Residents annual report 2017
How we performed in 2017
In this report we set out how we have met the requirements of our customer service charter between April 2016 and March 2017.

01 Message from the Chairman 04
02 Message from the Resident Services Group 05
03 Highlights of the year 06
04 About us 08
05 The housing environment 10
06 How we performed in 2016/2017 12
This has been a year like no other for L&Q. In December, we and East Thames came together to create one of the largest providers of affordable homes in the country.

For all of us, the recent tragic events at Grenfell Tower are a sharp reminder that we must continue to invest in the quality and safety of our homes. The health and safety of our residents is always a top priority for us.

We are doing everything possible to make sure you and your home are safe. In recent months we have reviewed all our fire-risk assessments and we are pleased to report that they are currently up to date. We visit sheltered-housing schemes and tower blocks over six storeys high once a year to review fire safety. We are also working closely with the fire brigade, reviewing sites together, where necessary.

Wherever possible, we will aim to make sure our tower blocks meet the fire-safety standards of new homes. These standards cover things such as sprinkler systems.

We will consider all possible methods of dealing with fire risk – cost will not, and never has, been a barrier to providing the most appropriate solution. For example, we are giving smoke alarms to residents who don’t already have one.

Alongside fire safety, this year we have focused on providing good-quality affordable homes, improving customers’ experiences and investing in communities.

We are determined to build more homes than ever in the coming years. To achieve that, we are now starting to work outside London and the South East of England, including working with Trafford Housing Trust in Manchester.

This year, we built more than 2,550 new homes. Of these, over 1,500 were for shared ownership or for rent to council and housing-association tenants.

Our existing residents have also benefited from the work we have done to their homes. We have carried out £32 million worth of repairs this year and invested a further £39 million in our existing properties.

We fitted more than 7,000 new individual ‘components’, such as kitchens, bathrooms and boilers, for our residents to enjoy. Plus, the standard of our estates is continuously improving, with inspectors classing 68% of them as gold status this year.

The efficiencies we will make as a result of joining together with East Thames give us more money than ever to invest into local communities. Through the L&Q Foundation we have set aside £250 million to help residents get on in life and be independent. We will also create a training academy for staff and residents, and increase the amount we currently spend on training.

Together, these will make a huge difference to the lives of our residents and our staff.

Finally, it is to the staff that I must give my thanks. They have worked tirelessly for us and our residents. I know they have done it because, for them, like me, homes matter.

Aubrey Adams
Group Chairman
This year has been overshadowed by the tragic events at Grenfell Towers and has brought the issue of health and safety into sharp focus. I have seen at first hand the co-ordinated efforts within L&Q in response to this – from the Chief Executive down.

I am extremely proud of the commitment and hard work shown by everyone across L&Q. Officers have worked tirelessly to keep residents informed and to carry out the necessary tests while continuing to operate day-to-day services.

This is all against a challenging backdrop for social-housing providers. Nevertheless, L&Q have managed to keep their social purpose while being ambitious in their efforts to deliver homes where they are needed most.

This year, we saw L&Q merge with East Thames, to create an organisation that will provide homes and services for more people than ever before. Behind the scenes, the integration is moving forward at pace, and will come to an end in the months ahead.

The merger brings together two organisations that have so much in common.

What I hope to see – and will be doing my best to achieve – is that the result is truly the best of both. That way, all of our residents can be sure that L&Q will provide even better, more efficient services for us.

Besides the merger, one of the highlights of the past year for me has been that L&Q have built more than 2,500 new homes, of which more than 1,500 are for social or affordable rent.

The other things that stand out are that L&Q have spent £82 million on repairing our homes and £39 million on upgrading them this year.

Plus, the standard of the estates that many residents live on is better than ever, with almost seven in 10 achieving gold status on inspection.

Combined, this work demonstrates that L&Q are investing in their existing homes while trying to put a roof over the heads of many more people. But there is much more to do.

This report shows us what it has done over the past year – and whether it has managed to do things as well as it hoped. It sets L&Q’s achievements against the commitments they made to us, so that you can judge their performance for yourself.

I’m proud to be involved with an organisation like L&Q that is not only providing homes but is also investing in local communities. The L&Q Foundation, with its new training academy, for example, offers more chances than ever before for residents to improve their lives.

Residents continue to play a central part in shaping and planning L&Q’s services. Involving residents in decision-making is key to delivering the quality services that residents need, at good value.

It is an honour to be Chair of the Resident Services Group. We have even more to do in future and will continue to hold L&Q to account. Residents will – and must – stay at the heart of what L&Q do.

With us working closely with L&Q, I am convinced that the coming year will be our best ever.

Fayann Simpson
Resident Services Group Chair
03 Highlights of the year

Here are some of the highlights of what L&Q achieved over the last year.

- **We built 2,552 new homes this year.**
- **We fitted 1,004 new kitchens this year.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlight</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average rent of residents</td>
<td>43% of private renters pay for a two-bedroom home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra benefits received</td>
<td>Residents received an extra £8.6 million in benefits and support with our help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact centre</td>
<td>Our contact centre is open 24 hours a day, Monday to Friday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with repairs</td>
<td>79% of residents were satisfied with our overall service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with last repair</td>
<td>86% of residents were satisfied with their last repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>We helped 451 residents into paid work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New homes planned</td>
<td>New homes we plan to build in the next 10 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social rents</td>
<td>We let 1,536 of the new homes we built at social or affordable rents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service charge enquiries</td>
<td>We dealt with 89% of service-charge enquiries within our target time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>We dealt with 83% of antisocial behaviour (ASB) cases within the target time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people engaged</td>
<td>Over 15,000 young people took part in our free holiday activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs</td>
<td>We kept 94% of appointments for repairs that residents asked for.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Residents annual report 2017
We are one of the UK’s leading housing associations and one of London’s largest residential developers. We own or manage over 90,000 homes in London and the South East.

We build high-quality homes to meet a range of needs and incomes. We also provide services for our customers, such as managing their homes and investing in local communities.

Our vision is that everyone has a high-quality home they can afford.

Our mission is to combine our social purpose and commercial drive to create homes and neighbourhoods we can be proud of.

This report takes a look back at our performance and highlights from the previous year. It also looks ahead at how, through our merger, we will continue to meet the demand for housing and services across the country.

In December 2016, we and East Thames joined forces to create one organisation.

The newly merged organisation has an ambitious plan to build 100,000 new homes. Half of the new homes we build will be affordable through shared ownership and rent. This reflects our belief that everyone should have a high-quality home that they can afford.

We are commercially driven but our heart is in the community, so we invest the money we make back into homes and services.

With East Thames, we have created a new specialist care and support subsidiary for older and vulnerable adults. This year, we will also set up a £250 million community investment fund to improve the life chances of the people who live in our homes and communities. We will also set up a new training academy to develop talented, qualified staff, and to give residents skills and job opportunities.

New neighbourhood services

We strengthened our neighbourhood services to improve the service we deliver to our residents. In September 2016, we changed how our neighbourhood services officers work by creating two specialist roles – property manager and case manager. This brought more specialism to our frontline roles, providing a clearer focus and responding to feedback from our residents and staff.

We tested this new approach in our Thames neighbourhood – covering Kent and the London boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich – for over a year. The test period was successful and showed us that by having clearly defined roles, our staff can focus on their work and deliver improved results for our residents.

“IN DECEMBER 2016, WE AND EAST THAMES JOINED FORCES TO CREATE ONE ORGANISATION”

"We believe that everyone should have a high-quality home they can afford."

All our residents now have a property manager who is responsible for providing an efficient estate-management service. They are much more visible and accessible than before and make sure that things happen on estates. We also have a dedicated case-management team in each neighbourhood, delivering a responsive, high-quality tenancy, lease and case-management service.

We hope that our residents see the benefits of these new roles in their experience of us now and in the future.

We launched a new supported-housing subsidiary

We set to meet the needs of growing numbers of older and vulnerable people with our new care and support subsidiary, L&Q Living.

Following the merger last year, L&Q Living, which launched in April 2017, brought together more than 6,600 supported and sheltered-housing flats from both our organisation and East Thames.

L&Q Living provide accommodation and support for older people, adults with learning disabilities or mental-health needs, and young people across London and the South East.

We will build on the existing services provided individually by both East Thames and us.

We aim to become a sector leader in dementia and autism care and expand mental-health support.

We will also develop a new model of accommodation and support for vulnerable young people, focusing on those who are leaving care or who have complex needs. Like the rest of the L&Q Group, we plan for L&Q Living to increase their care and support services over the next five years.

They will also help the wider L&Q Group to consider and deal with the needs of older and vulnerable residents living in our other properties. More than 3,000 of our residents are aged over 75 and could benefit from tailored services and housing that better meets their changing needs.
In February 2017, the Government published their long-awaited housing white paper, called Fixing Our Broken Housing Market. In it, they promised far-reaching changes for the supply of housing.

The most important part of the paper was that the Government acknowledged that the current housing market is broken, caused by decades of not having enough homes available.

The white paper sets out the Government’s aim to build many more homes for rent and for sale. This is an ambition we share and we are in a unique position to help meet this goal.

Gallagher Estates

To make sure that we deliver our target of building 10,000 homes a year, we completed the biggest land deal carried out by any housing association. We bought Gallagher Estates for £505 million.

Based in Warwick, Gallagher Estates work mainly in the South and south Midlands. They take sites through the planning process and develop infrastructure around them, such as transport links. Then they sell them to housebuilders and developers. Buying Gallagher Estates makes us one of the UK’s leading companies for new homes.

Gallagher Estates currently control plots for 42,500 homes. This deal will allow us to build on many of these sites ourselves, in a big boost to our development plans.

The business will become a wholly owned subsidiary of the L&Q Group, but they will continue as a standalone business, run by their current management team.

Landmark deal with the Mayor of London

This year, we announced our partnership with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. This will see us invest £8 billion in 20,000 homes across the capital. Of these, 12,000 will be genuinely affordable.

We expect around one-third of the 12,000 affordable homes to be available at the London Affordable Rent level, which is substantially lower than the national Affordable Rent level of 80% of market rents. The starting point for these rents will reflect the rent cap limits set for social rent.

The other two-thirds of the 12,000 affordable homes will be available for shared ownership or let at London Living Rent, which is based on a third of average local incomes.

“...we announced our partnership with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. This will see us invest £8 billion in 20,000 homes across the capital.”

Welfare reform

We work hard to deal with the effects of changes to the benefit system. We have set up our Financial Inclusion team to support our residents who are affected by this.

This year, we have introduced new IT systems and studied how benefit changes will affect certain groups of residents. We have also worked with the Government, the Department for Work and Pensions and local authorities.

Together, this means we can target our work where it is needed most.

The introduction of Universal Credit has continued. Some working-age residents who receive means-tested benefits (those that depend on their income and spending), including Housing Benefit, are now receiving this money direct into their bank accounts. There are over 28,000 L&Q residents who currently receive part or full Housing Benefit. By 2022, all of them will be transferred over to Universal Credit.

We have been working to manage this. Although the full effect of the changes has yet to be felt, our actions have led to no real increase in rent arrears, which means we are successfully helping residents to sustain their tenancies.
06

How we performed in 2017

In this section, we measure our performance against the commitments and standards of our Customer Service Charter. We introduced this charter last year. Here, we also highlight what we have done this year to help us deliver the commitments we made.
Charter commitment 1
Provide a good-quality home

This commitment is about the quality of homes at the point when our customers move in. It applies equally to newly built homes and existing homes.

Our Quality team have been very busy making sure that our new homes meet the needs and expectations of our customers. Over the last 18 months, they have worked closely with our contractors and consultants to make sure that our new homes meet a strict quality standard.

They have also taken more than 1,800 customers on introductory visits to their new homes, showing them how to use things such as the heating and water systems.

This shows our commitment to customer service and reduces the number of calls to our Aftercare team during the course of the two-year new-homes warranty that we offer to our customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before you move in, we will check that your home, facilities and services meet your needs.</td>
<td>For new homes, we aim to reduce, as far as possible, the number of repairs that we have to carry out because issues were not dealt with before tenants moved in.</td>
<td>Number of faults per home after a tenant moves in, averaged over 100 homes: 32.9 repairs per 100 homes per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will measure this by asking residents about the quality of the home they have moved into. This applies to both homes which have been newly built and for homes we have re-let.</td>
<td>Satisfaction with the quality of new home: 80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working in Manchester and the North West

In January, we completed a 50/50 joint venture with Trafford Housing Association. This gives them the capacity to deliver 2,000 homes in Greater Manchester and the North West.

By working together, we can build more homes more quickly than either of us could individually.

We will bring our strong financial background and development expertise to the joint venture. Trafford Housing Trust bring their financial strength and local knowledge and connection with the community. They also have an outstanding track record of delivering high-quality developments on time in the area.

The agreement marks our first partnership outside the South East and is in line with our long-standing commitment to work with local housing associations to deliver more homes and support for local communities.

Initially, our aim is to build around 500 new homes a year, with each partner investing around £80 million over the four-year period. Any extra money generated from the joint venture will be invested back into the local area.

This will help to create more homes for local people in the years ahead. Work has already started on site at our first joint development (45 flats in Davyhulme), in Greater Manchester.

2,000 New homes to be built in Greater Manchester and the North West area
**Charter commitment 2**

Deliver reliable services to maintain your home and the area where you live

These standards tell you about the quality of our homes and the local area and how well we manage our repairs and services in your neighbourhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will maintain your home and keep it in good condition.</td>
<td>This is measured by understanding how our residents feel about their homes and how well we are doing with programmed improvement work to homes.</td>
<td>Progress against a planned maintenance schedule, measured by the number of components (see the table below) planned and the number completed. 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will agree appointments for repairs at times that suit you.</td>
<td>We identify how many of the repairs that are reported to us receive an appointment and whether these appointments are kept.</td>
<td>Percentage of appointments made for repairs residents asked for (from survey): 91.8% Percentage of appointments kept for repairs residents asked for (from survey): 93.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When carrying out work we will get jobs done right first time.</td>
<td>We identify how many of our repairs pass the post-inspection quality checks and whether work is completed at the first attempt.</td>
<td>Percentage of repairs which were not completed first time: 22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will make sure that the shared and local area is clean and well maintained and managed.</td>
<td>This measure looks at the quality of our estates and the local area and how we manage and respond to reports of antisocial behaviour.</td>
<td>Percentage of estates reaching gold standard: 68% Antisocial behaviour (ASB) assessment completed within target time: 83.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Programmed work**

We have updated our five-year programme of planned work.

We give our customer-facing teams information about any planned maintenance in our properties. This helps them to answer customer enquiries better.

By sharing this information, our teams can make better-informed decisions if they receive a repair request. This means we do not pay twice for similar work. In time, we will carry out planned maintenance on all our homes, as the different parts of each home need replacing.

The table below shows the work we completed as part of the programme this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire door</td>
<td>1,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer units (fuse box)</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric tests</td>
<td>1,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full rewire</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom and wet room</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"We will agree appointments for repairs at times that suit you."
How we performed in 2017

Responsive repairs

This year, the majority of our neighbourhoods moved over to our Direct Maintenance service, our in-house repairs team. Below we set out how they performed against their target.

The satisfaction with the overall service this year has been partly affected by our revised repairs policies.

This year we published updated guidance on our repairs responsibilities. This was to help our residents and staff to be clear on the repairs we were responsible for.

We have also noted that the time taken to complete repairs was one of the main causes of residents’ dissatisfaction. We will be focusing on improving this in the coming year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointments kept</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of workers (% good)</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of work (% good)</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with this repair</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95% of our repairs and maintenance appointments were honoured and completed.

L&Q Foundation

The vision of our L&Q Foundation is that no one should be denied the opportunity to achieve their full potential because of where they live. So its work focuses on tackling the issues that create disadvantage and lack of opportunities in the communities where we work.

In 2016/2017, we invested over £7.1 million in the work of the L&Q Foundation.

The money was invested across four themes.
- Employment and skills
- Financial inclusion
- Positive futures for young people
- Strengthening communities.

Spending against theme

Spending money like this across these themes matches our overall aims. We want to have stable tenancies, support vulnerable residents and provide opportunities for residents. Some of the main things we achieved in 2016/2017 included:

- Placing 451 residents in paid work;
- Having over 15,000 young people take part in activities we organised;
- Helping residents gain £8.6 million of extra income through our money advice services; and
- For every £1 we invested, we gained £5 in social value.

We measure the effect of the social value generated from the foundation’s work by using a formula for this.

The formula puts a monetary value on social activities that have been difficult to measure financially. So, for example, increasing someone’s confidence has a value for society but it has traditionally been hard to give this as a monetary figure.

Similarly, living next to a community park has a value but it has been difficult to work out what it is worth in financial terms.

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How we performed in 2017

Charter commitment 3
Make any charges accurate and clear

These standards help you to be 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>
<th>How we performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will explain how we work out rents and charges and we will deal with queries swiftly.</td>
<td>Number of questions about service charges per 1,000 homes: 4.2</td>
<td>Percentage of enquiries dealt with within the Service Level Agreement: 88.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting residents with their rent

Changes to benefits and the introduction of Universal Credit mean some customers are now struggling to manage their income and outgoings. Universal Credit makes residents responsible for paying their rent to us.

Our Revenue teams have been spending more time contacting residents to discuss rent payments and offer support. Because of this, we have introduced a new arrears collection system to help the teams reduce arrears and target their support to residents most at risk.

Our new Tallyman system, which we developed in partnership with the referencing agency Experian, aims to reduce arrears. By taking action earlier on low-level arrears, we are able to help residents sooner and prevent their arrears from increasing. So, for example, we may put payment plans in place or offer financial advice. This earlier contact is also helping the team to build relationships with residents they may not have talked to otherwise.

To help residents sooner and prevent their arrears from increasing, we are able to offer financial advice. This earlier contact is also helping the team to build relationships with residents they may not have talked to otherwise.

The system has automated many existing manual daily processes for our revenue officers. This is freeing up their time to offer more intensive support to our vulnerable residents and those affected by benefit changes.

The system uses a risk rating applied to each account, based on credit scores and payment histories with us. For example, if a tenant has a good credit record and misses a payment, we will simply send a short polite reminder by text message. If they have frequently missed payments in the past, we escalate their case more quickly.

There was a lot of staff input into the new system. Revenue officers and their team leaders were heavily involved in designing it. By the end of March 2017, using the new system, we had automatically sent over 68,000 notices by text, email and letter, plus over 8,500 legal letters.

The system is a first for the housing sector. We estimate that we could benefit from a return on investment of up to £3.5 million over five years. By collecting rent when it is due, we are able to commit to building more homes and providing better services.

Value for money

We aim to bring value to the UK as a whole, as well as to our residents and the communities we serve. One of the ways we do this is by building as many homes as possible to meet a range of housing needs. In particular, homes at rents that are below market level are needed by people who would not otherwise be able to afford somewhere to live.

The volume of homes is important but we also want to deliver value by providing high-quality homes and services and by investing in our residents and communities.

We are still focused on our aim of delivering 100,000 new homes in the next 10 years. This is made more challenging by a reduction in our rental income and a period of political and economic uncertainty.

As a result, achieving our aim needs us to focus on reducing costs, spending money wisely and making the best use of our assets.

Across the L&Q Group, we have drawn up a £38 million efficiency plan to be delivered by 2020. This includes £9.6 million in efficiencies from the merger between us and East Thames.

In 2016/2017 we have:

- Completed 2,552 new homes, including 1,536 homes for below-market rent or shared ownership and 1,016 for sale or rent at market rates;
- Increased our investment in new homes to £3.80 for every £1 generated from operations (up from £1 last year), and
- Maintained high levels of customer satisfaction, at 79% (the same as in 2016).

Energy efficiency

Our EnergySave scheme has now helped more than 24,000 residents lower their energy bills. To accompany it, we launched EnergySave Plus in 2016. This £5 million programme helps residents in our 2,500 least-efficient homes to save money.

The EnergySave Plus programme will reduce energy bills through a combination of:

- Energy-saving advice for residents; and
- Practical improvements to make these homes more energy efficient.

Lower energy costs may also help to reduce rent arrears, mould and damp problems while also improving the comfort of our homes.

Improvements include fitting draught-proofing, new boilers, insulation and solar panels, and upgrading heating and lighting.

One of the main aims of our new environmental policy is for all our homes to have an energy performance certificate rating of D or better by 2020. We will continue to offer cavity-wall and loft insulation where it is needed. We contact residents who are included on the programme. Residents may also apply to be included by contacting our customer service centre.

"Our EnergySave scheme has now helped more than 24,000 residents lower their energy bills."
How we performed in 2017

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It will be easy to contact us, including by phone and online.</td>
<td>We monitor this standard by looking at how our call centres perform. Also how easy it is for residents to contact us and for their enquiries to be dealt with.</td>
<td>Percentage of people who hang up before we answer (L&amp;Q Direct and Homeowner teams): 10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| We will provide information that is clear, accurate and easily accessible. | We assess how clear the information is that we give our residents, and whether they are satisfied with the quality of our communications and published information. | Percentage of appointments made for repairs residents asked for (from survey): 91.8%  
Percentage of appointments kept for repairs residents asked for (from survey): 93.5% |

Customer service centre

In 2016/2017, our customer service centre explored new ways of working to make us a very flexible employer. We also introduced new ways of measuring customer satisfaction.

Our first big change of the year was to move to working around the clock. Our customers can now speak to our advisors 24 hours a day, Monday to Friday. This replaces our previous arrangement of using another company to answer the phones after 8pm. This approach improves the service we offer, because our teams have more experience and are trained to higher levels.

Our second change has been to introduce surveys at the end of our contact with customers. This short survey only has five questions but it gives us immediate feedback from customers. They can give us feedback about the service we offer and about individual advisors’ performance. We can use this for coaching and developing skills.

Finally, we introduced homeworking as an option for our customer service advisors. This allowed them to work from home, avoiding a commute and offering a greater work-life balance. This has led to increased productivity and quality from our homeworkers and lower absence.

Our homeworking approach was recognised recently at the National Customer Contact and Customer Service Awards. We won Most Effective Homeworking Programme in the UK.

We will also be introducing this approach with our out-of-hours service in the coming year. Overall, we met our year’s target for abandoned calls but had some challenging winter months when contact levels are naturally higher. We were very happy to receive extra recognition at the Contact Centre Forum Awards. Our talented staff members won Team Manager of the Year and Industry Newcomer awards.

The year ahead will be full of further changes as we bring together the L&Q and East Thames customer service centres.

"Our customers can now speak to our advisors 24 hours a day Monday to Friday."
How we performed in 2017

Charter commitment 5
We have professional staff who listen and respond helpfully

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>How we performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will provide a prompt answer, 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 and that the right member of staff handles the enquiry, and you know what we are doing in response.</td>
<td>Percentage of people who thought the next steps to deal with an enquiry were clearly explained: 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will check that your enquiry has been dealt with and that you are satisfied.</td>
<td>We will measure residents’ satisfaction with how enquiries are handled.</td>
<td>Percentage of enquiries sorted out at first contact: 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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 report on our performance in dealing with complaints.</td>
<td>See resident involvement below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveying residents in real time
Over the past five years we have monitored all dealings with residents in up to 11 service areas through customer satisfaction surveys. All but one of these surveys were carried out by phone through an independent research agency.
Generally, the calls were made a month after the transaction had taken place.
Our new real-time surveying method, which we use to collect most of our information about customer satisfaction, has been in place since September 2016. We currently have 12 different live surveys, and have had just under 11,000 surveys completed in the first six months. This is almost as many as we would have achieved in a year with our previous provider.
We hope to expand on this, and include different survey areas over the next two years. We will also match our surveying methods with those of East Thames. This will allow us to have one approach to customer satisfaction.

Involving residents
Following our merger with East Thames, we reviewed the structures both organisations use for involving residents. This was to make them more consistent and to make sure there is a link and line of accountability between all the activities which involve residents.
The new Customer Experience Committee took on the old Resident Board’s customer-services responsibilities. So that we can continue to involve residents in developing and monitoring service and policy, a new Resident Services Group was agreed. This group will be supported by, and will feed into, a wider structure for involving residents. We set out this structure in our new resident-involvement strategy.

“In March, more than 100 residents from East Thames and L&Q got together to find out about the future of our merged organisation at our first joint resident conference.”

Residents who had been involved with resident panels, forums, reviews and surveys were invited to the joint conference in central London. Resident Steering Panel Chair and Vice Chair Fayann Simpson and Michael Verrier, who are also members of the Customer Experience Committee, opened the event.
Staff from L&Q and East Thames were on hand to speak to residents about the work we do. Stands ranged from service charges to social media and even a ‘meet the directors’ stand where residents could speak to senior staff from both organisations. We also held workshops to help shape our resident-involvement strategy and to look at how residents preferred us to communicate with them.

Our resident inspectors carried out two reviews during the year. The first, in April 2016, was to assess our lettings service. Our residents identified issues relating to how we prepare homes consistently for letting. There were particular concerns over decorations and the gap in quality between a new home and a relet.
The inspectors reported to our Resident Board and a range of actions was agreed to be put in place. This included setting new criteria for when we would decorate voids, such as decorating for our most vulnerable residents.
The second review of the year assessed the complaints service. The fieldwork for this review was carried out in November, with six inspectors taking part. Following the review, we decided to set up an integration project group to look at combining the East Thames complaints process with ours. This will also involve a series of focus groups attended by residents.
Residents annual report 2017

In this report we set out how we have met the requirements of our customer service charter between April 2016 and March 2017.