TP04: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that Stevenage Borough Council provides a home that is well maintained	59.2%
TP05: Proportion of respondents who, when thinking about the condition of their property or the building they live in, report that they are satisfied that Stevenage Borough Council provides a home that is safe	69.9%

TP06: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with Stevenage Borough Council listening to their views and acting upon them	44.9%
TP07: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with Stevenage Borough Council keeping them informed about things that matter to them	50.9%
TP08: Proportion of respondents who report that they agree with the statement: "Stevenage Borough Council treats me fairly and with respect"	70.2%
TP09: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with Stevenage Borough Council's approach to complaints handling	22.8%
TP10: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied Stevenage Borough Council keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	53.3%
TP11: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied Stevenage Borough Council make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood	47.7%
TP12: Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with Stevenage Borough Council's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	49.5%

Satisfaction trends over time

Housemark's mid- year report considers that overall satisfaction has been declining over the last five years across the sector. Although several factors may have influenced this trend (Covid, economic downturn, cost of living and energy crisis, etc....), fundamentally 9 out of 10 landlords are reporting tenants are less satisfied than when they carried out their last satisfaction survey.

Median overall satisfaction since 2018/19



Conclusions

Based on findings for the 2023/24 TSM survey, this report suggests that whilst there are elements which may be encouraging (e.g. TP08, treating tenants fairly and with respect), there is room for improvement in all measures compared to peer group scores. Focusing upon the top key drivers of overall satisfaction will help increase satisfaction perceptions for most tenants over time, whilst consideration should also be given to areas of low satisfaction / high dissatisfaction. (specifically, complaints handling). Recommendations for consideration are noted at the end of Section.

You Said We Did

In response to the findings of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey the remainder of this report sets out the steps that have been taken to improve management of assets and the Council’s approach to tenancy management across the 4 following areas:

- Repairs
- Safety of Homes
- Complaints Handling
- Resident Engagement

This information is supplemented by the 10 management data measures (Annex A) that indicate that the Council performs consistently well across gas; fire; asbestos; water and lift compliance checks. This performance is consistent with the Council’s commitment to prioritising the safety of tenants and proactively maintaining and managing its social housing stock. Obtaining a clearer understanding of our performance in relation to other local authorities of a similar size, will be a priority for the council in 2024/25.

1. Repairs

TSM Survey findings indicated that 52.4% of respondents reported that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after they reported it. 62.7% of respondents are satisfied with the overall repairs service over the last 12 months.

In 2023/24...

The council completed 19,780 repair jobs and in Quarter 4 reported the following:

92% (3593) of 3906 non-emergency repairs were completed on time

91.5% (3980) of all repairs (4347) were completed on time

135 void property refurbishment works were completed, which has reduced the number of voids that are ‘work in progress’ to 38 during Q1 2024/25.

In addition, further training and expansion of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) Knowledge Base has helped increase staff knowledge and access to timely information, which has reduced the average call response and handling times for repairs.

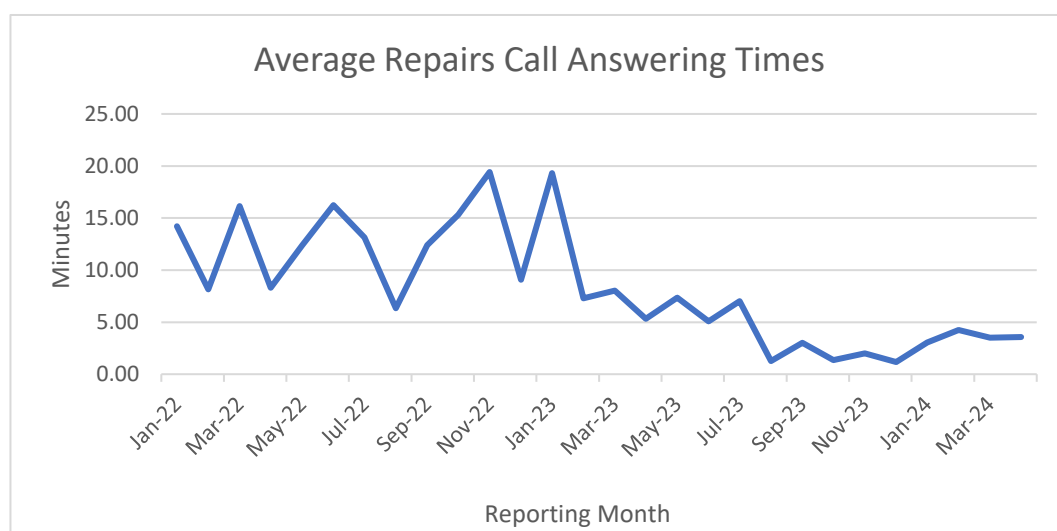


Fig.1

A service review of both Voids and Repairs was completed in 2023/24 along with scrutiny reviews of the Repairs and Void Service by the Community Select Committee. The agreed recommendations have fed into improvement plans to be delivered over the next 12-18 months.

Following a review of current arrangements, new interim contractors have been appointed to support the Repairs Service, including for specialist works such as roofing, pending a procurement process to award longer-term contracts in 2024/25.

A fencing programme has been put in place by the Housing Investment team which carried out fencing works on 342 properties in 2023/24 and aims to clear the historic backlog of fencing repair jobs during 2024/25.

<p>Changes to ways of working for the Repairs Supervisors and Maintenance Surveyors have been introduced to increase first time fix rates, productivity, and customer satisfaction.</p>
<p>‘Book Hub’ the new online reporting repairs service, which will allow customers to select their own repair appointment times, has been released in-house and testing is being carried out before it is offered to tenants in Q2/24.</p>
<p>Planned 2024/25</p>
<p>Deliver improvement plan for Repairs including:</p> <p>Continuing to upskill the workforce and maximise productivity</p> <p>Procurement of support contractors – to demonstrate Value for Money and ability to deliver to required quality and timescales in accordance with agreed service standards</p> <p>Make best use of technology and leverage the benefits of mobile solutions to capture tasks and manage workflow. Frontline teams to be enabled to view existing repairs and raise new repairs</p> <p>Improve diagnosis of repairs at first point of contact</p> <p>Customer engagement – to help shape new service model, demonstrate learning from complaints. Improve communications with customers and their perceptions of and satisfaction with the service</p> <p>Service delivery framework - to enhance collaboration between asset management and repairs teams balanced with clear accountabilities.</p> <p>Deliver improvement plan for Voids including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - procurement of voids contractor - business case for future delivery model to be presented to Cabinet for approval in Summer 2024
<p>Following a period of consultation, the new Repairs Policy and Service Standards will be presented to the Cabinet in July 2024. These documents will clearly set-out the council’s commitment to responding to repair requests and the service expectations</p>

2. Safety of Homes

<p>TSM Survey findings indicated that 69.9% of respondents, when thinking about the condition of their property or building they live in, report they are satisfied that they are provided with a home that is safe</p>
<p>In 2023/24</p>

<p>The council entered into the final year of its Major Refurbishment Programme (£50m+) raising the standard and quality of over 500 plus low to medium sized flat blocks</p>
<p>Building Safety and Investment Plans were approved by the Executive in July 2023 (10 buildings in scope including 2 new build schemes delivered in 2023/24)</p>
<p>All building safety regulatory milestones have been met and 100% compliance across all safety measures (Gas, Fire, Water, Lift, Asbestos) was achieved in May 2024</p>
<p>94% of the Council’s housing stock met the national Decent Homes Standard. This improvement in performance is as an outcome of the annual 3-star gas servicing contract which is now well established and ensures that where a boiler is deemed in poor condition and in need of replacement this will be actioned immediately, ahead of the replacement through the planned programme</p>
<p>Planned 2024/25</p>
<p>Design and remedy plans for the modernisation of high-rise blocks are due to be completed in Quarter 2 2024/25, and procurement of specialist contractors will be undertaken shortly after</p>
<p>Specialist Damp and Mould team has been established for 5 years to proactively respond to damp and mould reports and provide training to support the team</p>
<p>The Damp, Mould and Condensation Improvement Plan will be implemented to ensure compliance with soon to be introduced new statutory instruments linked to Awaab’s Law.</p>
<p>Delivery of the Decent Homes Programme to achieve 100% of housing stock meeting national standards, including the installation of 995 new kitchens or bathrooms, 1875 heating upgrades, 1500 window or door upgrades and 1400 receiving works to improve their energy efficiency over the next three years.</p>

3. Complaints Handling

<p>TSM Survey findings indicate that 22.8% of respondents are satisfied with the Council’s approach to complaint handling, with 16.6% of respondents being neither satisfied or dissatisfied</p>
<p>In 2023/24</p>
<p>A new Corporate Complaints Policy was approved in line with the revised Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, to include introduction of new Member for Complaints role within the Cabinet</p>

In Quarter 2, the Council introduced a bi – weekly complaints clinic with the purpose of reviewing trends and undertaking route cause analysis to help drive improvements and learning.

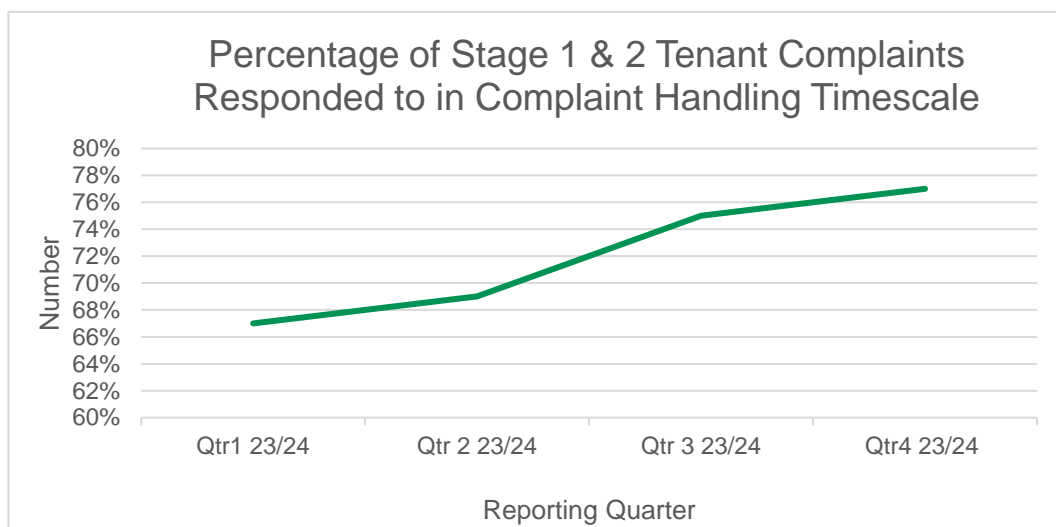


Fig.2

The introduction of the complaints clinic has had a positive impact on effective triage and resolution of complaints (see Figure 2). Alongside the decrease in the number of complaints being made (see Figure 3) and the reduced call handling time (see Figure 1) it is clear to see the council’s commitment to proactively address the causes of complaints demonstrated, and a significantly improved complaint handling picture overall

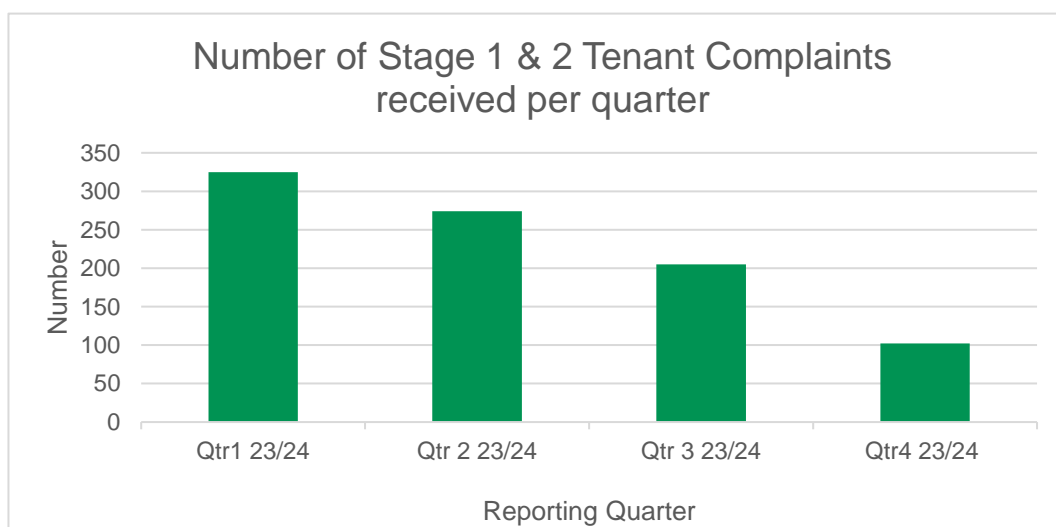


Fig.3

Planned 2024/25

Procurement and implementation of a new Complaints Handling IT System that will enhance management and learning, and improve insight into trends and causes of complaints

The increased investment in repairs and maintenance e.g., fencing, roofing and damp, mould & condensation is anticipated to reduce the number of complaints in these areas and these areas of focus will be monitored closely

Complaints Annual Report and Improvement Plan to be shared with the Cabinet in July 2024. The report will help inform areas of focus at weekly complaints clinics and through tenant engagement.

4. Resident Engagement

TSM Survey findings indicated that 50.9% of respondents report they are satisfied with being kept informed about things that matter to them. 44.9% of respondents report they are satisfied with their view being listened to and acted upon

In 2023/24

Pre-engagement work with Tenants was undertaken in preparation for the scoping of the Repairs & Maintenance Policy, this will be followed by a period of consultation with Tenants in Summer 2024

Consultation has taken place with tenants living in high rise buildings to help inform our high rise building resident engagement strategy. Further consultation and tenant and leaseholder engagement will be undertaken prior to publication

Commissioned TPAS to help us re-engineer our engagement framework to refresh and embed tenant voice throughout housing services. They have worked with ‘engaged’ and ‘non-engaged’ tenants through the discovery and design process

Tenants were invited to participate in a Caretaking Service Review which allowed us to gain valuable insight into the perception of the service

We have introduced transactional surveys for Complaint Handling and ASB to give us a deeper understanding of tenant views across these areas and to help us drive improvement with satisfaction

Resident consultation on a new Allocation Policy, due to be adopted in July 2024

Cooperative Neighbourhood Newsletters were launched to summarise activities in each neighbourhood and promote the collaborative work between residents, Members and Officers to deliver targeted neighbourhood initiatives

<p>A key strategic priority for the council in its Corporate Plan – Making Stevenage Even Better (2024-2027) is the provision of ‘More Social, Affordable & Good Quality Homes’ (MSAGQH). As part of formal consultation activities, sixty-four per cent (64%) of residents and tenants agreed that provision of good quality tenancy, housing maintenance, repairs and homelessness services to residents was important. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Milestones that will demonstrate performance against MSAGQH will be published in 2024/25</p>
<p>Planned 2024/25</p>
<p>Following the discovery and design stage of re-engineering our engagement framework, TPAS will continue to consult with tenants to design and deliver a co-created approach to engagement and influence, following publication of the revised standards</p>
<p>New Resident Engagement Strategy and framework to be introduced in July 2024, that will strengthen the council’s approach to tenant and leaseholder participation, influence and scrutiny based on ‘engaging, listening and acting’</p>
<p>Tenant profiling to give us greater insight into the needs and preferences and help shape our service delivery</p>
<p>Scrutiny groups will be re-invigorated to take a deep-dive into service delivery, with suggested improvement action plans generated by tenants and leaseholders</p>
<p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures Plus Approach to be implemented during 2024/25 to further empower tenants and provide more contextual information on perceived service issues, opportunities and successes.</p>
<p>Implementation of a High Rise Resident Engagement Plan to help inform the design and delivery of building safety works programme</p>
<p>A Communication Plan based on the feedback of tenants will set out the council’s approach to meaningfully sharing updates about the council’s improvement programme</p>
<p>A new suite of Key Performance Indicators and Milestones indicating how the council will demonstrate performance against the MSAGQH strategic priority will be published in July 2024, this will be followed by quarterly updates to tenants through engaging social media updates</p>

Annex A

Tenancy Satisfaction Measure (TSM)	Description	Annual
BS01: Gas Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.	100
Number of dwelling units owned for which all required gas safety checks were carried out and recorded as at year end		7185
Number of dwelling units owned for which gas safety checks were required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		7185
BS02: Fire Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.	100
Number of dwelling units owned within properties that required an FRA for which all required FRAs were carried out and recorded as at year end		2742
Number of dwelling units owned within properties for which an FRA was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		2742
BS03 - Asbestos safety checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	100
Number of dwelling units owned within properties that required an asbestos management survey or re-inspection for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections were carried out and recorded as at year end		2542
Number of dwelling units owned within properties for which an asbestos management survey or re-inspection was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		2542
BS04 - Water safety checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments	96.65
Number of dwelling units owned for which all required legionella risk assessments (LRAs) were carried out and recorded as at year end		1907

Number of dwelling units owned for which an LRA was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)	have been carried out	1973
BS05 - Lift safety checks (%)		100
Number of dwelling units owned within properties with communal passenger lifts for which all Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) inspection reports were carried out and recorded as at year end	Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out	725
Number of dwelling units owned within properties with communal passenger lifts as at year end (multiplied 100)		725
CH01 - Complaints relative to the size of the landlord STAGE 1 (per 1000 homes)		102
Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year	Number of: 1. stage one complaints and 2. stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes:	818
Number of dwelling units owned of the relevant stock type at year end (multiplied 1000)		8012
CH01 - Complaints relative to the size of the landlord STAGE 2 (per 1000 homes)		10.9
Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year		88
Number of dwelling units owned of the relevant stock type at year end (multiplied 1000)		8012
CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales STAGE 1 (%)	Proportion of: 1. stage one complaints responded to and 2. stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's	77.13
Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants during the reporting year for the relevant stock type that were responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale		631

Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year(multiplied 100)	Complaint Handling Code timescales	818	
CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales STAGE 2 (%)		69.3	
Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants during the reporting year for the relevant stock type that were responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale		61	
Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year(multiplied 100)		88	
NM01 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord Anti-social behaviour cases (per 1000 homes)	Number of: 1. anti-social behaviour cases, of which 2. anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents opened per 1,000 homes.	13.48	
Total number of anti-social behaviour cases opened by or on behalf of the provider during the reporting year (including any ASB cases that involve hate incidents)		108	
Number of dwelling units owned by the relevant social housing stock at year end (multiplied 1000)		8012	
NM01 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord Anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents (per 1000 homes)		0.12481	
Number of anti-social behaviour cases (as reported in part 1) that involve hate incidents opened by or on behalf of the provider during the reporting year		1	
Number of dwelling units owned of the relevant social housing stock at year end (multiplied 1000)		8012	
RP01 - Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (%)		Proportion of homes that do not	5.9

Number of dwelling units owned to which the Decent Homes Standard applied which failed the Decent Homes standard at year end	meet the Decent Homes Standard	468
Number of dwelling units owned to which the Decent Homes Standard applied at year end		7471
RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale Non-emergency repairs (%)	Proportion of: 1. non-emergency and 2. emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord’s target timescale.	87.575
Number of non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the provider's target timescale during the reporting year		15901
Number of non-emergency responsive repairs completed during the reporting year (multiplied 100)		18157
RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale Emergency repairs (%)		87.0098
Number of emergency responsive repairs completed within the provider's target timescale during the reporting year		1420
Number of emergency responsive repairs completed during the reporting year (multiplied 100)		1632

Annex B**Overview of the survey approach and representativeness**

An overview of the survey approach is outlined below.

Feedback services provider (collecting, generating, and validating the reported perception measures)	Service Insights Ltd (independent research company) in partnership with of Housemark
Survey fieldwork date	September 2023 and March 2024
Total surveyable population	8,000
Total sample size achieved (total number of responses)	1,000
Statistical confidence required and achieved	±4% is required overall for 2023/24. This report achieved ±2.9% (i.e. more
Reasons for any failure to meet the required sample size	Not applicable
Collection method	90.3% Telephone survey (903 completed) 9.7% Online survey (97 completed)
Type and amount of any incentives offered	None
Sampling method	Randomised sample through MS Excel randomisation.
Number of tenant households within the relevant population that have not been included in the	None
Summary of representativeness of the sample against the relevant tenant population	As the tenant survey responses were considered to be representative of the wider tenant population, weighting was not required.
Any weighting applied	Weighting was not required for this report.
Questions asked	12 regulatory TSM questions 3 additional questions (September 2023)

Any other methodological issues likely to have a material impact on the tenant perception measures reported	None
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