L&Q residents got involved in planning and running the annual resident conference. It is a chance for staff and residents to get together and look forward to the year ahead.
This is the first residents’ annual report that I have been asked to write a foreword for. I have just joined L&Q as its new Chairman. I bring with me many years’ experience in property and I am passionate about doing right by our residents.

I know that finding a home you can afford is difficult for many people. Rising house prices and private rent, together with cuts in benefits, all pose challenges for our customers.

Responding to these differing needs is part of what a modern charitable housing association must do. It is what we do. We are an organisation that invests for the long term. We invest in new homes for a wide range of customers. We invest in our existing homes and we invest in supporting customers who need help to make their lives better.

Over the past year, we have almost doubled the number of new homes we have finished building. That means 2,000 people and their partners or families have a new roof over their heads. Some 5,000 more have moved into one of our existing homes.

With more than 71,000 homes to our name, we now house over 175,000 people in London and the South East and offer a wide range of tenancies to suit our customers.

By building homes that we sell or let at full market rates, we can generate an income. We then use this to subsidise the homes we rent to people on council waiting lists.

This allows us to house and support people in real need.

We have more planned too. By 2020, we aim to have doubled the number of homes we build each year to 5,000 new homes a year. Over the next 10 years we plan to invest nearly £2 billion on maintaining and improving our homes.

Our aim is to do all of this while looking at how we can keep our costs down. The Government has announced plans to cut rents by 1% a year. For us, that means we will need to work with less money coming in. However, we are clear there will be no drop in the number of homes or the level of service we offer.

Quite the opposite, in fact. We are more committed than ever to our residents’ satisfaction with us. I know satisfaction levels have stayed at the same level this year as last year. We are doing a lot of work behind the scenes to make our homes and our services the best they can be.

The years ahead will challenge us all, but we are determined to carry on creating places where people want to live.

Aubrey Adams
Chairman, L&Q Board
Whichever way you look, tenants living in social housing (homes provided by councils and housing associations) are at the sharp end of the Government’s attentions at the moment. Many of us will have already felt the pinch of the Government’s changes to benefits.

The years ahead may be more difficult still.

For people on benefits, the Government has recently announced plans to reduce the maximum a household can claim. Meanwhile, higher earners will see their rents rise. The shift from individual benefits to Universal Credit will pose challenges too.

So it fills me with pride to know that, through my position on L&Q’s resident board, I am able to make a difference to people’s lives. I can influence how L&Q respond to us, their customers.

This report sets out what L&Q have been doing over the past year – and, importantly, how good, or not, they have been at it. While there are some areas where they could do better, it is pleasing to see that they are listening to us and taking action.

Last year, for instance, the Resident Communications Forum said that a visual summary of the annual report would be useful. Not everyone wants to read the full annual report. L&Q listened and included a two-sided version of the year’s highlights with Homelife magazine. It got big thumbs up from residents, so the process has been repeated this year.

Also, for the first time, L&Q have had this report edited by Plain English Campaign and been given a Crystal Mark for clarity. That is part of their commitment to us.

These changes in themselves won’t get your tap mended more quickly, but they are part of a bigger picture. I see a very real desire among L&Q staff to make things better for their customers.

The L&Q Foundation is a good example of this. They have helped residents to get over £6 million worth of extra income this year. Mostly, this is by helping them into work or training, or by making sure they claim the benefits they are entitled to. This year alone, 177 L&Q residents began work, thanks to their support.

It is frustrating that this positive work has yet to translate into a higher overall resident satisfaction figure. However, I am sure that L&Q’s push to put customers at the heart of the business will bring rewards very soon.

Frank Chersky
Chair of L&Q’s Resident Board and Group Board member
Residents' annual report  
How we performed in 2014/2015

78% of residents were satisfied with our overall service – 1% higher than the average among residents of other large housing associations in London but lower than we would like.

71% of our estates reached gold standard for cleanliness and safety.

5,000 is the number of homes we plan to build each year by 2020.

3,356 residents in rent arrears took up our offer of extra support.

91% of complaints were dealt with within 10 days.

1,400 new bathrooms were fitted this year.

2,100 new kitchens were fitted this year.

570 residents checked how we performed and helped us to raise standards.

93.9% of residents were given an appointment for when their repair would be done.

51.9% of residents said they felt we kept them informed of progress with their case of antisocial behaviour.

87.3% of residents were happy with how we dealt with their last repair.

71.9% of residents were satisfied that their rent provided value for money.

82.4% of residents were satisfied with the outcome of their enquiry.

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Highlights of the year

creating places where people want to live
52 years ago, a south London vicar persuaded a group of city professionals to create a charitable housing association. By combining a vicar’s dream to tackle homelessness with the business flair of some city hotshots, L&Q was born. We have grown rapidly and now manage more than 71,000 homes across London and the South East.

Our original goals have not changed. We provide affordable homes for people who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market. In doing this, we have kept our commitment to our residents and to our mission of ‘creating places where people want to live’.

For us, that means that everyone should have a safe, warm, good-quality and affordable home. We have focused our efforts in 2014/2015 on meeting our residents’ needs with better homes, services and neighbourhoods. We continue to increase the size of the organisation responsibly by finding new ways to invest in building houses and flats and by offering a range of housing options that increase choice and mobility.

Our promises are set out in our new customer service charter. We have developed the charter with the help of our residents and it strengthens our commitment to you.

This report presents a look back at our performance and activities from the previous year. It will also look to the future at how we plan to meet the commitments in the charter.

L&Q 2020
In April 2015 we launched our new five-year plan, L&Q 2020. This plan confirms our status as a charitable housing association and our commitment to our customers. It explains our ambitious plans to build 50,000 new homes over the next 10 years.

Making customers count
Our ‘making customers count’ initiative will help us to become even more customer-focused. Improving resident satisfaction is important to everyone working at L&Q. This programme brings together our different improvement activities under one banner. This is so that everyone is clear on what we are doing to improve our customers’ experience.

This work concentrates on three areas.

People and culture – to develop a culture of customer service within the organisation. We have changed the ways in which we recruit, train and manage our staff. They should be focused on customer service and have the right skills and attitude to deliver our services to the highest standards.

Systems and processes – we looked at the systems, policies and processes that support our front-line services. This includes priority areas such as improving customer contact, introducing new software to help manage complaints, and making it easier for residents to apply for and move into a new home.

Customer service charter
We have developed a new customer service charter with help from our residents. This is an important part of the L&Q 2020 plan.

This involved gathering feedback from the Resident Board, their subgroups, workshops and the resident conference. We received a wealth of useful comments which helped us shape our services. Importantly, you told us you wanted clearer standards for the day-to-day services we provide. This would help you know what to expect from our services and to see if we fall short.

We have used those views to develop our customer service charter and the following commitments to our customers:

1. Provide a good-quality home
2. Deliver reliable services to maintain your home and the area where you live
3. Make any charges accurate and clear
4. Offer information and services that are easy to access
5. Have professional staff who listen and respond helpfully

The charter is supported by more detailed standards. Together, they will drive the work we do to improve our customers’ experience.
Preparing for Universal Credit

Universal Credit continued to be gradually introduced in 2014/2015. Universal Credit combines all working-age benefits, including Housing Benefit, Jobseeker’s Allowance and tax credits, into a single monthly direct payment.

In future, the Government will pay benefits direct to claimants. You will need to manage your benefit claims online, as well as budget and pay your rent yourself. For all housing associations, councils and other social landlords, this change presents some risks. Some residents may start to build up rent arrears and it may cost us more to collect rent in the future.

Over 22,000 of our residents currently receive part or full Housing Benefit. We receive over £130 million of Housing Benefit each year, paid direct into our accounts by the local authority. Over the coming years, our residents will be transferred to Universal Credit. We have been working with partner organisations to help you prepare for this change by doing the following:

• Helping over 300 residents get online by providing training, a recycled computer and mobile internet access
• Reviewing how best to support you manage your finances. We are testing different approaches, for example whether it is better to be ‘proactive’, which means we predict problems before they arise, or to be ‘reactive’, which means we respond when there are issues. This will initially focus on residents in the Greenwich area (around 300 households) and then expand to the London Borough of Newham (around 600 households)
• Recruiting a new Direct Payments Pilot Officer, to support you with budgeting, debt and bank accounts
• Keeping you informed and offering our services by targeting the postcodes where Universal Credit has come into effect

Increasing the supply of homes

There is a shortage of affordable housing to rent and to buy in Britain. This is particularly true in London and the South East. We will continue to lead the way in filling this gap by having one of the largest development plans in the house-building sector.

In the last year, we spent over £356 million on building homes. Of our developments, half will be rented or sold at below-market rates and the other half will be rented or sold on the open market. The money we make from homes on the open market allows us to continue providing affordable homes to those most in need and improving our services.

In 2014/2015, we finished building almost 2,000 homes. Of those, 674 homes were for sale on the open market, 268 for shared ownership and 688 were for reduced rent.

We have started work on the next stages at a number of our larger schemes. These include over 100 homes each at the Greenwich Peninsula, Haggerston in east London and the Nine Elms redevelopment in south London.
How we performed in 2014/2015

In this section of the report, we set out how we have achieved our service targets in 2014/2015. This is a transition year. It is the last year we will use the targets and measures we agreed with residents in 2010/2011. Next year we will start measuring against our new customer service charter.

Independent researchers carry out satisfaction surveys on a sample of our residents. These residents will have used one of our services, such as repairs. The surveys are phone-based and the results show how well we have delivered those services during the year.

We compare our residents’ satisfaction to those of other housing associations. We use information they have supplied to HouseMark for the year 2013/2014. An external research company surveys our residents and this confirms that the results are impartial.

Overall, our resident satisfaction for the year was 78%. This is slightly above that of the other large housing associations in London, where last year the average was 77%.

In the following table, we review our performance against the targets we agreed with residents in 2010/2011. In the final column of the table, we show how in the future we will examine the issues we have measured in the past.

1. Involving residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer service</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will make it easy for residents to contact us</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>68.8% of residents found it easy to sort out their enquiry</td>
<td>We aimed to deal with residents at first point of contact so that no more than 20% of residents reported that they had to make a lot of effort to get their enquiry sorted out. Improving this is a large focus of the ‘making customers count’ programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will deal with enquiries to the satisfaction of residents</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>82.4% were satisfied with how we dealt with their enquiry</td>
<td>We have taken on more staff in our contact centre and introduced a revised recruitment and more intense induction programme, to increase satisfaction with how we handle enquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will provide choice in agreed areas and inform residents about this in a variety of ways</td>
<td>Does not apply</td>
<td>We have strengthened resident involvement to put resident views at the heart of our services</td>
<td>There are now 570 involved residents giving us their views, monitoring performance and helping to raise standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Complaints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will take complaints seriously and deal with them promptly</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>We responded to 91% of complaints, with a suggested solution, within 10 days. [Due to system and process changes during the course of the year, we can’t get a full year of comparable data]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep residents informed about the progress of their complaint</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>43.6% were kept up to date with the progress of their complaint</td>
<td>Our ongoing evaluation of the new approach to complaints will continue into 2015/2016. The aim is that more issues are sorted out at an earlier stage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Involving residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involving residents</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will provide a range of opportunities for residents to get involved in shaping our services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>We have launched our new resident involvement offer, under the banner Get Ahead, Get Involved</td>
<td>Over the last year, 68 committed and active residents have taken up resident involvement. In particular, we set up a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) forum, which will play a critical role in identifying housing issues faced by LGBT residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will listen to residents’ views and use the feedback to improve services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>We held a resident conference in March 2015 for 100 of our involved residents, to consult them on our services</td>
<td>We will be using feedback from the conference to help us change our systems. We will also look at the way we communicate with residents and our community investment priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Meeting residents’ needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting residents’ needs</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will treat residents fairly and equally</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td>We produced an annual report on our performance on equality and diversity for our Group Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How we performed in 2014/2015

2. The home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of accommodation</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will provide and maintain homes to the Decent Homes Standard</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>In 2014/2015, less than 0.01% of our homes met the Decent Homes Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep residents informed about progress during planned maintenance work and repairs to shared areas</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>This is a slight drop from 71.8% in 2013/2014. We have changed the role of our resident liaison officers on planned work to get more involved with customers during the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors will keep residents informed about progress during planned maintenance work and repairs to shared areas</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep residents informed about progress during repair work to shared areas</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repairs and maintenance</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will offer residents a choice of appointment times</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep appointments</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will carry out repairs to the satisfaction of residents</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>We have improved our performance from 87.3% in the previous year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Neighbourhood and community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood management</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will keep shared areas clean and safe</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>In December, our resident inspectors carried out an audit of our estates and the way we grade our estates. Overall, they found that strengths outweighed weaknesses. We have set up an estate-improvement project group to put their recommendations into practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local area co-operation</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will work to improve neighbourhoods in partnership with local organisations</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>Resident satisfaction with their local area has increased from 84% in 2013/2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-social behaviour</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will treat reports of anti-social behaviour confidentially and will not reveal the names of witnesses</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>This result is the same as last year. As with last year, we believe that this result is lower than in previous years because we have changed our focus to deal with the more difficult antisocial behaviour cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will keep residents informed about the progress of their anti-social behaviour case</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>This is an improvement on last year. During the year we have introduced senior manager case reviews for antisocial behaviour cases that are difficult to deal with. We also have team leaders contacting residents before cases are closed to make sure residents are satisfied with the outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## How we performed in 2014/2015

### 4. Tenancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocations</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homes will be empty for a minimum amount of time</td>
<td>3.75 weeks</td>
<td>On average, our general needs homes were let again in four weeks</td>
<td>The time it takes us to prepare a home for our new tenants has dropped slightly. A number of changes within L&amp;Q and some other factors are likely to have affected this figure. We are currently examining our performance on lettings using a range of different measures to achieve the right balance between efficiency and customer experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>On average, our supported-housing homes are ready to be let again in five weeks and four days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will let our homes fairly to applicants and existing residents</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>46.94% of lettings were to residents from black and ethnic-minority backgrounds</td>
<td>We have slightly increased the percentage of residents from black or ethnic-minority backgrounds – up from 41.9% last year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rents and tenancies</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will offer support to residents in arrears to help them keep their home</td>
<td>3,356</td>
<td>We referred 3,356 residents to our support services in 2014/2015</td>
<td>We have worked out the financial and wellbeing value of our Foundation activities to be £14 million this year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Value for money

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value for money</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
<th>What we achieved in 2014/2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will make sure residents receive value for money through their rent and service charges</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>71.9% are satisfied that their rent provides value for money</td>
<td>This is an increase from 68.6% in 2013/2014. The improvements to how we work out service charges and how we explain our charges began to take effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will invest in the services that matter most to residents, such as repairs and maintenance and antisocial behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>Our latest figures are for 2014/15. They show that we spent the following per home:</td>
<td>£505 on managing housing; and £848 on maintenance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2015 and beyond - customer service charter

From this year, we will be measuring our performance against our new customer service charter. In this section of the report, we explain the commitments in the charter, the standards and how we will be measuring performance. We also set out the work we have already started which will support us in delivering our charter commitments.

Charter commitment 1 – Provide a good-quality home

We want our residents to have the choice to live in a safe, warm and good-quality home. These standards monitor the quality of our homes before you move in.

### Standard 1.1 Before you move in, we will check that your home, facilities and services meet your needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will measure this by asking you about the quality of the home you have moved into. This is for homes that have been newly built and for homes we re-let. For new homes, we will aim to reduce, as far as possible, the number of repairs we have to carry out because issues were not sorted out before moving in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technical services and repairs

To provide our residents with a safe, warm and good-quality home, this year we:

- agreed new trust-wide grounds maintenance and cleaning contracts which included mapping 1,400 estates using GIS technology, so we can better understand our estates and boundaries and their features
- completed a programme of fire-risk assessments for just under 6,000 homes
- inspected over 116,000 pieces of service equipment
- installed over 2,100 kitchens and over 1,400 bathrooms as part of our planned maintenance programme
- completed a cyclical improvement programme (where we carry out improvements according to a set schedule) valued at £8 million
- completed just under 18,000 inspections of empty homes and repairs
- through better procurement (buying services), achieved new contract savings of over £1.4 million and reduced our number of suppliers from 66 to 10
- achieved a gas-servicing performance of 99.8% – up from a previous best of 99.6%
- delivered service improvements to the gas system through better procurement (buying services), achieved new contract savings of over £1.4 million and reduced our number of suppliers from 66 to 10
- achieved a gas-servicing performance of 99.8% – up from a previous best of 99.6%
- delivered service improvements to the gas system with new software and improved information and the way we manage contracts which resulted in a resident satisfaction level of 92% for the year
- ended the year with satisfaction from residents with their last repair (March 2015) at 88%
- provided a realistic solution to bringing a difficult-to-let block, Cintra House in Croydon, back into use (the scheme was complicated as the building is locally listed and in a conservation area, but after speaking to the local council we now have a financially realistic scheme where the main building has been restored and provides extra homes, which will help improve the area)
- nearly completed turning a brownfield site into much-needed rented homes on what were previously two disused garage sites in Bexley, south-east London.
Residents’ annual report  How we performed in 2014/2015

2015 and beyond - customer service charter

Each year we can capture more of the value of this type of work as our monitoring and evaluation becomes more thorough and innovative. For example, we evaluated our financial inclusion services. We decided that our most effective method for tackling debt was through our Pound Advice project. This project works with 17 Citizens Advice Bureaux across London and the South East. As a result, we have increased our investment in this work and introduced new performance targets. This will lead to greater social returns on our investment.

Social responsibility
As a charitable housing association, we aim to be socially responsible through all our activities. In the past three years, we have been using Business in the Community’s Corporate Responsibility Index. This is a way to encourage improvements and measure our performance. We have seen a year-on-year increase in our score since we started the index. In 2012, we scored 64%. This year we achieved a score of 82%, one of the highest increases in the index. With the launch of our new corporate plan, L&Q 2020, we have included social responsibility as an important theme when planning our business.

Complaints and feedback
• We introduced a new system and policy for managing complaints. This will make sure that complaints are recorded appropriately and that the right person responds promptly
• We have reviewed the way complaints are managed. If a resident is not happy with our initial response, we make sure our staff and heads of service take up any issues. We will then learn from this and use it to help us improve

Our residents and neighbourhoods
To help you maintain your tenancy and to make sure our homes and neighbourhoods are places where people want to live, we have carried out the following this year:
• Maintained a good level of performance in managing rent arrears. General-needs rent arrears reduced to 3.5% of all the rent we charge, down from 4.2% in the previous year. Revenue team leaders manage the accounts on a weekly basis. This is to make sure residents who are affected by any changes to benefits are easily identified. It is important they are allocated to the correct patch as there are two teams who specifically deal with residents affected by changes to the benefit system
• Our Hardship Fund spent just under £30,000, helping 122 households in financial difficulties. The money has been used to buy household essentials, such as fridges, cookers and carpets
• Our Financial Inclusion team has continued to help residents who are affected by the benefit cap. It also helps people facing financial hardship to find employment, improve their life skills and keep their tenancies
• We renewed our focus on antisocial behaviour and domestic violence. We have appointed staff champions who will have specialist training and skills relating to domestic violence and supporting witnesses
• We assessed 97% of our antisocial behaviour reports within the agreed timescales. This was better than our target of 95% of reports.
• We introduced a new vulnerable resident’s policy to make sure that we take account of individual needs when we provide residents with our services.
• We have now visited 20,600 residents as part of our award-winning EnergySave programme. An independent evaluation found that, on average, residents are saving £200 a year as a result of taking part
• We are continuing to install environmentally friendly and renewable technology. We now have solar panel systems at over 500 sites across London and the South East
• Our residents can now access the London Plus Credit Union which provides extra help with managing their money and accessing affordable loans

Community investment bottom line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>£m</th>
<th>Employment and skills</th>
<th>Financial inclusion</th>
<th>Keep It Tenancy</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social value</td>
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We know the risk that changing the benefits system poses to our tenants and our communities and have continued to develop services that deal with this. In August 2014, we launched a new employment and skills service for tenants. We have now helped nearly 300 residents back into work, an increase of 24% from the previous year. Our community investment work includes our Tenancy Sustainment team. They have helped over 600 of our most vulnerable residents keep their tenancies on track.

We have reviewed the way complaints are managed. If a resident is not happy with our initial response, we make sure our staff and heads of service take up any issues. We will then learn from this and use it to help us improve

Our residents and neighbourhoods
To help you maintain your tenancy and to make sure our homes and neighbourhoods are places where people want to live, we have carried out the following this year:

• Maintained a good level of performance in managing rent arrears. General-needs rent arrears reduced to 3.5% of all the rent we charge, down from 4.2% in the previous year. Revenue team leaders manage the accounts on a weekly basis. This is to make sure residents who are affected by any changes to benefits are easily identified. It is important they are allocated to the correct patch as there are two teams who specifically deal with residents affected by changes to the benefit system
• Our Hardship Fund spent just under £30,000, helping 122 households in financial difficulties. The money has been used to buy household essentials, such as fridges, cookers and carpets
• Our Financial Inclusion team has continued to help residents who are affected by the benefit cap. It also helps people facing financial hardship to find employment, improve their life skills and keep their tenancies
• We renewed our focus on antisocial behaviour and domestic violence. We have appointed staff champions who will have specialist training and skills relating to domestic violence and supporting witnesses
• We assessed 97% of our antisocial behaviour reports within the agreed timescales. This was better than our target of 95% of reports.
• We introduced a new vulnerable resident’s policy to make sure that we take account of individual needs when we provide residents with our services.
• We have now visited 20,600 residents as part of our award-winning EnergySave programme. An independent evaluation found that, on average, residents are saving £200 a year as a result of taking part
• We are continuing to install environmentally friendly and renewable technology. We now have solar panel systems at over 500 sites across London and the South East
• Our residents can now access the London Plus Credit Union which provides extra help with managing their money and accessing affordable loans
2015 and beyond - customer service charter

Charter commitment 3 – Make any charges accurate and clear

These standards make sure that residents are confident that the charges we collect, including rent and service charges, are used appropriately and that we provide value for money and efficiency at all times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 We will explain how we work out rent and charges and deal with queries swiftly</td>
<td>We will measure our customers’ experiences of how we respond to rent enquiries. We will also look at the quality of information on service charges for new-build homes.</td>
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</table>

Value for money and financial information

These standards tell residents about our approach to making the most of our resources and providing cost-effective and efficient services to residents

- We are investing at least £10 million in the energy efficiency of our homes. By 2020, all of our homes, where realistic, will have Energy Performance Certificates rated D or above

Direct Maintenance update

In 2013 we started our Direct Maintenance pilot. This brought some of our repairs services in-house. Our aim was to provide a better service at a lower cost than our contractors had done.

We recruited our own maintenance staff to do the following:

- Carry out repair work on empty properties before residents move in. Over the past year we have seen improvements in the quality of the work. Resident satisfaction has also improved in our Thames and South London neighbourhoods, where this service is in place. Based on the outcomes from the pilot, we decided to start rolling out the service across our other areas
- Carry out day-to-day repairs that residents report to us. We passed our first anniversary in early 2015 and have been evaluating the successes and improvement areas of this pilot. We have seen that satisfaction with repairs has risen in our pilot areas.
We will continue to test and evaluate what does and does not work before introducing this service to our other neighbourhoods

Charter commitment 4 – Offer information and services that are easy to access

These standards make sure that you are aware of, and can access, the range of services we offer.

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<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 It will be easy to contact us, including by phone and online</td>
<td>We will monitor this standard by looking at how our call centres perform. Also, we will look at how easy it is for you to contact us and for us to deal with your questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 We will provide information that is clear, accurate and easily accessible</td>
<td>We will assess how clear the information is that we provide to you and if you are satisfied with the quality of our communications and published information.</td>
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Reviewing how our services are provided

As part of our ‘making customers count’ programme, we are testing new ways of interacting with our residents. This was started because customer research and feedback showed that we needed to improve our customer service. As the organisation grows, this will also allow us to continue to meet demand and offer great service to our customers.

We launched a pilot in February to test three main service areas in one part of L&Q – the Thames neighbourhood in south-east London. These areas are shown below:

- Looking at splitting the neighbourhood services officer role into two separate roles. Customers in the pilot area will have a property manager for questions on managing estates and properties. Tenancy matters, including antisocial behaviour, will be referred to the case management team where a specialist case manager will take responsibility. This will allow staff to better prioritise their work and to have more focused skills and knowledge relevant to their jobs
- Seeing if we can deliver a more efficient and effective lettings service. New residents in the Thames neighbourhood will have their viewings and sign-ups with a property manager rather than a lettings officer
- Looking at how we can better identify vulnerable residents and tailor our services accordingly

The changes we are making are partly about processes but equally about our culture and how our staff carry out their tasks. During this time we will monitor and assess how this is working and how the pilot affects the rest of the business. We will use what we learn to allow the rest of the organisation to help achieve our goal of improving customer satisfaction.
2015 and beyond - customer service charter

Charter commitment 5 – Have professional staff who listen and respond helpfully

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<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 We will provide a prompt answer to, or explain the process for, dealing with your enquiry and keep you informed of progress.</td>
<td>We want to make sure that enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact. Also, we want to make sure that the right member of staff handles the enquiry and that residents know what we are doing in response.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2 We will check that your enquiry has been dealt with and that you are satisfied</td>
<td>We will measure residents’ satisfaction with how we handle enquiries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 We will provide a range of ways for you to suggest improvements to our services</td>
<td>We will report on how we involve residents and on our performance in dealing with complaints.</td>
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Involving residents

Over the last year we have involved our residents in the following ways:

- We have delivered a number of actions from our resident involvement strategy which aims to make sure that residents’ views are at the heart of our decision-making. For example, we have introduced an induction programme for new neighbourhood committee members and set up a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender forum.
- We launched our new resident involvement offer, which makes it easier for residents to choose how they want to get involved.
- Our ‘mystery shoppers’ tested the advice from our Revenue team about Universal Credit. As a result, the team have improved how they greet callers and have improved their customer service.
- Over 250 residents volunteered as neighbourhood champions. These champions inspect their local area to make sure that high standards are maintained and propose improvements where needed.
- Resident inspectors reviewed how we communicate planned maintenance and grade our estates. They recommended some things to help us improve our service. As a result, we have created a new electronic app for staff to help grade their estates. The Programme Management team are working to increase the information available to residents who ask about improvement work.

How we will improve next year and beyond

Our future strategy is set out in our new five-year plan, L&Q 2020.

L&Q 2020 sets out how we will tackle the housing crisis head-on. We will increase the number of homes we build to 5,000 a year. This is the most ambitious development programme ever carried out by a housing association.

The plan cements our identity as a charitable housing association, reaffirms our social mission of ‘creating places where people want to live’, and outlines a vision that everyone should have a safe, warm, good-quality and affordable home.

In the next year, we will also make improvements in the following ways:

- Neighbourhoods will put their recruitment and succession strategies into practice to increase the diversity of residents who get involved.
- We will consult residents on our new resident involvement strategy for 2017.
- We will set up a private rentals subsidiary to make sure that that we continue to provide affordable homes and that we use and protect all our assets across all types of tenancy in the best way possible.
Residents’ annual report

How we performed in 2014/2015

In this report we give you a summary of how well we met our service commitment to you between April 2014 and March 2015. We developed and agreed our customer service charter with residents and it covers five important areas. Our resident board have reviewed and agreed the information in this report.