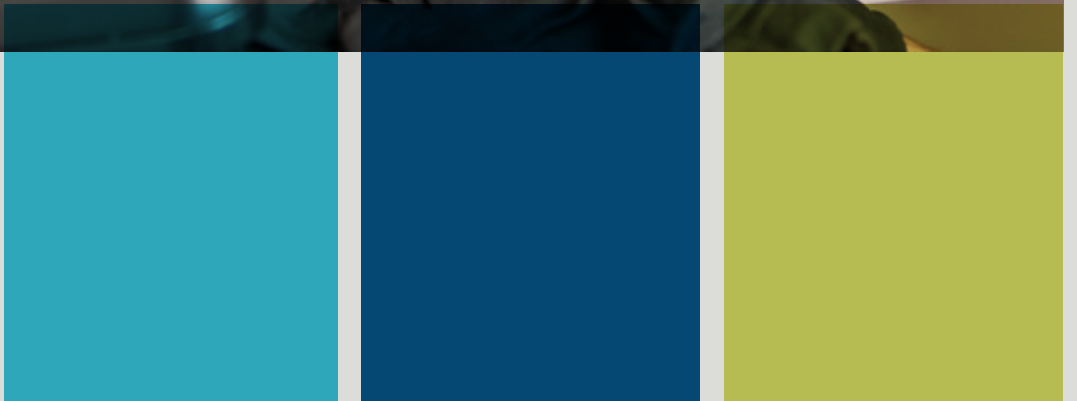


# ABILITY ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

Promoting Independent Living



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## Jane Harrison (Chair) Annual Review

After nine years as a non-executive director at Ability HA and the last five years as chair, I will be stepping down from the board at our AGM in March 2021, having completed my term of office.

Ability has significantly evolved and developed over the past nine years, with new supported housing schemes in Surrey, Hillingdon and East Sussex, providing good quality and much needed accessible homes, supporting people with disabilities to live independent lives. We have also grown our care and support services, increasing the reach and impact Ability is able to offer across London and the south of England, enabling more people to have autonomy and control over their lives. Our future plans involve greater collaboration, partnership and co-production with our residents and customers, together developing Ability's services ensuring our future plans put residents front and centre of all that we do.

The last year has been challenging for everyone, in particular those providing and in receipt of care and support. The team at Ability have risen to the challenge of delivering much needed services in a safe environment and I am immensely proud of their efforts and achievements.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with Ability and will be sad to leave. I would like to thank the staff and executive team and my fellow board members for their hard work and support over the past five years and wish my successor Sally Reay every success for the future. I know that Sally, with the support of the board, will build on the foundations that have been laid to further develop and grow the services and support Ability provides over the coming years.

Jane Harrison, Chair



## Welcome Jeff Skipp

It has without doubt been an unprecedented year, with Covid-19 posing a serious risk to the safety of residents and colleagues. In March, with the virus spreading significantly across the country and throughout our communities, it became clear we were heading for a national lockdown; making it essential that Ability found new ways to operate.

The support of all our residents was fantastic and greatly appreciated, and together we managed to deliver essential services whilst maintaining a Covid-19 safe environment. On the occasions we needed to enter your home during this time, together we were able to agree a safe way to carry out repairs and protect everyone concerned.

We also put in place wellbeing calls, regularly contacting residents to ensure they were safe and to provide additional supports when needed. Maintaining the safety of our residents, while supporting them and minimising the loneliness and isolation

experienced during these challenging times, has been our focus.

Managing the pandemic and keeping residents, colleagues and contractors safe has been the priority during the year. We have also been able to undertake a number of our planned projects and these are outlined further in this review.

Once again can I thank you for your support during this challenging period. I am sure we all hope that, with a vaccine being rolled out, life may move closer to normal in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Skipp, CEO

## Ability Positive values: at the heart of everything we do

We work to our Ability Positive values and provide some excellent support across our services. We are working at improving how we record some of the great outcomes some of the people we support have achieved – and to celebrate their success whenever we can.

Case studies bring to life the impact we can have on individuals' lives and we want to be

able to celebrate and promote these successes showcasing the achievements our customers and residents make and the positive difference Ability can and does make to the people we serve.

It would be hard to reflect on the past 12 months without considering the impact on Ability of the pandemic, our response, and how we have worked so well together to keep people safe.

# Ability's response to COVID

By Jeff Skipp



With the national lockdown in March 2020, we had to change how we delivered services quickly, to ensure we minimised the risks of infection to our residents, staff teams and contractors. We implemented a reduced repairs service, focusing only on emergency, urgent, and landlord Health and Safety inspections, such as gas servicing. As residents, you were really understanding and supportive of these restrictions to services, and on those occasions it was necessary to enter your homes, you worked with our staff and contractors to agree a way for these repairs to be completed in a way that kept you safe - and made you feel safe.

We introduced weekly wellbeing calls for residents to give everyone the support they needed from the outset; we have maintained these throughout the year for residents who wanted the regular contact. We also continued with estate inspections to ensure our housing and estates were safe and that we identified any emerging health and safety issues.

I have heard feedback from some residents

who said they felt reassured seeing their Housing and Support Officer, to know they were keeping an eye on things, even though we could not invite residents to accompany them on the inspections as we normally would.

We also brought forward our fire risk assessments undertaken by external contractors to ensure all necessary fire safety precautions were in place and that residents, many of whom were spending more time at home than in normal circumstances, were safe.

Within Ability's Care & Support services our priority was to prevent Covid-19 from taking hold. This involved implementing difficult and challenging rules prohibiting visitors, closing communal areas and introducing strict social distancing and infection control procedures.

We know that these procedures were challenging for residents and the large impact the restrictions have had on so many of the people we serve. Our staff have been brilliant

in the ways they sought to minimise the impact of both lockdown and subsequent restrictions on socialising and using community facilities, which we appreciate are such an important part of people's day-to-day lives.

Staff worked with individuals and, working within government guidance, arranged and supported activities such as walking, board games, cooking in groups and others. They also helped residents in supported housing services form "bubbles", with the aim of minimising the isolation experienced by some.

Before the pandemic we knew and valued the difference our staff made, but their response, commitment and dedication during this period has been nothing less than fantastic. Without our staff's willingness to work selflessly and put the needs of others before their own, Ability would have been unable to maintain safe services during this crisis. I cannot express my gratitude and thanks enough; but, on behalf of our residents, myself and the organisation, thank you.



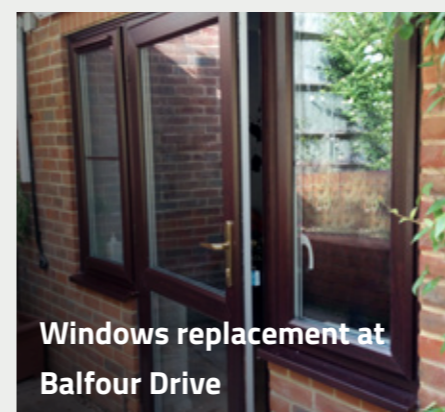
## Housing management

Intensive Housing Management (IHCM),  
by Lucy Sivasundram

Ability's Intensive Housing Management Service aims to support residents in running their homes in many ways. This includes everything from help to settle in at the beginning of the tenancy; providing help with things like completing housing benefit claims and updating these with changes when they are needed; and advice on paying bills and other debts related to your home.

We can also support you with any issues relating to your repairs and rent and we will continue to help all our residents understand their rights and responsibilities from their tenancy agreement. For example, providing advice on how tenants can maintain their safe and secure home and can help find additional support from other agencies if it is needed.

Ability helps by dealing with nuisance issues such as anti-social behaviour and any other concerns you may have about your home or environment; and helping our residents achieve a move on to alternative accommodation as and when it is appropriate. These are great examples of achieving and maintaining independent living.



Windows replacement at Balfour Drive

We are pleased to confirm our programme for replacing all windows and doors at Balfour Drive is complete. There are 10 bungalows and six houses. These works took three weeks to complete from 3-23 September and we carried out a final inspection on 25 September.

The programme was managed by MEA and the contractors Exbury Homes were very professional and friendly throughout the project and worked around our residents' needs and appointments. Residents were very complimentary during the works. One wrote in, saying:

**"We are delighted with the new windows and doors, the company fitting them were excellent and they arranged things so that I only had to take one day off work. All of the fitters were very professional and they did an excellent job."**

Keeping our residents' environment safe and secure is paramount, which we do with advice and, where appropriate, practical intervention. This includes monitoring CCTV, door entry, fire and other safety systems on behalf of residents. We also keep track of visitors, including contractors and other professionals, and by carrying out health and safety checks and risk assessments for the property.



# 100%

of homes gained a gas safety certificate against a target of 100%

All of our residents were contacted during each lockdown to ask whether they required any additional support, and frequency of contact agreed on a weekly or fortnightly basis if requested.



Properties in the year across Care & Support, Supported Housing, and general need.



HSOs inspected **100%** of our estates on a minimum six-weekly cycle.



**99.3%** of our properties gained an electrical certificate on a 5-year cycle



We received **18** reports of anti-social behaviour.



**98.4%** compliance achieved across all areas.



**12** complaints regarding estate management



**32** complaints regarding repairs



We completed **2,744** repairs

## Housing and Support: a case study

**One of our residents – a lady with significant health conditions – had been living in unsuitable temporary accommodation for two years and didn't have the support she needed to organise a move.**

Ability's Housing & Support Officer, Sarah Yeo, helped her move into an adapted flat. This included setting up her housing benefit and utilities, as well as ordering payment cards enabling her to pay cash everywhere – as she doesn't trust direct debits.

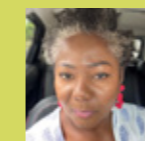
The Housing & Support Officer also ensured she was able to let the DWP know about her change of address. When she let us know she was struggling in the new flat's wet room and

had fallen over a couple of times, Ability helped her contact social services, who provided a shower seat and walker to use in the room.

We speak to the tenant every two weeks – and will often pop in to see her and help her read any letters that she has received. By becoming more outcome focussed, staff are now able to support customers to reflect on their journey and accomplishments so far, which has a positive impact on an individual's motivation.



### Customer stories



By Yewande Keleko, Area Manager - London

Ability's support to people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health needs ranges from step-down mental health services to community support in people's own homes.

Through the delivery of pathways - ranging from intensive support to lighter touch community-based services - we are able to personalise our offer, giving commissioners a range of options and the opportunity for people to move from high support services to community-based support as and when their independence increases.

Last year, Ability successfully bid for, and retained, the Hillingdon contract to continue

the provision of care and support to over 150 customers across four schemes in Hillingdon.

Since then, we have been improving and building on our support offer by focussing on staff skills and efficiency. Staff have been supported to gain confidence in identifying and working with people on achieving meaningful goals; working proactively with customers to support the development of independent living skills. Staff have achieved this by challenging their own perceptions about an individual's ability, alongside positive risk taking. This has meant staff changing the narrative within conversations, exploring, and capturing more fully with the individual their hopes and dreams and reinforcing their strengths. As an example, staff were then able to relate this

to the customer's ability to manage their own medication, as a first step towards the realisation of living more independently.

One of the impacts has been an increase in readiness of customers moving on. This is evidenced by feedback from customers, as well as an increase in the utilisation rates of our supported living services.

Staff working more effectively in this way has also enabled them to recognise and articulate people's strengths and achievements. By becoming more outcome focussed, staff are now able to support customers to reflect on their journey and accomplishments so far, which has a positive impact on an individual's motivation.



## Improving my diet – and my cooking!

By Mary, Sir Robert Mews

### “I would like to share my journey towards healthy eating.”

“Having made a choice to improve my wellbeing by positively managing my weight, staff supported me to consult with a dietician. The dietician advised me about the changes that I would need to make to achieve my goal - one of these was to eat healthier meals.

“Before, I used to eat mostly microwaved food. So, I started shopping and cooking healthy meals for myself.

“But now, I had another challenge to overcome – I was not a good cook! I had to start from scratch.

“With support from staff, I have learnt to prepare meals and I am amazed at how much I am enjoying the experience. I couldn’t have made a better decision - I really enjoy cooking more healthily.”



## Making my wishes a reality

By Ramesh, Hayes Park Lodge

“I can tell you that my physical health has not been the best and I know my habits haven’t helped.

“I often have severe respiratory problems and have been admitted to hospital due to reoccurring chest infections. Thankfully, I was given one of the best key workers at Hayes Park Lodge – Sahra, who has really listened to my health concerns.

“Sahra said to me: ‘Ramesh, we will get through this together and I will be supportive every step of the way’....my key worker didn’t give up on me.

“With Sahra’s help, I was signed up to a pulmonary rehabilitation team. At first, I wasn’t keen on attending, but Sahra explained it all so well to me, I attended and remained focused.

“I completed my course and I feel much better within myself. I don’t have to worry too much about my health, my breathing has improved, and I can continue with my exercises during the day. My habits are slowly changing as I have other activities that I now enjoy doing weekly.

“So, cheers to a new, improved and healthy Ramesh!”

# Compliments about Ability’s services

A selection of the recent feedback we have had at Ability’s services.

## Hamlet Lodge

A phone call from Elise, the sister of resident QK, thanking us for setting up his new phone. She told us that communication with him is so much better now. Elise said she thought the staff at Hamlet Lodge were marvellous, that her brother is very happy - and it gives her great reassurance knowing that he is so well supported.

She added a special thank you to staff for the great work being done during Covid 19. She said she doesn’t know how we do it.

The family of another resident, QK, sent flowers to staff for the support they have given him, particularly during periods of lockdown.

## Hayes Park Lodge

RF’s mother spoke to his keyworker about his progress and was pleased that he has successfully been able to apply for a freedom pass, so he can go for his monthly depots independently. She also commented on the pleasant, welcoming atmosphere in the staff office, adding that she thinks that the staff are great, respectful, and doing a good job.

She was especially proud to hear that RF is also moving to the next level with medication management to start self-medicating – and that he will be supported with the purchase of a mobile phone, which will help him through his self-medicating process by setting alarms.

Staff were also treated to a tray of cupcakes and card from the sister of one of our residents for doing a great job and supporting her with a healthy eating plan, which has included securing her GP’s referral to a dietician.

## Sessile Court

Previous resident Miriam sent a thank you card to staff, for their support and helping her to move on successfully to more independent living.



## Foster in high spirits about next move



Foster is now moving into a local council property in Merton. He says “I have not become unwell for numerous years now. My life has been a battle of ups and downs, but I now feel ready. I feel confident enough to live on my own now.”

Foster says his faith has helped him through the bad times, adding that spiritual healing really works.

Now with a portfolio of training and volunteering, a new flat, and new prospects, he hopes to be successful and healthy and bring his fiancé over from Ghana to live with him and share a long and happy life’.

## Working towards the perfect job



Ricardo (also known as ‘R’) from Merton Floating Support, said, “I really like my flat and I have found the support really helpful. I like to keep busy by attending various recovery college courses, but when I have some spare time, I participate in the groups that my keyworker helped me to find”.

“Over the years I have done some voluntary work – from gardening to befriending. I have really enjoyed getting the work experience. With the support of my employment advisor and keyworker, I got my first paid job working for Royal Mail. I am happy that I took the plunge and went for it. This is a big step, but with the continued support I know I will be fine”.

# Customer engagement

## Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Ability carried out a customer satisfaction survey last year, during which we sent surveys to 749 housing residents, of which 250 replied. We also carried out a customer satisfaction survey with our Care & Support customers, sending out 377 surveys, of which 112 replied.

Through the survey, our residents informed Ability that our housing services need to improve in a number of areas, which they highlighted to us.

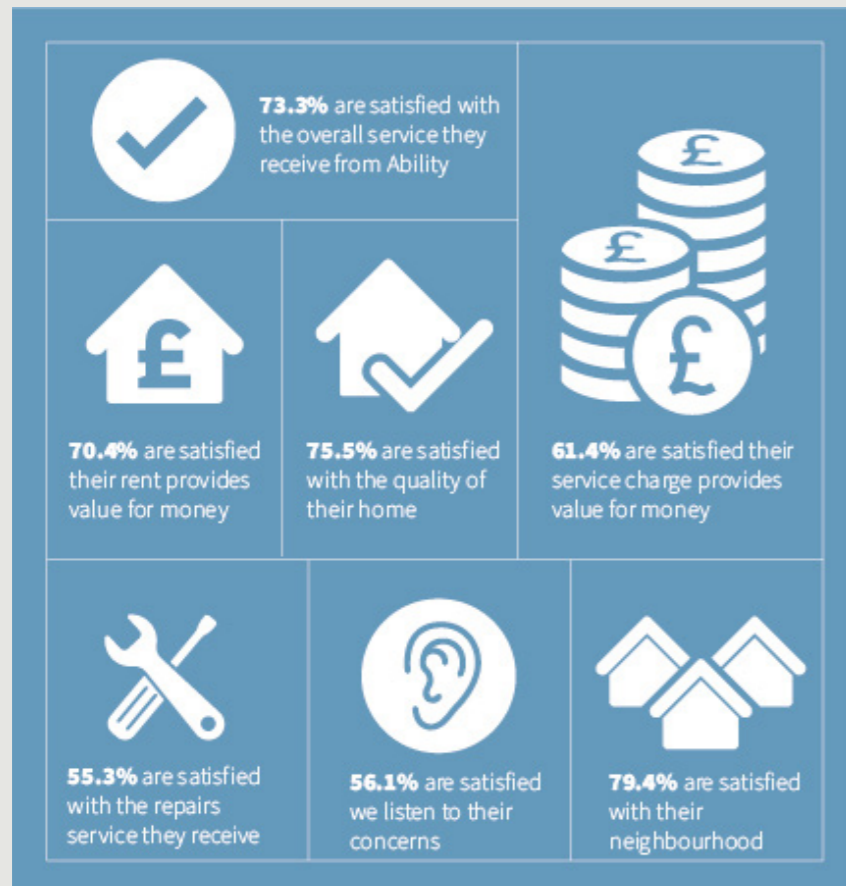
We are satisfied with the outcome of the Care & Support customer survey results and very pleased that 92% of customers are happy with the support they receive.

However, we will be looking at the results and areas where we can improve. We are

particularly keen to improve the number of customers who say our services make them feel safe, and increase the number of customers who feel staff treat them with respect.

We are aware that a number of the people who reported feeling less safe mainly receive a community-based service and do not live in our supported living flats. It is important we understand what further measures we can take to improve the security and safety people experience and feel, particularly in community settings.

Equally, we will seek to understand from customers how we can increase the number of residents who feel they are respected by staff and look at increased management and staff training.



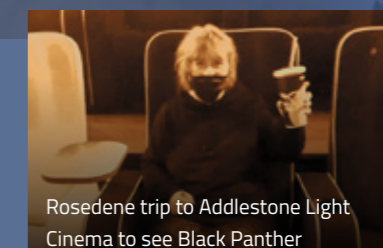
**Getting involved is important to increase physical and mental health, and overall wellbeing. Many of our staff and customers took part in a wide range of activities during 2020.**

Here are some of the highlights, in numbers:

- We provide Care and Support to 386 customers
- We deliver 5696 hours of support per week
- We have received 13 compliments about our services.
- We have received 15 complaints of which 14 were resolved at stages 1 and 2 of our complaints procedure with 1 complaint being resolved at stage 3.

We work with our customers to access and participate in their local communities. This plays an important part in encouraging them to live as independently as possible.

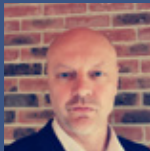
Community Inclusion is an essential part of our customers' lives, we work with our customers to ensure they have equal access to community resources and social activities, supporting them to live the lives they want.



Rosedene trip to Addlestone Light Cinema to see Black Panther

# Personalising our services for you

by Keith Iwin-Hill



**At Ability, we talk a lot about ‘personalisation’ of our services. But what does this actually mean?**

Personalisation means making sure you, and everyone we support, have as much control over their own lives as possible. Ability is working hard to make sure that we do this for everyone we support – and that everyone who works for Ability understands this.

Ability’s support planning process is very important, because it helps us work closely with you to make sure we understand your choices and how you need us to best support you. It also allows us to show the people who pay for the services what we do to support you.

We recently reviewed this process and have added new parts to improve it further. These include a one-page profile of every customer, and a decision-making tool, which together help us to get useful information about customers, how they want to live their lives, and what they need Ability to do to support them in achieving their goals.

## Risk – and rewards

We all have risks in our everyday lives, and this is a good thing. Getting over a risk like taking a walk to the shops is something we should do so we can live a more interesting life. We call this ‘positive risk taking’.

At Ability, we recognise that our customers need to take positive risks to help them become more independent and to achieve their goals. We want to work with our customers

to help them take positive risks and to reduce any hazards.

To do this, we have adopted a risk management process which identifies all the potential risks of supporting a person to achieve their goals. This means we can identify any related hazards and reduce them, ensuring our customers are supported in the safest way possible whilst promoting their continued independence.

Ability is aiming to train its staff in support planning and risk assessment. We want this training to be interactive and for staff to use these tools on themselves, so they understand how to use them well, and how to involve our customers in the process.

## Supporting you

Ability Care & Support provides services to some people who only receive a few hours a week and others who we need support throughout the day.

Some of the people Ability supports have changing needs, often to do with their health and mobility. This means we sometimes need to work with other organisations to review the care provided to customers. This is to check if we need to change the support we are giving them.

If a change in support is needed, sometimes we need to give their support team additional training or other assistance. We offer this help to our staff when they need it.



## Ability recruitment and training

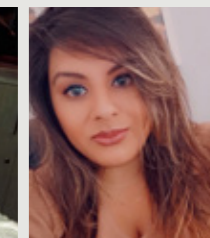
By Alex Hughes

**The job market has been varied during the pandemic. Whilst we have found there has generally been good availability for people with a care background, for those who are considering a new career in the care sector, we have seen some concerns with regards to Covid-related risks and concerns about health and safety, which have held some people back.**

Meanwhile, Ability reacted quickly to the new environment, thanks to our internal recruiter, Nav Matharu. We are pleased to have either maintained or improved recruitment levels across Ability during this time, and particularly with having increased recruitment from 81% to 94% in Care & Support.



Diane Husband



Nav Matharu

We have improved our online advertising and now advertise our vacancies on six job platforms, while at the same time developing a stronger presence on social media for promoting jobs. All Ability’s recruitment will be online for the foreseeable future.

We also adapted our face-to-face training, moving it all online to Social Care TV, as we continued to take a proactive approach to the personal and career development of our staff. Three managers achieved their level 5 in health and social care; one staff member achieved a level 4; and five support workers achieved a level 3. Several of our managers completed a Lead to Succeed course.

Ability’s training manager Diane Husband has done an excellent job in keeping on top of our team’s training requirements and making sure everyone’s training in mandatory areas such as Infection control, first aid and fire safety are up to date.

We would like to thank all Ability’s staff for their continued commitment through this very challenging time.

# Our plans for the future

A key priority for Ability HA over the next twelve months is to develop a customer strategy, working with residents to develop our future plans to improve our services and provide opportunities for residents to have greater involvement in the future development of Ability Housing Association. The Key areas we will be seeking to cover in the strategy are:

- Housing Management, including areas such as estate management, neighbourhood, managing anti-social behaviour, intensive housing management support and tenancy sustainment;
- Repairs and Maintenance, including areas such as day-to-day repairs, planned, cyclical and landlord health and safety;
- Customer communication, and in particular the role and function of our repairs call centre and the opportunity to widen its role to become a customer services function, improving communication and providing a single contact point for tenants;
- Digitalisation and the opportunities to improve communication with our residents and offer a wider range of information and advice through greater use of technology.



The strategy will be developed over the coming months and implementation will be phased, with priorities and timescales agreed with the Customer Engagement Committee.

We know from our recent housing customer satisfaction survey that the overall satisfaction with our housing service is not where it should be and needs to improve. Only 73% of residents are satisfied with the overall housing service provided by Ability HA and we know from our residents' feedback the area we need to improve on most is repairs.

To achieve this and to ensure our services are more responsive and focused we are planning to enhance our resident engagement and scrutiny at an individual, estate, area and

organisational level, working in partnership with residents to improve our services alongside involving and co-producing future organisational strategy and developments.

To achieve the above we plan to enhance our engagement from the ground up, building on the strong individual relationships already in place with Housing and Support Officers (HSOs) as part of our intensive housing management service. We will agree with each resident the housing service and supports they require and this will be formalised and recorded so every resident knows the service and support they can expect from us and rely on.

We will increase the number of local engagement forums and events at both a

neighbourhood and area level, providing opportunities for residents to discuss and identify parts of the service which are working well, areas for improvement and opportunities to share new ideas and innovate. It will also increase opportunities for Ability Housing Association to share and discuss local and organisational plans, gain feedback and improve communication.

Working with the Customer Engagement Committee we are seeking to review, expand and strengthen the role of the committee at an organisational and corporate level. We believe that the scrutiny, oversight and feedback they can provide will be invaluable in supporting Ability Housing Associations to fulfil its ambition to be customer focused, inclusive and deliver great services.



## An overview of Ability's year

By Peter Gardiner

We have worked closely with local authorities and contractors to make sure that we continue to deliver the excellent service that Ability Housing provides. This has meant:

- sourcing protective clothing for our care teams and maintenance contractors;
- working from home where possible as the government asked;
- investing in computers and systems to allow remote working;
- keeping our residents and customers safe
- Our Housing Team spent a lot of time during the spring and summer contacting residents to check that they were coping with lockdown, that they were staying safe, and offering whatever support we could.
- Last autumn, we invested in a new computer system, investing in our future and making sure we can support the business going forward. This investment enabled us to respond immediately when we were asked to work from

home where possible, moving to remote service delivery within a week but continuing to support customers quickly and effectively.

- During the course of the year, we said 'goodbye and good luck' to colleagues and customers at Yew Tree Lodge, as they moved to the care of another care provider. We also said goodbye to our customers in Howard Close, who returned to the management of another housing association.
- Ensuring that we had Covid-safe working practices and concerns from customers about the pandemic meant that we had a much lower demand for repairs during the year. However, safety is our first concern, and we have ensured that all safety critical repairs and inspections were delivered – and in the most Covid-secure way possible.

The end of the year saw Ability in a secure financial position, with a clear budget in place for next year and a business plan in place for the next five years.

## Budget for 2020-21

- Budget turnover £10.6m
- Finding £0.1m in running cost savings
- Investing in your properties £1.6m

## Finance Facts & Figures

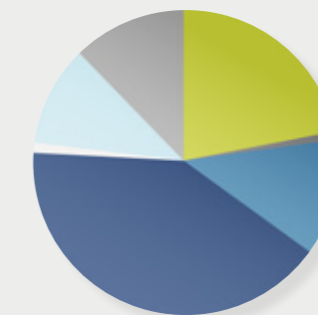
- £853 average spend on responsive repairs to each home (previous year £1,364)
- £866 average spend on planned maintenance to each home (previous year £535)
- £1,207 spent on each home to manage the property (previous year £1,860)
- £10.8m turnover at year end (previous year £10.6m)
- £10.3m housing related costs (previous year £10.3m)
- £0.8m operating surplus (previous year £0.3m)
- £5.8m gross income for Care & Support (previous year £5.2m)

For most of this at Ability we have been concentrating on keeping our service to you up to our normal high standards in spite of the impact of Covid-19. This includes the following achievements:



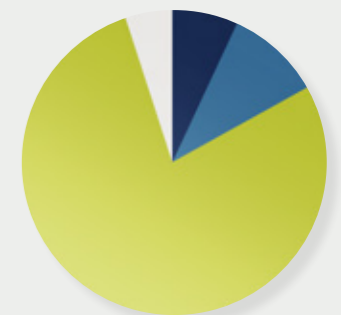
Ability Housing - Where does our income come from?

- 52% Care & Support Contracts
- 36% Housing rents (net)
- 7% Housing Service charges
- 4% Amortised Housing Grant
- 1% Care & Support Covid Grants



Ability Housing - Where do we spend our housing income?

- 41% Providing your Property
- 22% Maintaining your property
- 12% Central Overhead
- 12% Service Charges
- 11% Housing management
- 1% Surplus for re-investing
- 1% Bad debt



Ability Housing - Where do we spend our Care and Support income?

- 78% Care & Support staff
- 10% Central Overhead
- 7% Providing your Property
- 5% Surplus for re-investing





## COMMITMENTS

### VALUES

#### We engage actively for feedback

*We listen actively to our customers, colleagues and partners to help improve what we do and how we do it.*

#### We value differences

*We respect and value the individuality of each person.*

#### We focus on ability not disability

*We focus on what each person CAN-DO.*

#### We demonstrate integrity

*Our culture is one of openness, honesty and personal accountability.*



### BEHAVIOURS

#### Seek first to understand

*I will listen actively to ensure I have the best possible understanding.*

#### Think: CAN-DO

*I will focus on what is possible and think about what I CAN-DO.*

#### Give a positive response

*I will work with you to agree a positive outcome, without excuse or blame.*

#### Personal ownership

*I will take full responsibility for making sure the agreed outcomes are achieved in good time.*

### Board Members

(as at 30th September 2019)

- Jane Harrison (Chair)
- Sally Reay
- Jim MacIntyre (to December 31, 2020)
- Gina Small
- Maureen Osborne
- Nicola Philp
- Dominic Wallace
- Jai Dosanjh

### Executive Directors

- Jeff Skipp, CEO
- Peter Gardiner, Director of Resources & Deputy CEO
- Rita Asamoah, Director of Care & Support (to December 2019)
- Lucy Sivasundram, Director of Operations (Housing)
- Jackie Davis, Director of Assets & Housing (to August 2019)

### Auditors, solicitors & bankers

- Auditors: Beever and Struthers
- Solicitors: Devonshires
- Bankers: Barclays Bank PLC

### Registrations

- Company number: 01261380
- Charity number: 271547
- Registered with The Regulator for Social Housing for England & Wales, Number LH2174

### Report production team

- Nav Matharu/Alex Hughes, Ability
- Copy Editor: Dominic Weaver, Twelve
- Design: www.velocity-marketing.co.uk

### Company registered office

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