

Your Customer Annual Report 2016

Having difficulty reading this report?
Please call us on 0300 123 1966 and we'll provide you with a magnifying sheet.

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Welcome

Last year's Customer Annual Report went on to win a prestigious housing honour so we've continued with our award-winning formula this year, again working with a panel of customers.

The panel provided feedback on what information they felt was most important to people living in Great Places communities as well as how we can design the report in a way that is clear and easy to understand.

By working with customers to create this document we aim to make sure that it really is your Customer Annual Report – containing the information that matters most to you, so you can monitor how we go about creating great homes, great communities, and supporting great people.

I know one topic that really matters to our customers is our repairs service. I'm pleased to report that during 2015/16 we completed 83% of repairs on the first visit to a customer's home

(compared with 75% the previous year). We also made sure 100% of our homes were gas safety compliant. For more information on this, please see page 11.

Many thanks to all those customers involved in creating what hopefully will be a helpful, interesting read.

There are lots of ways for you to get involved in helping us to shape our services to make sure they meet the needs of you and your community, while developing new skills along the way. So if you'd like more information on this, please contact us (see page 17 for contact details).

Matthew Harrison
Chief executive,
Great Places Housing Group



Finance

Where our money comes from:

Rent and service charges
Other social housing activities
Developments for sale
Commercial activities

£82.9m (80% of total turnover)
£13.9m (13% of total turnover)
£6.1m (6% of total turnover)
£1.0m (1% of total turnover)

Total turnover for 2015/16

(the amount of money Great Places collected)

£103.9m

21% Interest/loan repayments

We need to borrow money to help us build new homes.

19%

Staff and office

14% Depreciation

Depreciation is an accountancy term used to describe the reduction in value of our homes due to wear and tear.

10% Routine repairs

10% Services

Services covers things like cutting grass, landscaping gardens and cleaning communal areas.

12% Surplus

Surplus is the 'profit' made by Great Places Housing Group which then gets invested back into the business to help build new homes and provide a range of support services for customers.

How we spend our money

Rent arrears:

The amount of rent owed which has not yet been paid. The lower the percentage the better as this means more rent is being paid on time.

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
General Needs - current arrears including housing benefit	3.3% (£2.0m)	3.4% (£2.0m)	👍
Supported Housing (directly managed schemes) - current arrears including housing benefit	4.5% (£148,000)	4.3% (£150,000)	👍
Customer satisfaction that rent is value for money	85.9% (818 responses)	82% (799 responses)	👍

Tenancy

Great Places is required to let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way.

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Re-let days	23.9 days	28.5 days	👍
Total void loss	£291,783	£427,000	👍
Average void cost per property	£898	£1,711	👍
Satisfaction with new homes	98% (159 responses)	97% (145 responses)	👍

What do we mean by re-let days?

The number of days between the previous customer moving out of a property and the new customer moving in.

What is void loss?

Void loss is the amount of rent not collected by Great Places due to our properties remaining vacant for any period of time.

What does average void cost per property mean?

How much we spend on making each empty property ready for a new customer to move in.

How do we ensure that our new homes are meeting the needs of our customers?

Our development team work closely with colleagues across Great Places and look at other new homes built in the local area to ensure that the style, layout and features of our new homes reflect the needs of individual communities.

We also invite all our new home customers to provide feedback about what works well and what could be improved in the future such as access, storage, energy efficiency, refuse removal and garden design.



Your homes

We've invested more into improving and maintaining your homes than ever before - with a total investment of £25 million.

Improving homes — what we've achieved

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?
New kitchens	627	628
Homes with new windows	278	367
New bathrooms and wet rooms	505	409
New boilers	783	607
New doors	808	605

How do we decide which properties need improvement work?

Work is planned using a sophisticated database, which records the age and condition of the major elements of each Great Places home.

We also make planning decisions based on feedback from customers and Great Places staff about the condition of a property or communal space.

This information is constantly refreshed by our 'stock condition surveyors' who complete reviews of 2000 individual properties each year.

How do we manage the allocation of repairs jobs?

Jobs are allocated by offering an appointment to a customer based on the urgency of the work required and availability of suitable resources. We attend emergency jobs within four hours and non-emergency jobs within 28 days at a date and time convenient to the customer.



Repairing homes — what we've achieved

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Number of repairs completed	43,000	41,000	👍
Number of repairs fixed first time	83% (35,674)	75% (30,750)	👍
Number of repairs appointments kept	85% (36,616)	82% (35,337)	👍
Customer repairs calls lost	3% (1,941)	3% (2,162)	👍
Customer satisfaction with repairs call handling	94% (745 responses)	96% (622 responses)	👎
Customer satisfaction with overall repairs service	91% (740 responses)	89% (622 responses)	👍

Did you know...
Our repairs helpdesk took 75,000 calls in 2015/16!

How do we ensure your homes are safe and compliant?

Your safety is our number one priority, so we carry out regular checks to ensure your home is safe and compliant with various regulations. During 2015/16 we achieved the following:

- 100% of properties checked for gas safety
- 100% of property communal areas with in date fire risk assessments
- Maintenance checks of over 97% of elevators
- 100% of planned asbestos inspections carried out in communal areas
- 100% of water safety checks completed

We're also continuing with our three year project to test all of our homes for electrical safety certificates. So far, we have tested 91% of homes, which now have valid certificates, and we are on track to get this figure to 100% by 31 March 2017.

Lost calls:
A lost call is a call that rings for over 15 seconds and the customer hangs up before we have a chance of answer it. We record all instances of this and try and call customers back at a later time where resources allow.
Our lost call rate is better than the 5.4% average recorded by 32 other UK housing associations.



Customers and communities

Great Places' vision isn't just to build great homes but to also create great communities, supported by great people. We continue to support thriving neighbourhoods and work to transform the lives of our customers.

Funding the development of great people and great communities

Our Residents' Fund and Shared Spaces Fund provide a pot of money to help the people and places in Great Places' communities to shine.

During 2015/16, our Customer Funding Panel reviewed/scored 38 Resident and Shared Spaces Fund applications and approved £121,000 worth of projects. This funding helps Great Places customers and community groups to achieve their goals – this year projects included room hire for a community knitting group, summer activities for a youth group and a gardening project for one of our supported schemes.

How did we handle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and community safety cases?

Over the last 12 months, the number of ASB cases has risen, while the levels of satisfaction have decreased. On the surface, this may seem like a step back; however, despite a challenging year for the public sector, including cuts to police and other community services, we are continuing to adapt our processes to respond to higher demand wherever necessary and have made a number of positive changes during 2015/16.

We upgraded our ASB reporting out of hours provision. Customers can now call 0300 123 1966 any day or night to report ASB, improving community safety and peace of mind. This change to the service may have contributed to the number of ASB cases reported over the last year, as we've made it easier for our customers to report any issues.

We continued to invest in independent mediation services to assist and empower customers to find a resolution to issues with nuisance behaviour, and during 2015/16 we increased the number of cases Great Places staff were able to resolve through early intervention to nearly 600.

We also successfully obtained 24 injunctions in particularly severe cases. While this number may seem high, legal action is always a last resort and only used where necessary. In cases where an injunction has been obtained, it was felt that this would be the best course of action to protect the individuals and communities, which is our ultimate objective.

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Number of ASB cases	1520	1069	👎
How long it takes to close a case	60 days	59 days	👎
Customer satisfaction with handling of ASB cases	82% (62 responses)	90% (134 responses)	👎
Customer satisfaction with outcome of ASB cases	72% (62 responses)	90% (134 responses)	👎

Celebrating our community stars

The outstanding contributions of our customers in helping us to create great communities were again recognised at our annual Community Stars Awards 2016.

Over 200 customers attended the ceremony at Gorton Monastery – with 11 winner and 13 runner-up awards being handed out.

Nominations are now open for this year's Community Stars Awards, please see page 4 for more details.



How do we pass savings onto residents?

We've provided lots of support to customers over the last year regarding what benefits they can claim and how Universal Credit works – including customer surveys to better understand our customers' experiences with the Universal Credit process so that we can provide suitable support.

We've also continued to help hundreds of customers to cut down their energy use and save money on energy, particularly through our 'check, switch and save' events. These events provide energy efficient gadgets, as well as offering advice on how to cut down their home energy use, switch to a cheaper tariff, and reduce heat loss during the colder months.

	2015/16	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Number of households helped into employment, voluntary opportunities and training	361	338	👎
Savings passed onto customers through benefit advice, utility savings and affordable credit	£1.2 million	£1.0 million	👎
Number of Community Stars Award nominations received	135	111	👎

Putting customers first

Customer involvement and empowerment

Did you know...
Customers took part in over 3000 engagement activities over the past year to help to shape Great Places' services!

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Number of repairs appointments audited by customers	250	135	👍
Number of customer calls audited by customers	180	270	👎

How have customers been involved in monitoring performance, shaping policy and scrutinising our services?

Our customer scrutiny group 'Insight' completed two service reviews around community safety and communications (specifically 'how we keep customers informed') and made a total of 43 recommendations, which were agreed by the Great Places Board. These include:

Community Safety

- Make it easier for customers to report incidents by developing the function and availability of the duty officer.
- Increase promotion of the service to customers and the action that can be taken in response to customer reports, including case studies encouraging customers to report incidents.
- Refresher training for the 'Out of Hours' service staff to ensure consistent service delivery.

Communications

- Enhance communications by increasing ways Great Places keep customers informed digitally, for example social media, email and online via our website.
- Ensure methods of communication can be easily accessed by all Great Places customers.
- Increase promotion of alternative communication formats, particularly to customers more likely to require these.
- To promote widely the opportunities offered to customers to be involved to help develop, influence and shape customer communication.

Our Customer Funding Panel reviewed/scored 38 Resident and Shared Spaces Fund applications – learn more about these on page 12.

Our team of customer call auditors reviewed 430 calls (repairs appointments and general customer calls) into Great Places, scoring out customer services officers on a number of factors, including their knowledge and customer service.

16 customers worked with our communications team to develop our Customer Annual Report.

Interested in getting involved in helping to improve Great Places' services?
Please contact us by texting 07797 870 734, emailing cat@greatplaces.org.uk or calling 0300 123 1966.

Customer service and complaints

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Result
Customers satisfied with Great Places overall	88% (848 responses)	86% (808 responses)	👍
Number of of formal complaints received	327	325	👎
Customers satisfied with the way complaints are handled	76% (42 customers surveyed)	59% (106 customers surveyed)	👍

How have we increased customer satisfaction with our Customer Access Team?

Our Customer Access Team (contact centre) has completed additional training in a number of key areas over the last 12 months to help improve the service you receive. These include the arrears process, community safety cases, and customer service. A 24/7 automated rent payment line has also been introduced to make payments easier and more convenient.

What have we learnt from complaints?

Complaints are an invaluable opportunity to understand where our services have failed to meet customer expectations and make improvements to ensure this does not occur in the future. Our service managers review the detail of every resolved complaint to ensure that key learnings are identified. These are collated on our complaints learning log and shared across the group.

How do we find out how satisfied customers are with our services?

We regularly contact customers by phone and email to find out how well our services are meeting your needs. This year we also introduced text messaging as a method of capturing feedback which is often more convenient for customers.

We also use a group of call auditors who listen to a selection of calls made by the customer access team, allowing us to get a better understanding of the impact of the service we provide from a customer point of view.

Meeting the diverse needs of customers

Our key values include 'we know, respect and care about our customers' and 'we are fair, open and accountable'. We continue to work individually and collectively to ensure that we put these values into daily practice and demonstrate that we understand the diverse needs our customers.

We also continued to show our support for diversity within our communities by participating in the annual Manchester Pride festival. This year we joined up with a number of other local housing organisations and walked the parade route under the 'HouseProud' banner.

Did you know...
Our contact centre took 65,000 calls in 2015/16!



Supported housing

Our supported housing service provides over 2,300 places for a variety of vulnerable people including the homeless, young mums, young people, alcohol dependants, those with mental health issues, and older people.

How do we help customers to reach these goals?

When a new customer moves into one of our supported housing schemes or receives a support package we work alongside them to help them identify their goals and strengths and we develop an aspirational and dynamic support plan. We then support them every step of the way to achieve their goals and greater independence before they move on from our service into their own home.



Key developments during 2015/16

- Our general needs tenancy sustainment team helped to prevent 142 Great Places tenants from losing their home and 182 tenants with benefit issues, with a total of 456 benefit issues.
- The customers at In Partnership have been supported to open a small shop on scheme which has provided them with volunteering opportunities and increased skills to help them secure future employment.
- A number of residents at Next Step successfully completed a painting and decorating course with the support of Back on Track. Residents painted ground floor communal areas of the scheme, increasing their skills and confidence. The appearance of the building has greatly improved, which has generated a real sense of home pride.
- Lorna Lodge in Wythenshawe partnered with local charity, Young Persons Support Foundation to allow all residents to complete a 'tenancy move on' course, explaining their rights and duties as a tenant and giving practical advice on managing their own tenancy.
- Residents from our sheltered and extra care schemes in Manchester, Salford and Blackpool continued to meet on a quarterly basis to help shape improvements to the service.
- A number internal grants were awarded to schemes for cooking, budgeting and independent living courses, as well as to individual residents for college courses and essential equipment to improve employment opportunities.

Supported housing — customer successes

	2015/2016	How does this compare with 2014/15?	Results
Number of customers who completed a planned move on	97%	85%	
Number of customers who maximised their income	95%	95%	
Number of customers who progressed with training and education	75%	84%	