

ABILITY NEWS

Sept 2022

Promoting Independent Living

New Customer Contact Centre:

Tel: **0808 164 7474**

Email: contact@ability-housing.co.uk



Contents

2	Contents
3	Welcome by Lucy Sivasundram
4/5	Customer strategy
6/7	Customer strategy
8/9	Customer strategy
10	Customer strategy / Housing Management Team
11	Housing Management Team



Welcome by Lucy Sivasundram, Director of Operations, Ability Housing Association

Welcome to the spring edition of Ability News.

Ability is committed to delivering quality housing and support services, enabling you to live independent lives in good quality homes. We know from the feedback we have received that there are areas of our service which we can improve, alongside engaging and communicating better with our residents.

In this edition of Ability News, we focus on our housing customer strategy and the changes and improvements we are making to improve the service you receive. The feedback we have received shows that the key areas residents want to see improvement in the areas of communication and repairs.

Hearing your views, we are bringing our repairs line in-house alongside expanding its role to be the first point of contact for all repairs and housing matters. This means that, from May 2022, you will be able to contact the call centre to discuss any issue or problem related to your home.

If the call centre cannot resolve the problem straight away it will be passed to a Housing Support Officer who will contact you and seek to resolve any issues in the shortest possible time. We believe that by bringing the call centre in-house we will be better able to deal with matters quickly, have a direct relationship and communication with our residents and monitor progress for both repairs and housing issues, ensuring any problems get resolved in

a timely manner, whilst also ensuring we can keep you regularly updated on progress.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to improve the services we deliver.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Sivasundram,
Director of Operations

Ability**POSITIVE**⁺

Our new Customer Strategy

Last year we said we would develop a Customer Strategy that defines our customer offer in Housing Management, Repairs and Maintenance, Customer Engagement, and wider Customer Services functions, including a contact centre.

We worked with customers and colleagues to develop this, and made the following commitments to improving Ability's customer experience:

- We will communicate well and resolve problems
- We will ensure the good state of your home
- We will provide a supportive, proactive, and responsive Housing Management service
- We will have meaningful engagement with our customers
- We will provide a supportive and personalised service to our customers

These commitments are the basis of our customer offer. One of the outcomes of these was the rollout of an Intensive Housing Management (IHM) Support Plan, which is now used by Housing and Support Officers to work with customers to define how they engage with our Intensive Housing Management Service in a measurable way. Our Housing and Support Officers also began the process of a full tenancy audit.



**Customer Strategy:
Our Commitment to You**

We have been working hard to ensure that our offer to you is the best that it can be. Our Customer Strategy shows you how we are continuing to improve our services and how customers like you can be involved.

**More about our
five-point plan:**

We have introduced new Customer Care Standards so that you know what to expect from us. This means that we aim get things right the first time - so that you won't need to follow up on your enquiries.

This means we will:

- Respond to call and texts from customers within two working days
- Acknowledge your emails or letters the same day we receive them. We will provide you with a full response, or details of the steps we will take to resolve your query, within two working days.

**1. We will communicate well
and resolve problems**

In May, we launched Ability Housing's new in-house Customer Contact Centre.

The Contact Centre will make it much easier for you to get in touch with us. It will be your single point of contact at Ability.

The Contact Centre team can book your repairs and maintenance appointments and make appointments with your Housing and Support Officer. They can deal with day-to-day queries you have about your home.



As this new service develops, we will be introducing digital services that will enable you to resolve queries quickly and simply, using your mobile phone.

There will be no difference to the way in which you contact us – but you will only need one number to do so, whatever your query. We will still have people who will take any emergency calls out of office hours.

Our Customer Contact Centre will be staffed by three permanent members of the team – Chantia, Lee, and Sara - who are trained to answer your queries or pass them on to the correct colleague.

Our Customer Contact Centre is staffed by three permanent members of the team – Chantia, Lee, and Sara - who are trained to answer your queries or pass them on to the correct colleague.



**Sara-Bryony
Langford (Sara)
Senior Customer
Service Adviser**



**Chantia Williams
Customer Service
Advisor**



**Lee Miles
Customer Service
Advisor**

“I am excited to be taking a leading role in this exciting project implementing the in-house contact centre. It is a natural step up from my previous role as Care & Support Administrator.”

“I have a real passion for customer service and our customers, and this position will enable me to be more ‘hands on’ with delivering an excellent customer experience for everyone we serve.”

“My name is Lee, and I’m brand new here at Ability Housing. After various customer services roles, from entry-level to management, I’ve landed here as a Customer Service Advisor. I look forward to expanding my skillset in this very exciting environment.”



2. We will ensure the good state of your home

You told us that we needed to improve our repairs service and be more responsive. Following a tender process, our new contractors (KNK Group) began delivering maintenance and repairs services to some of our customers in March 2022, with BCHA continuing to provide their services to our customers in the Bournemouth and surrounding area.

We are also starting a programme of work to ensure that our properties are maintained appropriately in the longer term. This includes reviewing how our empty homes are relet.

Ability will be reviewing how KNK Group and BCHA are performing and will communicate this with you and all our customers.

3. We will give you a supportive, proactive and responsive Housing Management Service

Most of our customers will now have an Intensive Housing Management Support Plan. Your Housing and Support Officer has met with you to fully understand your needs and how much – or how little – support you need to live well and independently in your home.

As above, this year we will also be developing our digital service offers. This means you will be able to get information about your home using a mobile phone.

4. Customer Engagement

Listening to our customers' feedback is at the heart of what we do. Your views and experiences of the services we provide you helps us improve what we do for you in the future.

We would like to increase the number of customers who give us feedback by being a part of our Customer Panel. This gives us your views on issues including complaints, the services we offer and suggestions for improvements.

The Customer Panel usually meets virtually via a Teams Meeting so there is no need for travel.

If you would like to be a member of the panel, or to hear more about what they do, please let us know. You can do this by contacting Helen Armstrong Christie, Housing Services Manager at helenac@ability-housing.co.uk



5. We will provide a supportive and personalised service to our customers

As mentioned above, you will probably have already received a visit from your Housing and Support Officer to review your support plan and also to complete a tenancy audit. This will allow us to ensure that you are getting the support that you need to live your best life.

We will also be ensuring our properties are of a high standard. This includes the standard of a home when we relet it to a new customer.

Finally, when we relet a property or when we visit you at home for an electrical safety check, we will install lightbulbs with 10-year lifespans.



MEET OUR HOUSING MANAGEMENT TEAM...



Colleen Straver
Housing Team Leader

"Having previously worked for a several local councils in and around Surrey, I joined Ability Housing as Housing Team Leader in September last year. I have responsibility for managing the six Housing Support Officers.

"I have worked in housing for over 30 years, providing housing advice, homelessness prevention, tenancy support and sustainment, rent collection and arrears management and in my last role, I managed a Team of Housing Management Officers, the Tenancy Sustainment function, and supported with the caretaker service.

"I look forward to developing in my role at Ability Housing and providing a service to offer tenants the housing support that is required to ensure that residents are happy in their homes."



Helen Armstrong Christie
Housing Services Manager

"I joined Ability in February 2022 to implement our new Customer Strategy. Along with the day-to-day management of your home, this includes the launch of our in-house Contact Centre to make it easier for you to get in touch with us.

"I will also be ensuring that all customers have their say in the way we deliver our services and that you have the opportunity to become a member of our Customer Panel."



Beccy Hayden
Housing & Support Officer

I joined Ability Housing at the beginning of May 2022.

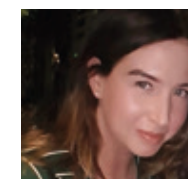
Prior to this I worked for a large housing association for more than five years. I worked as a specialist Older Persons Housing Officer, covering the over 55s housing schemes in Hampshire, Berkshire and South Oxfordshire.

My last job included providing support and advice, tenancy management such as dealing with rent arrears, antisocial behaviour and other issues. I also provided support such as referrals to external agencies - like social services and voluntary organisations - and helped enable residents to remain independent within their homes.

Before I moved into housing, I worked for a local authority for over 12 years as a social worker within their Adults Services Team. During my time there I gained lots of experience managing safeguarding cases, hospital discharges and also assessing for packages of care and support to meet their individual needs.

Since joining Ability, I have taken over 'patch 5' which includes Newbury, Reading, Bracknell and Basingstoke, and everything in between.

Over the coming months I look forward to meeting many of you, and getting to know my patch. If you see me out and about on site, please do pop over to say hello and introduce yourself.



Kathrine Burden
Housing & Support Officer

"I have worked at Ability Housing as a Housing & Support Officer for just over two years, covering the Oxfordshire, Swindon, Hayes, Essex and St Albans areas.

"I support tenants with issues like antisocial behaviour, applying for benefits and making adaptations to their homes. I love helping people achieve independent living.

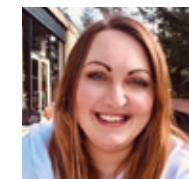
"I enjoy the gym and have recently started weight training. I also enjoy socialising with friends and family, going for dinner and drinks."



Michael Cunningham
Housing & Support Officer

"I started at Ability in March as a housing & support officer. I am really enjoying my time here and everyone is really supportive. In my spare time I love to run and have run several marathons including the London Marathon in October 2021.

"I live in Bournemouth and love to run along the promenade. I am also a season ticket holder at AFC Bournemouth and attend every home game.



Hannah-Kate Lampard
Housing & Support Officer

I'm Hannah-Kate and I am the Housing & Support Officer for the South Coast area. I have worked for Ability for 8 years and have really enjoyed getting to know our tenants over that time. I enjoy each day being different and being able to support our tenants through any tenancy/housing related issues.

Outside of my work, I enjoy socialising with friends and family and I have keen interests in Music, gardening and animals. I also volunteer as a choir director for a local charity community choir.

I'd like to thank our tenants for choosing Ability as their housing provider. You are the reason why we do what we do!



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)

- Sally Reay (Chair)
- Dominic Wallace
- Gina Small
- Jai Dosanjh
- Dritan Uka
- Mandy Dunstan
- Tim Jennings
- Vimal Gaglani
- Lynsey Bradshaw

Executive Directors

- Jeff Skipp, CEO
- Peter Gardiner, Director of Resources & Deputy CEO
- Lucy Sivasundram, Director of Operations (Housing)

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

- Lucy Sivasundram, Ability team
- Copy Editor: Dominic Weaver, Twelve
- Design: www.vdmagency.co.uk

Company registered office

Ability Housing Association,
The Coach House,
Gresham Road, Staines,
Middlesex, TW18 2AE

How to get in touch with us:

- ☎ : (01784) 490910
- ✉ : info@ability-housing.co.uk
- 📍 : AbilityHA

- 📞 : AbilityHA
- 📷 : Ability_pictures
- 🌐 : ability-housing-association