



sshā
your local housing provider

Customer Annual
Report 2010/11



You
made it!

More of you than ever are helping
shape SSHA – find out how inside

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the second Annual Report for you, our customers. This report tells you how we're doing in providing services, the progress we've made against our promises in last year's Local Offer and how we're planning to improve even more.

It doesn't seem like twelve months since I wrote the introduction for last year's report and a lot has happened since then! Nationally the economic outlook hasn't been good, with big cuts in public spending and welfare benefits already happening. The way that Housing Associations are regulated by Government is also changing. There's more emphasis on performance and scrutiny by customers.

Inevitably these changes will affect the Association, but we need to be positive. I'm more than confident that we can meet the challenges ahead. We've already made good progress but there's much more work to do and we need your help.

It's very important for us to tell you how we're improving and what we're planning to change in the future. Thank you to everyone who's been involved with the Association during the year. You'll see we've tried hard to act upon your comments.

To help us improve even further, I would encourage you to get involved with the Association in any way you can. Only by working together can we continue to deliver great homes and services and I look forward to reporting next year on the exciting things we've achieved together.

Rolf Levesley

Chair

South Staffordshire Housing Association

Rolf Levesley, Chair SSHA

Introduction from the Resident Sounding Group

Welcome to the second South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) Tenants' Annual Report. It covers what we've done from the 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011.



The Resident Sounding Group

The Resident Sounding Group works with the Association to help plan future policies and service improvements so that SSHA stays forward thinking and meets new challenges. And right now, we're very proud to have been involved in the development of the design and content of this Annual Report.

It's also a good opportunity to tell you all what a busy year the Resident Sounding Group has had. We've concentrated on tasks like setting

up the Group, reviewing a number of policies including Income Management and Access to Services. We've also been involved in choosing the Association's Home Contents Insurance provider, reviewing the Grounds Maintenance Service and Starter Tenancies. This is all in addition to the work we've carried out helping to define the Local Offer.

We hope that you'll take the time to read this and see how well we're doing and how the services we provide compare to others.

And here's more good news! If you'd like to be involved in the Sounding Group, but the commitment of regular formal meetings has put you off, don't worry. Things are changing. We're now working on giving the Group more flexibility and offering greater opportunities for your involvement without you having to attend a set amount of meetings.

Resident Sounding Group

To find out more, call Freephone
0800 096 8690, 01785 312000 or e-mail
communityengagement@ssha.co.uk

Introduction from the Resident Scrutiny Panel

The Resident Scrutiny Panel is the Association's approach to involving customers in monitoring what it does.



The Resident Scrutiny Panel

It's our job to independently compare and challenge how the Association has performed against the targets set out in the Local Offer, as well as identify areas for improvement, promote good practice and celebrate success.

Scrutinising how the Association performs is vital for providing assurance to the Board and to you, our fellow customers, that the organisation is running well and that the information given to you is accurate. We've been encouraged by the Association's approach to scrutiny so far, particularly the desire to work with us and its openness to questions.

This Annual Report is a key way for the Association to tell you how it's performing and as a Panel we encourage you to read it and ask lots of questions about the content.

Resident Scrutiny Panel

To find out more, call Freephone
0800 096 8690, 01785 312000 or e-mail
tony.price@housing-plus.co.uk

About SSHA

Your Landlord

South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) is the largest landlord in South Staffordshire and a proud member of the Housing Plus Group. SSHA has been established since the transfer of homes from South Staffordshire Council in March 1997.

We are pleased to own and manage 5,878 properties. These consist of:

- » 3,617 general needs homes for families, couples or single people.
- » 1,904 apartments and bungalows for the over 55's, including extra care accommodation.
- » 251 leasehold properties, usually flats sold under the Right to Buy scheme
- » 106 shared ownership properties, which are part rent/part buy.

And we're pleased to say, that as a result of our successful development programme we've been able to build another 226 homes this year to house even more people in need.

What did we do in 2010/11?

Between April 2010 and March 2011 we let 545 homes to new tenants. Compared to 511 homes last year it's quite an increase and means that these people are now able to enjoy better housing and an improved standard of living.

More than eight out of ten homes were let to local people and 5% were let to people who were classed as homeless by a local authority. 2% of homes were let to customers from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, which is about the same level as the BME population in our catchment areas.

2010/2011 also saw us open Vine Court, a new extra care scheme in Cannock with its own specialist care team, CarePlus.

What's in the pipeline for 2011/12?

We've lots of exciting plans for this coming year. In October 2011 we'll be opening our third extra care scheme, Cherry Tree Court in Essington. Here, 66 modern apartments will provide a choice of one or two bedroom apartments offering independent living and reassurance for the over 55's

**For further information contact
SSHA on freephone 0800 096 8690,
01785 312000 or visit
www.care-plus.org.uk**

We've also applied to the Government for funding to help us with our development programme and we have received an allocation to help us build an extracare scheme in Penkrudge. We'll continue to use our own resources to help with development to meet local needs.



SSHA Residents at launch of Giggetty play area

About the Report

Why you should be interested?

You've told us you want to know how we're performing. After all, your rent and service charges pay for these services. That's why it's important you have the information to decide whether we're spending money wisely or not. This is also an opportunity for you to find out what progress we've made in developing the service improvements we featured in last year's report. Our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) requires us to report our performance to you.

Our Performance

You've told us how you'd like performance to be reported. Over the next few pages we'll tell you about each service area featuring the following:

- » Key targets and performance for this year and last so you can see how things have changed.
- » A 'traffic light' performance system: Green is on or above target, Amber is just below target and Red is well below target.
- » In addition to national comparisons of our performance, we've also included comparisons with local providers. This is a new feature you requested.
- » Our plans on improving Red or Amber performance.
- » Our progress against service improvements we agreed with you last year.

When asked to comment on how effectively we've displayed performance information, an

Interested Customer Group Member said, "Very effective. The traffic light system is simple to understand, yet shows clearly where performance needs attention."

Performance Comparisons

You asked us to report how our performance compared with local associations and we're happy to introduce this. We've compared our performance to seven providers operating locally. These are Sanctuary Housing, Stafford and Rural Homes, Midland Heart, Staffordshire Housing, Places for People, Accord and Wrekin Housing Trust.

As we develop our Local Offer to be specific to your feedback, like for like comparisons will become more difficult to provide. However, over the next twelve months we'll be working with other local associations and customers to develop useful comparisons.

Performance Monitoring

We monitor performance in two ways. Officers are responsible for looking at their service areas, ensuring that targets are met and service improvements delivered. Also, the Resident Scrutiny Panel provide a customer perspective and look in detail at specific areas of the Local Offer performance. The Panel can raise poor performance with the Board and recommend areas for further scrutiny.

Value for money
By producing just this Annual Report rather than the report PLUS a separate edition of News Extra, we've saved £5,000.



SSHA residents working together

Your input in this report

Many customers have been involved in developing this report and we're very grateful for your input. Your ideas have influenced many decisions around:

- » Style and design
- » Articles and content
- » Presentation of performance information
- » Type of paper used




"We were all given the opportunity to comment on what we considered good about last year's report and how it could be made even better. After giving honest and constructive feedback it's rewarding to see our ideas have been incorporated in the new report."

Resident Sounding Group/Editorial Panel

Thank you to everyone who's worked closely with us to bring it all together. Please let us know what you think by completing the Feedback form on page 37.

Your Involvement

How did we perform last year?

Target	How we performed		How we compare	
	2009/10	2010/11	Locally	Nationally
Answer 85% of phone calls within 20 seconds.	84.7%	83.12% 	No Bench Mark Available	No Bench Mark Available
Acknowledge complaints within one working day.	100%	100% 	No Bench Mark Available	No Bench Mark Available
Resolve 95% of complaints to your satisfaction by dealing with them at the first stage.	99.4%	89.13% 	Lower 25%	Lower 50%

What are we doing about the Red and Ambers?







We're currently reviewing our Complaints Policy and Procedures. A series of staff workshops are being held to ensure complaints are dealt with more effectively at stage 1 of the process by the most appropriate member of staff.

You also told us that how we handle your call is just as important as how quickly we answer it. Therefore we've developed a number of procedures to improve our speed as well as the quality of our response.

Value for money

We provided the call centre with a new system that helps them accurately diagnose repairs. This reduced the need for callbacks, sped up the entire process, and saved money too.

Update on service improvements

What we said	What we did	Progress
Agree timescales to return your calls.	You said some calls should be returned the same day, but you're prepared to wait a little longer for others. We're committed to implementing this and will introduce and report our performance later this year.	
Agree how fast we should answer your call.	You're happy for us to answer your call within 30 seconds. We'll introduce and report our performance against this target this year.	
Decide whether to keep our Freephone telephone number.	The majority of you feel we should keep the Freephone telephone number, so this is what we'll do.	
Develop additional measures for reporting complaints performance.	You told us you'd like to see the number of complaints and at which stage they are resolved. These measures will be reported to you this year.	
Develop a Resident Scrutiny Panel.	Four members have already been recruited onto the Resident Scrutiny Panel and have carried out their first scrutiny exercise.	
Agree how to tailor our services to meet your specific needs.	We're currently updating the Tenant Audit information you provided. This will be complete by December 2011. The information will ensure our services are accessible to all and will also guide the way we develop our services.	



SSHA Resident, Miss Ellis and family

Your Involvement

Case Study: **Keeping in touch**

We know how important your repairs service is to you, which is why we regularly review it and make improvements thanks to your feedback.

At last year's Big Day Out you told us that the way we deal with your call is as important as how quickly we answer the phone. So over the past year we've worked hard to keep improving both the speed and quality of what we do.

Now, wherever possible, we'll call you back the same day. In some cases, this might be tricky and we want to make sure you get a proper answer when we ring you. If we can't give you the full answer within 24 hours, we'll keep you up to date with regular calls until we can resolve the matter.







One customer, Miss Claire Ellis called to report damage to her path and steps up to her front door. Using our diagnostic system, our advisor looked into what the best course of action should be. Unfortunately she wasn't able to give Miss Ellis an answer straight away but offered to call back after she'd spoken to the right people and found a satisfactory solution. Arrangements were quickly made and our advisor was soon in touch to make an appointment to complete the repair.

Miss Ellis commented, *"Please continue to employ friendly and helpful people like Hilary. She's happy and cheerful and always finds out the answer to our problems. She always calls back when she says she will and nothing is ever too much trouble."*

We understand that having a specified call back time and keeping our promise is really important to you. Whether you're taking time off work, or waiting in just for us, our operatives are mindful they have to keep in touch to keep you happy.

Your Home

How did we perform last year?

Target	How we performed		How we compare	
	2009/10	2010/11	Locally	Nationally
Achieve over 97% satisfaction in the way we deal with repairs and maintenance.	80%	95.36%	 No Bench Mark Available	Upper 25%
Complete 99.5% of all emergency repairs within 24hrs.	99.62%	99.75%	 Lower 50%	Upper 50%
Complete 99% of all urgent repairs within 4 working days.	100.00%	99.36%	 Upper 50%	Upper 25%
Complete 99% of all routine repairs within 18 working days.	98.81%	98.5%	 Upper 50%	Upper 50%
Keep all of the repairs appointments we make.	99.68%	99.30%	 Upper 25%	Upper 25%
Less than 100 properties should fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard.	52	0	 Upper 25%	Upper 25%

What are we doing about the Ambers?








We've held a series of focus groups on the repairs service to understand what really matters to you. This feedback has shaped our Local Offer promises.

We've also set ourselves the challenging target of keeping every appointment we make. Because our focus groups indicated this was really important to you, it's changed how we'll take our Local Offer forward.

Value for money

During last year we reviewed the way we offer contracts for certain areas of work. This led to annual savings of £28,000 for the external painting contract and up to £70,000 for the electrical repairs contract.

Update on service improvements

What we said	What we did	Progress
Identify priorities for investment in your home and discuss improvement work your home needs.	After speaking to you at the Big Day Out last year we worked with a focus group to develop an Asset Investment Strategy. This included investment programmes that are being run this year to improve your home. You can catch up with the Strategy and our programmes on our website.	
Define a specific Standard for SSHA homes.	After speaking to you at the Big Day Out last year we worked with a group of residents in the Property Services Forum to develop an SSHA Standard, a Safer Homes Standard (covering health and safety issues) and a new Lettable Standard. You can see these Standards on our website, and a summary will be included in the next News Extra.	
Review our repairs targets so that all repairs happen within a month of being reported.	You told us that 30 days is the longest you're prepared to wait for any repair and you'd like us to focus on using labour efficiently to achieve this. As a result, we'll complete any repair that's our responsibility within 30 days of it being reported. Repairs included in a programme of planned works will be published on our website and monitored separately.	
Consult on what you think 'right first time' means.	You said you don't like the term 'Right First Time', you prefer 'Quality Repair'. Therefore this is the term we'll use. You defined 'Quality Repair' as: appointments made and kept supported by repairs that stand the test of time. We'll begin to monitor Quality Repair Performance by measuring appointments kept and reviewing a percentage of repairs to see whether you're still happy with the work 6 months later.	
Consult on whether we should offer compensation for missed appointments.	You said appointments are really important and you need a minimum of 2 hours notice of any changes, otherwise they should be classed as missed. We're now working towards this. From our consultation it's not clear whether compensation would increase your satisfaction for missed appointments. We'll review this with you around 12 months after the service improvements mentioned have been made.	
Discuss the choices you have regarding improvements to your home.	Choice has always been offered for some improvements. For example, new kitchens can be designed and fitted to meet individual needs. Where possible we'll offer you a choice and include you in the selection of materials too.	
Identify priorities for investment in your home and discuss improvement work your home needs.	After speaking to you at the Big Day Out last year we worked with a focus group to develop an Asset Investment Strategy. This included investment programmes to improve your home which are being run this year. You'll find these on our website.	

Your Home

Case Study: **Improving our repairs service**

We rely on your feedback to shape and improve our services. From our latest surveys we learnt that you consider keeping repairs appointments one of your biggest priorities.

With your comments in mind we set a performance target of keeping 100% of our appointments over the year ahead. That's a tough target when we're dealing with the unexpected every day, from fire and floods, to ceilings collapsing and road closures. If we're going to be late, we'll do our best to contact you at least two hours before your appointment.

Unfortunately Mrs Jones of Cheslyn Hay knows all about that. We made an appointment to repair some brick work at her property and didn't keep it. She'd taken the afternoon off work and wasn't happy. Mrs Jones commented, *"They gave me a time and date for their visit, but they didn't come. I called them and they were really apologetic. We arranged another visit two days later. Because it was the outside brickwork that needed looking at I didn't have to be there, so I didn't lose any more pay."*

Though we're constantly reviewing our performance to help people like Mrs Jones, our deadlines for dealing with priority repairs haven't changed. We still respond in 24 hours for emergency repairs, four working days for urgent repairs and 18 working days for routine jobs.

But we've slashed the times for 'planned and packaged' repairs, like plastering and fencing from 12 weeks to just 30 days. This means we promise to deal with all repairs within one month. And sometimes it's even quicker! If one of our workers is in your street to do another repair and they have some spare time, we'll fit your repair in there and then if we can.

Miss Partington was delighted with the extra early repair work carried out on her guttering. She told us, *"They got it done a lot quicker than I thought. I wasn't surprised they called early, if they can squeeze work in they will. They're all lovely lads, I've never had any problems and I've lived here 17 years!"*

From the minute you call, we use the latest technology to diagnose your problem. This way we can select the right person with the right skills and the right equipment to do the job. The same technology even allows the inspector to book the work in direct from your home, making the booking and repair process faster. It all adds to the service that offers our tenants a quality repair.



Mark Howles, Property Care

Your Tenancy

How did we perform last year?

Target	How we performed		How we compare	
	2009/10	2010/11	Locally	Nationally
To re-let General Needs properties within 21 calendar days.	33.4 days	21.3 days 	Upper 50%	Upper 50%
Keep rent arrears less than 1.75%.	1.60%	1.64% 	Upper 50%	Upper 25%
Write off just 1% of our debts and no more.	0.3%	0.4% 	Upper 25%	Upper 25%
Achieve 95% satisfaction with the re-let process.	99.3%	100% 	No Bench Mark Available	No Bench Mark Available

What are we doing about the Amber?




We're really pleased with the progress we've made in reducing the number of days it takes us to re-let an empty general needs property. This was primarily due to different teams working better together and using more

efficient processes. However, we're still just over our target. By continuing this improvement we're confident that we'll achieve the target during 2011/12.

Value for money

By reducing the time a property stands empty from an average of 33 days to 21, we've increased our rental income by a massive £83,000. This money can then be spent on improving even more services and homes.

Update on service improvements

What we said	What we did	Progress
Consult you on acceptable targets for re-letting empty homes.	Last year you asked us to reduce our target from 28 to 21 days. We've made significant improvements during the year by developing our processes, and we're confident we can go even further and reduce the target to just 19 days.	
Consult you on how long it should take to process an application for housing.	In the past we've done this within 28 days. We're now committing to an ambitious target of 10 days.	
Consult you on the best way to deal with under occupation.	Last year 61% of you suggested we should "actively encourage" tenants living in properties that are too big for them to downsize. We're currently developing an Under Occupation Policy with the Resident Sounding Group. Check out the details in the next News Extra.	

Your Tenancy

Case Study: **The Perfect Fit**

With so many people waiting for housing, it is vital that we have the means to house everybody in the right sized properties. With such a demand we have to let homes based on needs, whether it be disability, age specific or growing families.

This story shows how one simple move can be the starting point for a whole chain of families and individuals finding their perfect home and improving their lives no matter what age they are.

Mr Bill Tunnicliffe who lived in a bungalow is well into his 80's. Maintenance and housework were becoming too much and Bill desperately needed to downsize. Our experienced team helped him find a one bedroom apartment at the Sheltered Housing Scheme, Naden House. This not only freed up his bungalow for re-letting, it also meant Bill could improve his quality of life, by enjoying more company and receiving the support he needed. Di Wallace, Supported Living Co-ordinator comments, *"It was the quickest letting ever. Bill came and had a look and straight away he said that yes, he wanted to come here."*

Bill's bungalow then became the ideal new home for Mrs Llewellyn. Living in her 3 bedroom house had become a struggle. Due to poor health, Mrs Llewellyn's daughters had moved her bed downstairs so she was close to the kitchen, but unfortunately with no bathroom on the ground floor it was only a temporary solution. Mrs Llewellyn comments, *"I just couldn't manage the stairs any more, at first I lived in one bedroom upstairs but was really housebound. Even living downstairs was a struggle. The bungalow's really made a difference. It's the best move I've ever made."*

Once available, Mrs Llewellyn's home was then spotted by Miss Price and her three children. Living in a 2 bed flat, life for the family was a little cramped as Miss Price explains, *"The new house is great. My 5 year old daughter will have her own room for the first time in her life. She can put all her toys in it so I can have the living room back which is lovely. My two boys are happy because their bedroom is bigger too. It's made life much, much better."*

Housing people in need is one of our most pressing issues. As a result we are improving the way we re-house tenants by looking for ways to speed up the application process and repair empty homes so they are available more quickly.



Di Wallace, Supported Living Co-ordinator



Naden House Resident, Bill Tunnicliffe

Your Neighbourhoods and Communities

How did we perform last year?

Target	How we performed		How we compare	
	2009/10		Locally	Nationally
Achieve 95% customer satisfaction with neighbourhoods.	89%		Upper 25%	Upper 25%

What are we doing about the Red?

This figure's taken from the 2009/10 STATUS survey. Since then our Neighbourhoods Team has been working closely with you to improve your communities. This work includes:

- » Providing extra car parking spaces in Coven, Essington and Kinver
- » Fitting gates to a garage site in Codsall to stop fly tipping and vandalism
- » Changing a derelict site in Wombourne into a play area for younger children
- » Introducing camcorders to combat noise nuisance. Visual and sound evidence will help us identify offenders and stop the problem sooner.


Over the next twelve months we'll be working together to review your satisfaction with where you live and try to resolve any issues you highlight.

"The new workmen are very polite, always knocking on the door to let me know they're here to cut my front lawn rather than just doing it without me realising. The service they give is much better."

Quote from Mrs Potts of Penkridge

To help improve your grounds maintenance service we've teamed up with South Staffordshire Council to appoint a new contractor, the Landscape Group. Because the Group works on both organisations' land it provides a much more 'joined up' service and saves £70,000 for tenants each year.

Update on service improvements

What we said	What we did	Progress
Agree response times for different types of anti social behaviour and establish exactly what you need from us when you ask for help.	By working with victims and agencies such as the Police, we've reviewed our Anti Social Behaviour Policy. This includes setting timescales for any communication with you. The new Policy has been agreed and we'll start reporting our performance against these timescales this year.	
Consult on how the ASB service is delivered.	We're creating a new, more customer focused approach to the ASB service which makes communication with you about your complaint a priority. An update on these new procedures will be published in the next News Extra.	Completed by Dec 2011
Treat all issues as important and keep you fully informed.	As part of our new approach we'll provide weekly updates for all ASB complainants. We'll also report our performance this year on this.	Completed by Dec 2011
Direct you to the most appropriate organisation to help.	Besides agreeing individual action plans for each case, we'll also refer people to relevant agencies where appropriate.	Completed by Oct 2011



Laura Evans, Neighbourhood Management Officer with resident

Your Neighbourhoods and Communities

Case Study: **Playtime For All**

One of the key things helping us develop our services is your customer feedback. By working closely with you we are able to understand more about what is needed most in your community.

In the Giggetty area of Wombourne, we've set up activities like fishing trips and boxing clubs, but little was available for younger children. So we involved you, our residents right from the start in this exciting project. Some of you supported it, some of you were against it, but by continuously consulting you and working together we created an area targeted at younger children. It features totem poles and steps made of natural materials so it's visually appealing for residents living close by. And there's an area for ball games too.

The residents commented, *"It's great. The kids have actually got something for themselves and they respect it. We know they're safe and off the streets."*

The play area opened in January 2011. Help from lottery funding made it happen along with our own commitment. The project offered great value for money as fencing surrounding the perimeter was recycled within the play area, some was used to protect the homes at the side of and backing onto the new play area, whilst the rest replaced damaged fencing in Perton. The purpose was also to complete work before the increase in VAT, thus making another major saving and presenting even more value for money.

The idea was to create something everybody could use, not just children, as Chair of the Giggetty Residents' Group Bobby Lay confirms, *"The play area is a great investment for the community and is going to be a very valuable resource where children can play safely. We're going to make the most of the space and are already planning community activities like a barbeque and picnic that everyone can come to."*

Value for Money

How do we control costs?

SSHA realises that cost control can bring immediate savings, therefore we've put measures in place like these.

- » Conducting regular reviews of how and what we do and compare these with other Housing Associations. We apply the approach that 'every process can be improved'.
As a result, we've reduced number of days to re-let empty properties from 33 to 21 days by working smarter and improving the effectiveness of our teams.
- » We review contracts with our suppliers regularly, looking for the best solutions, which is the right quality for the right price.
Property Care has re-tendered the contract for responsive electrical work and maintenance on empty properties. Based on this tender process we can now deliver the same quality services for £70,000 less.
- » By working in partnership with other organisations we can work smarter and gain purchase power through buying in greater quantities.
South Staffordshire Council and SSHA have joined forces to change the way both organisations maintain open spaces, shrub beds and trees. This joint approach to grass cutting alone saves us and our tenants over £70,000 a year.

Update on service improvements

Last Years Promise	Our Progress	Progress
Define Value for Money.	Based on your feedback, we defined Value for Money as 'getting the best quality at the best price'.	✓
State where we purchase our goods and services from.	We'll be using your Value for Money definition to shape the way we purchase goods and services. It'll help us review our Procurement Strategy and inform how and where we purchase our goods and services from. The Resident Sounding Group will be working with us on this.	Completed by April 2012
Understand your priorities for our spending.	Last year, at The Big Day Out, you told us you cared most about repairs to your homes and commented that you were least satisfied with kitchens and bathrooms. This guided our investment programmes in 2010/11, and we spent over £1 million on these rooms. All together we spent £8.2 million, that's 35% of our total expenditure on maintaining your homes.	✓
Benchmark ourselves and others in our area.	By collecting and monitoring key information, we can now compare the cost of our services to other local Housing Associations. You'll find the results each year in your Annual Report.	Completed by April 2012
Establish a clearer way of presenting service charge information.	A new leaflet explaining service charges has been developed with the Resident Sounding Group. You'll find yours with your September 2011 service charge statement.	Completed by Sept 2011
Publish Value For Money information.	Look out for the Postit notes on each page of this report. These provide examples of where we've demonstrated VFM in the past year. You'll find this in future Annual Reports as well.	✓

Running Your Association

To encourage residents to become more involved in their communities, we put together a training programme at Rodbaston College which started in March 2011. People taking part were invited to apply to join the Scrutiny Panel and after an assessment and selection process, four residents were successful.

The Panel has already been through a detailed introduction to the Association and has looked closely at how we deal with empty properties and presented their recommendations to the Board in July. It's an exciting time and we'll be recruiting more residents to join the Panel over the coming year.

Julie Moorhouse, SSHA Scrutiny Panel Member explained, "We established the Resident Scrutiny Panel to act on behalf of tenants and monitor SSHA's performance in relation to the Local Offer. The Panel then recommends improvements and promotes good practice.

It's been really successful, we report directly to the Board on these issues and have been impressed with the Association's commitment and open approach to scrutiny."

If you're interested, contact Tony Price on Freephone 0800 096 8690 or e-mail tony.price@housing-plus.co.uk. Also, keep an eye out for regular updates in News Extra and on our website.

Members of the Residents Scrutiny Panel aren't paid, so we're very grateful for their commitment and input. Their role is to compare and challenge performance, identify areas of good practice and continuous improvement as well as providing an honest customer perspective. Members do not deal with individual queries or complaints. These should be passed to the Association in the usual way through our freephone number **0800 096 8690** or by calling **01785 312000**.

The Boards

The work that SSHA undertakes is overseen by a Board of Management which is ultimately responsible for the activities and performance of the Association. You can find out more about the Board at www.ssha.co.uk.

How does the Association plan its finances?

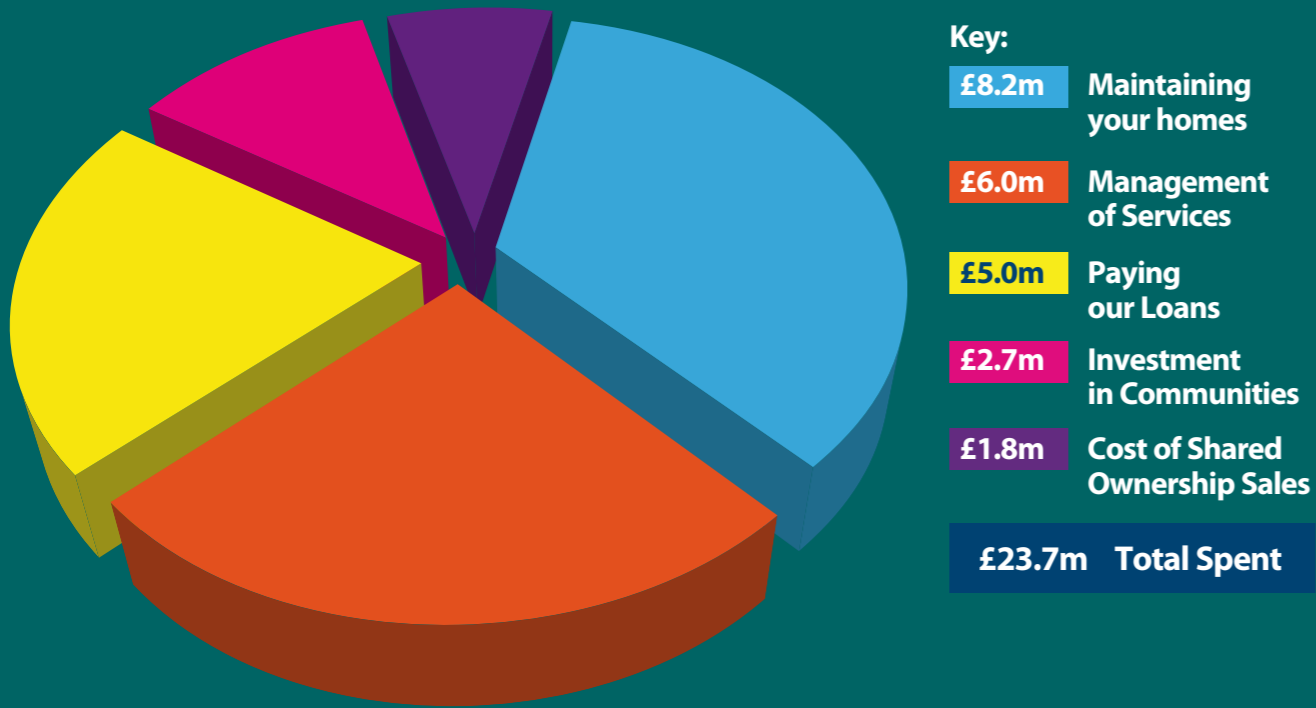
A key role of the Board is to look after the Association's finances. SSHA has a long term Business Plan which covers the next thirty years. It sets out what we want to achieve, focusing on the views of tenants and other groups who've an interest in both what we do and the Local Offer. The Business Plan is reviewed annually by the Board.



The Resident Scrutiny Panel at work

Running Your Association

Where our money was spent last year

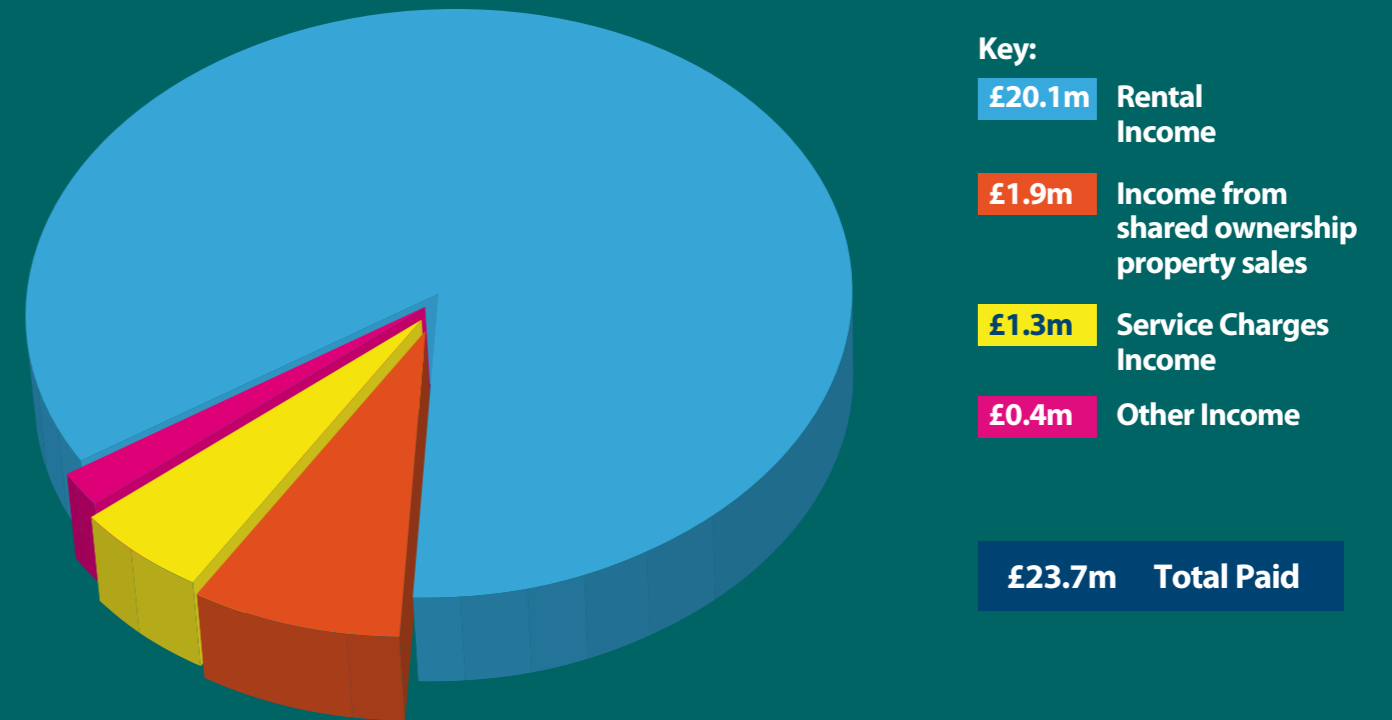


For every £1 we spent last year, almost 35 pence went towards maintaining your homes. Every year this is where we spend the most money. Last year we spent £100,000 more on maintaining your homes than we did the year before.

We also increased the amount we invest back into your communities by half a million pounds. Over 11 pence in every £1 was invested into your communities in 2010/11.

Over the last 12 months, we've tried to provide you with the best possible value for money. We're proud to say we've improved the quality of our services, and also cut the amount we spend on managing your services and repaying our loans by 3 pence in every we £1 spent.

How we paid for this



Most of our money comes from you, our tenants. In 2010/11 rental income provided us with almost 85 pence of every £1 we received.

We're keen to try and find other ways of generating money and we relied less on rental income last year than in 2009/10. To support this we gained over half a million pounds in extra income last year from shared ownership sales and through service charges.

We also managed to secure an extra £300,000 through other income sources last year, which has also helped us increase the overall budget for reinvesting back into our homes and communities.



Chris Bedward, Resident Scrutiny Panel

Running Your Association

Case Study: Taking a Closer Look

As a member of the Resident Scrutiny Panel, Chris Bedward a Penkridge resident has been looking closely at empty properties to uncover how we can cut costs and get them ready to rent quicker.

Chris explains, "Our group decided to review empty homes because this work wasn't meeting its targets. To learn more, we had independent training, interviewed staff and inspected empty properties.

The target for completing work is 30 days, including weekends, but sometimes properties seem to stand empty for much longer. We wanted to find out why.

First we discovered it's common for a home to be empty for weeks before anybody realises and tells the Housing Association. The home can be abandoned leaving furniture to be cleared, or in the case of another home in Pattingham the tenant may have passed away. Without a will or obvious relatives it was SSHA's responsibility to find any next of kin before anything could happen with the property. Also, as the tenant hadn't been keen on letting people in, the maintenance and modernisation had fallen behind. Renovation couldn't start until the paperwork had been taken care of. It's hidden issues just like these that hold up work and cost money.

Seeing these costs and red tape was a real eye-opener. Getting an empty home ready for a new tenant can cost anything from £50 to £21,000. I was a builder and I could almost build a whole house for £21,000, never mind just repair it! So we took a closer look. We found one home had been flooded, as a result it needed a new boiler and a whole catalogue of other work which takes time and money. It's all necessary to make the home livable and achieve the standard SSHA has set.

The Panel thinks there's a better way to co-ordinate the improvement programme and the empty homes work to achieve greater value for money. We've already been speaking to the Board about this issue. Hopefully the solution will be more convenient and a more economical way to work.

Looking at these areas and getting everybody's input has proved very useful. We're looking forward to recruiting more Panel members. We really need people to say what they think and come up with ideas to improve the way things work."

How to Have Your Say

When developing and improving our services we like to involve as many of our customers as we can. We know you're all individuals with different needs and skills. That's why we're committed to ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to get involved no matter what their personal circumstances.

There's a range of ways to get involved, from one off focus groups, to our Resident Sounding Group or Scrutiny Panel. If you can't attend any of our meetings, don't worry. You can still express your views by completing a postal survey, or telephone survey, all from the comfort of your own home.

Listening to you is the best way of improving our services. There are a variety of ways to influence what we do, these include:

- » Resident Scrutiny Panel
- » Resident Sounding Group
- » Customer focus groups
- » Customer surveys
- » Community groups
- » Interested Customer Group
- » News Extra magazine
- » Mystery Shopper
- » Homeowners Forum

During 2010/11 tenants joined us in 75 activities, giving 3,364 hours of their time. A whopping 232 changes were made as a result of your involvement. These include:

- » Developing our 'Local Offer' and our service standards

- » Creating a new Grounds Maintenance specification for our new contractor
- » Redesigning the rent statements so they're easier to read and more understandable

"It's been great to be involved and extremely interesting. I've really enjoyed learning more about the Association, how it works and how I can influence what they do."

Quote from Sounding Group Member

"We'd like to involve you in all areas of the business. Our dedicated Community Engagement Team supports the involvement of residents throughout the organisation."

*Quote from Dawn Northwood,
SSHA Involvement Team Leader*

Why not join in? It's great to hear what you think of us, your home and your community. **Call freephone 0800 096 8690, 01785 312000 or e-mail communityengagement@ssha.co.uk and tell us what you think.**



Putting things right

Customer feedback is really helpful to us and we want to hear from you when we don't get things right. We view your complaints as an opportunity to improve and develop the service we provide.

Between April 2010 and March 2011 we received 167 complaints and 247 compliments about our services.

Below is a snap shot of some of the actions we took as a result of your feedback:

- » Operatives now contact the call centre on your behalf when further work that requires an inspection is detected. An appointment can then be agreed with you on the spot.
- » All inspections are made by appointment. This warns you of their visit and allows the inspector more office time to reply to your enquiries.
- » Policy reviews are being undertaken regarding, Choice Based Lettings (allocations), Anti-Social Behaviour, Key Safe Policy, Grounds and Decoration Assistance.
- » We've introduced a system that logs and monitors all contact with our legal team. This makes sure we respond to requests within a set timescale.

Why not join in? It's great to hear what you think of us, your home and your community. **If you'd like to make a complaint or would like a copy of the complaints procedure please call Freephone 0800 096 8690 and ask for Jennie Morris or e-mail complaints@ssha.co.uk.**



SSHA Residents with Neighbourhood Management Officer, Helen Wallett and Housing Assistant, Leann Knox

Feedback

You can start improving our services today by telling us what you think of this report. We'd love to hear your views on it and the information it features, particularly our performance and the targets we use.

To have your say:

Freephone

0800 096 8690

Call Customer Services

01785 312000

(ideal if you have free call time on your mobile)

E-mail enquiries@ssha.co.uk

Visit www.ssha.co.uk

Or write to us at

SSHA,

Freepost,

MID19970,

Stafford, ST18 9WX

If you need any help understanding this leaflet please call 0800 096 8690 for help.

Jeżeli masz problemy ze zrozumieniem tej ulotki, poproś o pomoc dzwoniąc pod numer 0800 096 8690.

यदि आपको इस लीफलेट को समझने में कोई दिक्कत है तो कृपया सहायता के लिए 0800 096 8690 नंबर पर संपर्क करें।

如果您对本小册子内容有任何不明白之处，请致电0800 096 8690求助。

જો તમને આ ચોપાનિયું સમજવામાં કોઈ મુશ્કેલી થતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરીને મદદ માટે 0800 096 8690 પર કોલ કરો.

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਲੀਫਲੈਟ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੋਈ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਮਦਦ ਲਈ 0800 096 8690 ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو اس کتابچے کو سمجھنے میں کوئی دشواری ہو تو، براہ کرم مدد کیلئے 0800 096 8690 پر کال کریں۔

WIN £50 of ARGOS VOUCHERS

Complete this survey and send it to us via our FREEPOST address before 31st October 2011 and you could win £50 of Argos Vouchers in our fantastic prize draw! So what are you waiting for? Grab a pen or get typing!

Good Luck

If you'd prefer to complete this form online, please click on the link on our homepage - www.ssha.co.uk

Terms and Conditions

1. All entrants are deemed to have accepted the rules and agreed to be bound by them. 2. A winning entry will be picked at random after the closing date and the winner will be notified by post and/or telephone. 3. The draw is open to all tenants, shared owners and leaseholders of the Association's properties and any family members living with them in the property. 4. Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries lost, damaged or delayed in the post. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of receipt. 5. The prize is as stated, there is no cash alternative. 6. Any entrant who is not in compliance with their tenancy or lease conditions will be deemed ineligible to enter. 7. The judge's decision will be final. 8. Entrants agree to any publicity related to this competition. 9. If you are under 18, you must have the written permission of a parent or guardian. Closing date 31st October 2011.

Argos Competition

How did you rate this year's Annual Report?

- Excellent Very Good Fair Poor Very Poor

Which section did you like best and why?

Which section did you like least and why?

Are there any targets we should change and why?

Are the targets we use for performance

- Too High About Right Too Low

Which area of our Local Offer is most important to you?

- Involvement Tenancy Home
 Your Neighbourhoods & Communities
 Value For Money

Do you have any other comments to make on the report or its content?

I'd love to be more involved with the Association. Please contact me on

Name

Tel

e-mail

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ST18 9AP

t:0800 096 8690
e:enquiries@ssha.co.uk
www.ssha.co.uk

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