

EASY READ
VERSION



- YOUR HOME**
- YOUR TENANCY**
- YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY**
- YOUR SUPPORT**
- WELFARE REFORMS**
- GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE**
- YOUR INVOLVEMENT**

OUR THIRD ANNUAL REPORT TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Welcome to Ability's third Customer Annual Report



We want to put customers at the heart of everything we do.

I have learnt from listening to customers that not all of your views and feedback reach the people who make decisions. I want to change that.

That is why we have employed a Customer Engagement Co-ordinator. Her name is **Maddy Cox**. Maddy's job is to make sure all your feedback is used to improve your homes or services.

See page 14 to learn more about Maddy's role.

We want every one of you to feel that you can give us feedback in a way that suits you.

You can give feedback through:

- The Customer Panel
- A Local Group
- A Survey
- Complaint or Compliment.

In this report you can read about what we have done to make Ability better than last year.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Best wishes,

David Williams
Chief Executive





YOUR HOME

We know that your home and our repairs service are important to you.

We have been working hard to improve our repairs service.

We measure how long it takes to do our repairs and we found we are meeting most of our targets.

We rang a sample of our customers after they had a repair. Nearly all were happy with the work done.

If you need a repair, you can call our repairs service.

You can speak directly to the person who will be organising your repair.



THIS YEAR

we have:

- built 43 new homes
- replaced 63 gas boilers

NEXT YEAR

we will carry on making improvements to our services like:

- heating
- windows
- doors



YOUR TENANCY

You told us that having your own home is very important in helping you live more independently.

Christine from Merton said:

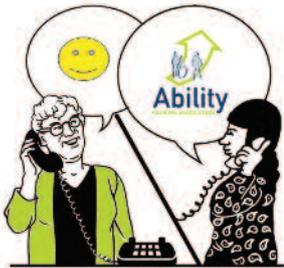
“I feel safe here in my own flat and I love having my own kitchen and bathroom.”

THIS YEAR

Our Housing Officers contacted all new tenants just after they moved in. Most tenants said they were happy with where they lived.

NEXT YEAR

- We will send out a survey to all new tenants to see how we can improve.
- We will discuss the results with the Customer Panel.
- We will talk to the Customer Panel about how we can keep our rents affordable.





YOUR LOCAL AREA

You told us that the most important thing is to feel safe and secure in your home.

THIS YEAR

We improved the security at 2 services, 1 in Croydon and 1 in Reading. The tenants told us they now feel much safer.

We are also working at another service to improve security and make the area safer.

NEXT YEAR

We will make more improvements to some of our properties so they are all at the Ability Standard.

We will do this by:

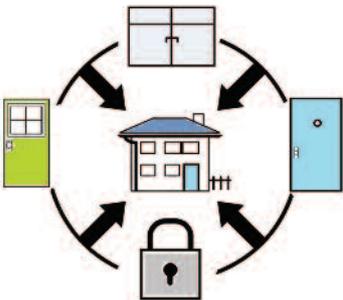
- putting better locks on doors and windows
- installing door viewers
- replacing windows and doors.

We will review our Pet Policy to make sure owners are being responsible.

We will make sure communal gardens and other shared areas are being well looked after.

We will carry on working with the Police, other housing providers and **local agencies** to make sure anti-social behaviour is dealt with.

Local Agencies are groups that are there to help you and give you advice. For example Citizens Advice Bureau.



YOUR SUPPORT

We know that making your own decisions about your own lives is important to you. We have been looking at more ways to help you live more independently.

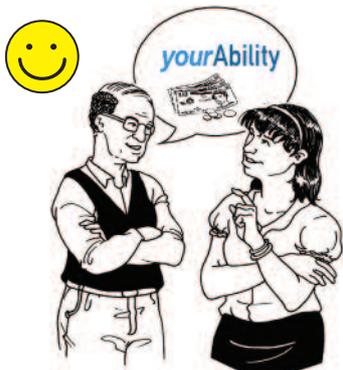


THIS YEAR

We have set up Ability Care & Support as a separate part of Ability. This is to help us focus on looking at new ways to help you live more independently.



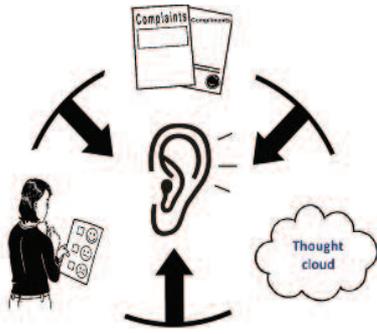
We can now provide personal care to more customers.



We have introduced **yourAbility**. This offers more flexible support for customers with personal budgets. We have over 30 customers using **yourAbility** and so far the feedback has been very positive.



We have worked with customers to make **Easy Read** more available. You can now have Easy Read support plans, this annual report and 'window'.



We have introduced more ways for you to give feedback so we make sure we hear your views.



We have involved some of you in selection of staff.



We have welcomed our new customers in Croydon and Merton. This is Dee who recently moved into one of our new flats in Merton.



NEXT YEAR

- We will keep on finding ways for you to give us feedback.
- We will work with the Customer Panel to decide how best to improve our service.



WELFARE REFORMS

The article tells you about two very important changes to welfare benefits.

These changes will be introduced in April 2013.



The 'Bedroom Tax'

This may affect you if you have a 'spare' bedroom.

For example, if you are a single person or a couple and you have a home with two bedrooms then this may affect you (unless you have a carer who sleeps over).

If you are a couple with one child or two children of the same sex then this may also affect you.

How will it affect you?

If you have housing benefit to pay for your home then you may get less benefit because you have a spare room.

For example if your rent is £100 a week then from April 2013 you would get £14 less in housing benefit.

You will have to find this extra from other money to pay for your housing.





We will contact Ability tenants who may be affected by this change.

If you are worried you should talk to your landlord

Changes to the Council Tax Benefit

Local authorities also have to change the way they organise council tax benefit from April 2013.

This means some people may no longer get the full amount of council tax benefit and will have to pay some of their own council tax bill.

The changes will be published in January 2013.

Each local area will be making their own plans so you need to look out for the details about this so you know what you will have to pay.



We will put information about these welfare changes on our website. **www.ability-housing.co.uk**

Click on the button Welfare Reforms on the left side of the screen.



VALUE FOR MONEY



THIS YEAR

We lowered the cost of the service we deliver and kept other costs as low as possible.

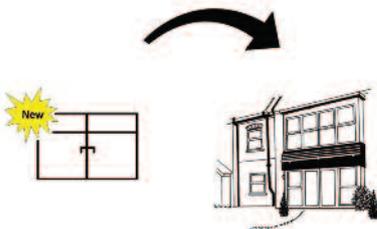


We agreed to give more money to our repairs contractor when they perform a job really well. This is called an 'incentive'. We also agreed to have penalties if they don't perform to the right level.

We decided to spend more money on **preventative maintenance**. This should mean that we have to do fewer repairs in the future.

Preventative maintenance is when you replace or update something before it breaks.

We spent more on improving homes to keep them warmer and keep your heating costs as low as possible.



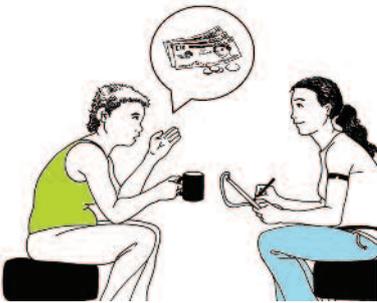


We set up a service improvement group to look at ways to improve service and value for money.



**NEXT
YEAR**

We will work with our Customer Panel to find more ways to save money



Our Customer Engagement Coordinator will get your views and feedback on value for money of our services.

GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

Governance means how Ability is managed and how we make decisions.



The Customer Services Committee was set up by the Ability Board to make sure customers are at the centre of everything we do.

THIS YEAR

The Customer Service Committee met to decide how to get customers more involved.

Financial Results:

We met our financial targets in 2012. We have set a budget for 2013 which includes money for building new homes and making improvements to the services we have told you about.

NEXT YEAR

We will work with the Customer Panel to make sure we focus on providing good service for customers.

This means Customer Panel members will look at complaints with us.



YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Here are some ways you can get involved with Ability.



The Customer Panel:

The Panel is made up of Ability customers who have said they want to help improve Ability's services and provide regular feedback.

There are 11 members on the Panel who are a mix of tenants and support service customers from different areas.



THIS YEAR

We put an advert in the summer edition of Window to see if there were more customers who would like to join the Panel. We have gained 3 more members.



Training and support for Customer Panel members

We have found some training options and will work with Panel members to help decide which training would help the most.

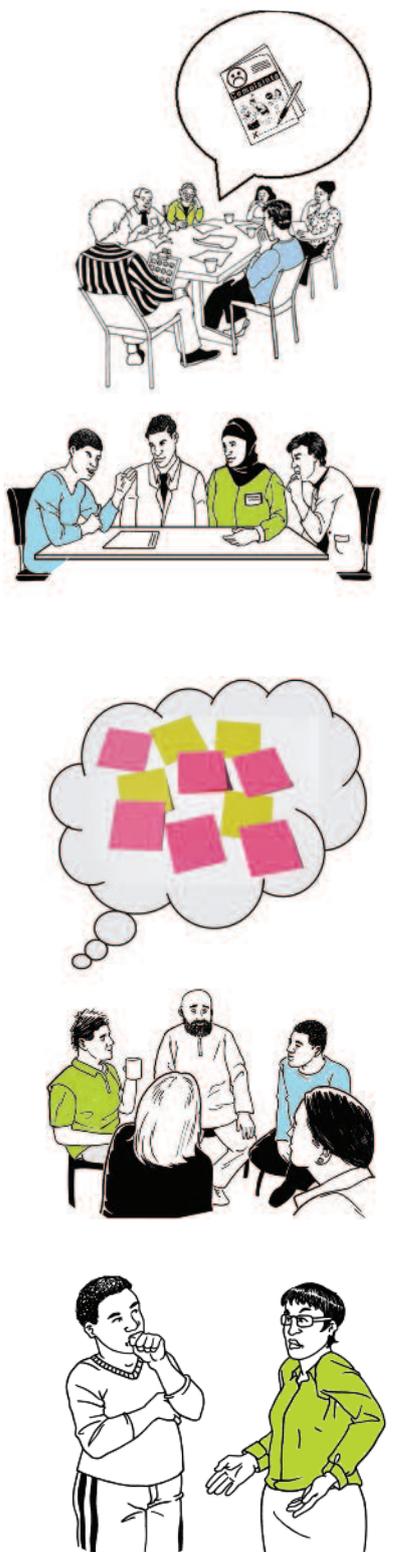


Panel representative in the Customer Services Committee

One of the Customer Panel members goes to this committee 2 times a year. He represents all customers to look at feedback and agree improvements.

Continues on next page

YOUR INVOLVEMENT CONTINUED



Involving customers in solving complaints

We have employed a Customer Engagement Co-ordinator, Maddy Cox (see opposite page). Maddy has taken over our complaints process and will be talking to the Customer Panel about complaints.

Involving more customers at a local level

During the year we tried to improve the ways you can get involved and tell Ability your views.

Here are some ways you can give feedback:

Thought Cloud: A notice-board with lots of post-it notes. You write your idea on a post-it and stick it on the board. The ideas are looked at every month and the feedback given to the Customer Engagement Coordinator.

Service Meetings: Regular meetings to talk about issues and 'thought cloud' suggestions.

Complaints Update: We had 45 complaints last year.

What have we learned?

Many of the complaints were about communication and attitude of staff.



What are we doing about it?

All complaints will now be co-ordinated by Maddy Cox. The Customer Panel will look at complaints and suggest improvements.



We will keep training staff to deliver excellent customer service.



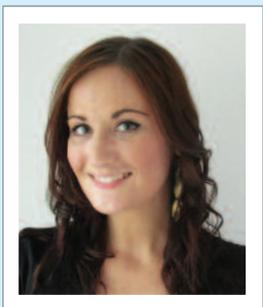
We will work with our repairs contractors to continue to improve our repairs service.



NEXT YEAR

We will work with the Customer Panel to increase their involvement.

We will make sure there are easy ways to give feedback in all our services. Your feedback will go to managers to make improvements.



Customer Engagement Co-ordinator

Maddy Cox has been working for Ability since April 2011. She started as a Housing Support Worker at one of our services so she already understands Ability and the services we provide.

Maddy will be responsible for developing customer engagement in housing services and care and support services.

She will work with the Customer Panel members to help them get more involved and make sure their views are fed back through the organisation and will make reports to help us identify any trends in customer complaints and find ways to improve.

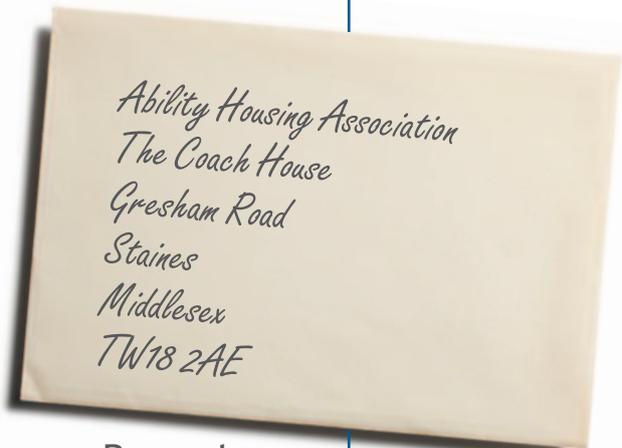
This is your publication and
we'd like to hear from you.



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