

2023

Annual Report



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Welcome by Robin Bailey, Chair



When I wrote the introduction to last year's annual report, I spoke about the unprecedented context within which we were operating. Little could we have known what lay ahead in the following 12 months.

I start this year's opening statement by outlining an even more startling list of major disruptions and challenges our organisation, sector and society have faced. You would have to go back a long time to find a period of greater political and economic instability. A combination of soaring inflation, rising interest rates and the resulting cost-of-living crisis have placed huge pressure on our customers and our organisation.

These factors have significantly impacted our financial performance. Inflation has seen the cost of services we provide rise sharply, while rising interest rates have had a substantial effect on the cost of borrowing. Given the huge pressures placed on our customers by the cost-of-living crisis, we were keen to minimise the impact of any rent increases and were fully supportive of the 7% rent cap.

However, with inflation running much higher than this we must note that this placed yet more pressure on our financial position. All this, combined with the investment required to address safety issues we identified following our merger, has made this another very challenging year.

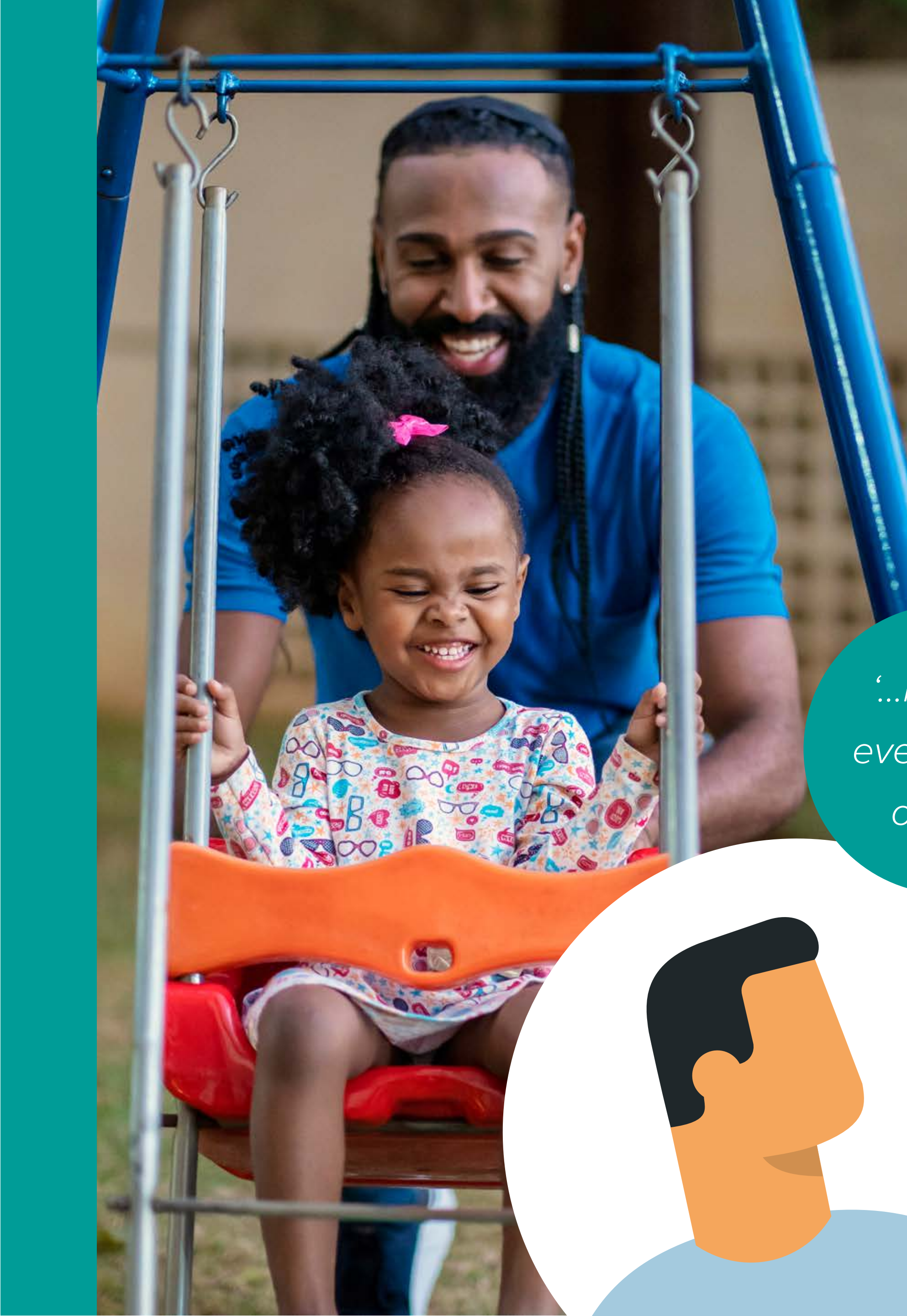
I said last year that we would focus on three areas; safety, service, and satisfaction - and despite all the challenges outlined above I am pleased to report we have made significant progress on all these fronts.

We made big strides in our Building Safety Recovery Plan – completing the priority work we identified and improving our compliance in all core safety areas.

Thanks to the hard work of our colleagues and input from our customers we have also managed to make important improvements to our services – including slashing our call waiting times, getting more repairs done within target times and improving customer satisfaction.

'Our newly recruited Customer Panel has been at the heart of our service improvements...'



A photograph of a man with a beard and a young girl on a swing set. The man is smiling and looking at the girl. The girl is also smiling and looking down. They are outdoors on a playground.

'...it is more important than ever that we are clear about our priorities and plans.'



Our locality model, which we launched in 2022 to make sure we are providing quality services which respond to the diverse needs of people in our communities, sits at the heart of this and we are committed to strengthening this approach.

I want to thank our Customer Panel Chair Sarah Mason and our panel members for their continuing passion, insight, and invaluable contribution. We are committed to growing the influence of the panel and our new Customer Involvement and Empowerment Strategy outlines how we will use new methods to make sure the voice of our customers sits at the heart of our work.

Given the unprecedented nature of the 12-month period we have just been through it is more important than ever that we are clear about our priorities and plans. In recognition of this and the extent to which our operating environment has changed since we launched our Simply Brilliant Together strategy in 2021, the Board and Executive Management Team worked together to create a refreshed five-year strategy for GSA which launched in April 2023 – Simpler, Stronger, Better.

We said in 2021 that we wanted to work with our customers to put them at the heart of everything we do and create a stronger, better organisation. While this ambition has not changed, our approach to achieving it must. In Simpler, Stronger, Better we set out a renewed approach with four focused objectives and projects which sit underneath them to make sure we deliver on our promise.

This will be my final Chair's statement as I will be stepping down later this year. I am extremely grateful for the support I have received in my time as Chair from fellow Board Members and colleagues at GSA and it has been a privilege to lead the organisation's Board through this challenging but exciting period.

The effort and dedication of our colleagues and involved customers, the very real improvements we have made in the last 12 months, and the plans we have to continue this improvement make me more confident than ever that we will achieve our ambition to become a great social landlord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Bailey'.

Robin Bailey
Chair

Improving our performance for our customers



We were pleased to make improvements to our service and performance in 2022-23.

This included reducing our call waiting times hugely, despite a significant increase in the total number of calls we answered. This and other changes helped us to see a jump in customer satisfaction with our Customer Contact Centre from 71.2% to 80%.



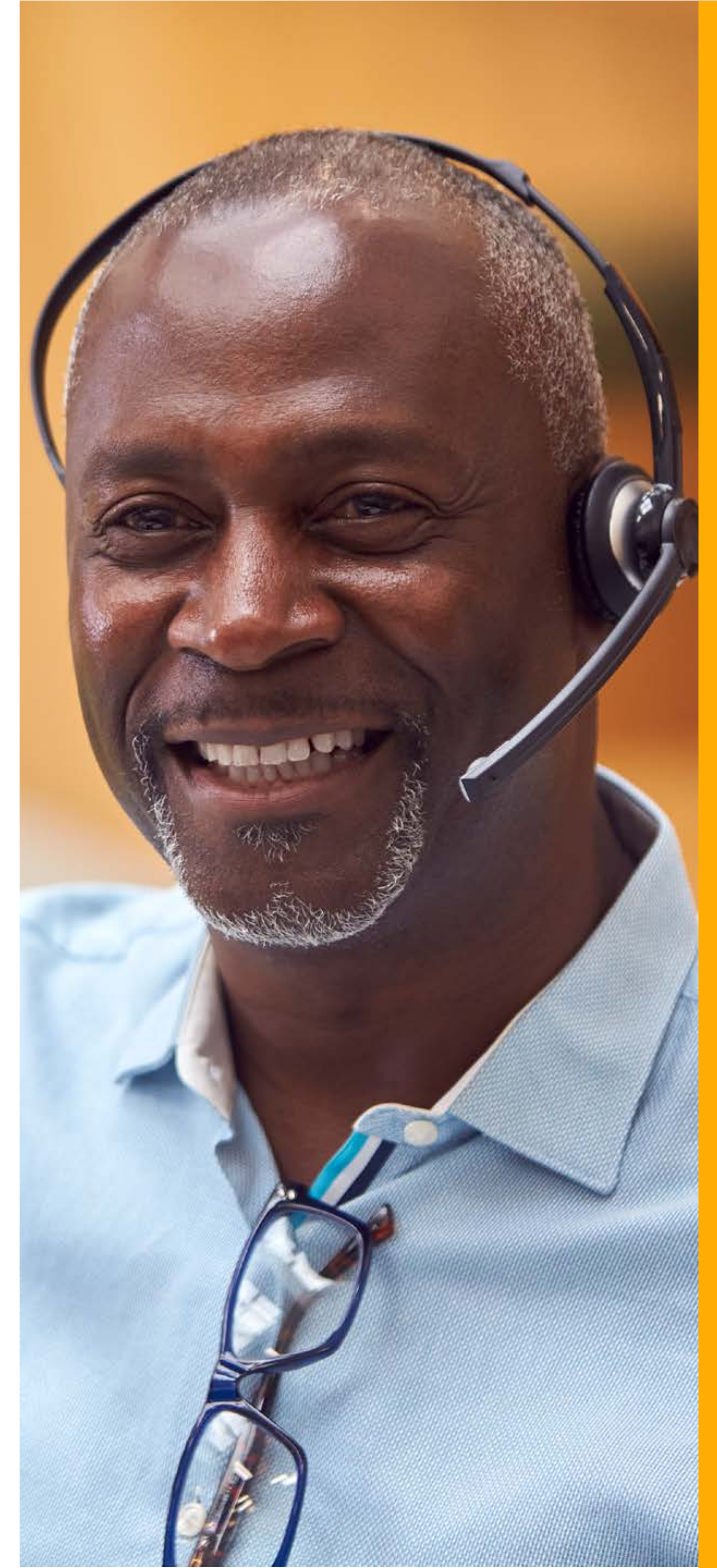
Meanwhile our new website represents an important move forward for customers, who were at the heart of this project.

We made big steps forward in reporting our performance for customers – introducing a new monthly infographic and animation so customers can easily keep track of how we are doing.

We recognise we need to continue to move forward and improving our customer offer is a central commitment in our five-year strategy. A priority for us now is to improve the quality of data we hold about our customers so that we can make sure the changes we make reflect their needs.

We will also invest in our housing management system to continue to make our service more efficient. This will set the groundwork for long-term improvements to our customer portal to help customers access services online more easily.

We want to involve our customers in our work at every opportunity and our new customer involvement and empowerment strategy includes a new set of guiding principles which will provide the foundation for more effective and meaningful customer engagement and involvement. Our Customer Panel is already playing an important role in making sure the feedback of customers is at the heart of our work.





In numbers



Calls answered
215,205

2021-22: 186,486



Average waiting time
1 minutes 19 seconds

2021-22: 9 minutes 15 seconds



Emails handled
84,792

2021-22: 83,300



Transactions on our online portal
52,915

2021-22: 53,393



Customer satisfaction
with Customer Contact Centre
80%

2021-22: 71.2%



Reporting our performance

We understand how important it is that we keep customers updated on our performance on a regular basis. In December 2022 we launched a new monthly performance infographic and animation to share our performance across a range of measures. We share this on our website and across our social media channels each month.



You can find out more and keep up to date with our performance on our performance web page.

A new and improved website

We know a lot of customers want to access our services online, and in May 2022 we launched a new customer website. The new and improved site brought two older websites into one place for customers, making it easier than ever to get information and access our services.

Customers were at the heart of developing the new site; including providing insight into accessibility, what information they wanted and how it was presented.

The new site has had 99,400 visitors since we launched it last year and more than 400,000 page views.

We are continuing to improve and add to our website and create new areas to support our customers. Customers are actively involved in its ongoing development.

We recognise we need to continue to move forward and improving our customer offer is a central commitment in our five-year strategy.

How we will improve our customer offer:



Deliver initial improvements that make the biggest difference

- clearing our repairs backlog
- reducing repairs response times
- communicating an agreed planned works programme
- responding to concerns and handling complaints.



Standardising and improving our systems and process



Making improvements to our customer portal



Developing a customer service training package and start to roll this out to all colleagues



Recruit Customer Champions across GSA

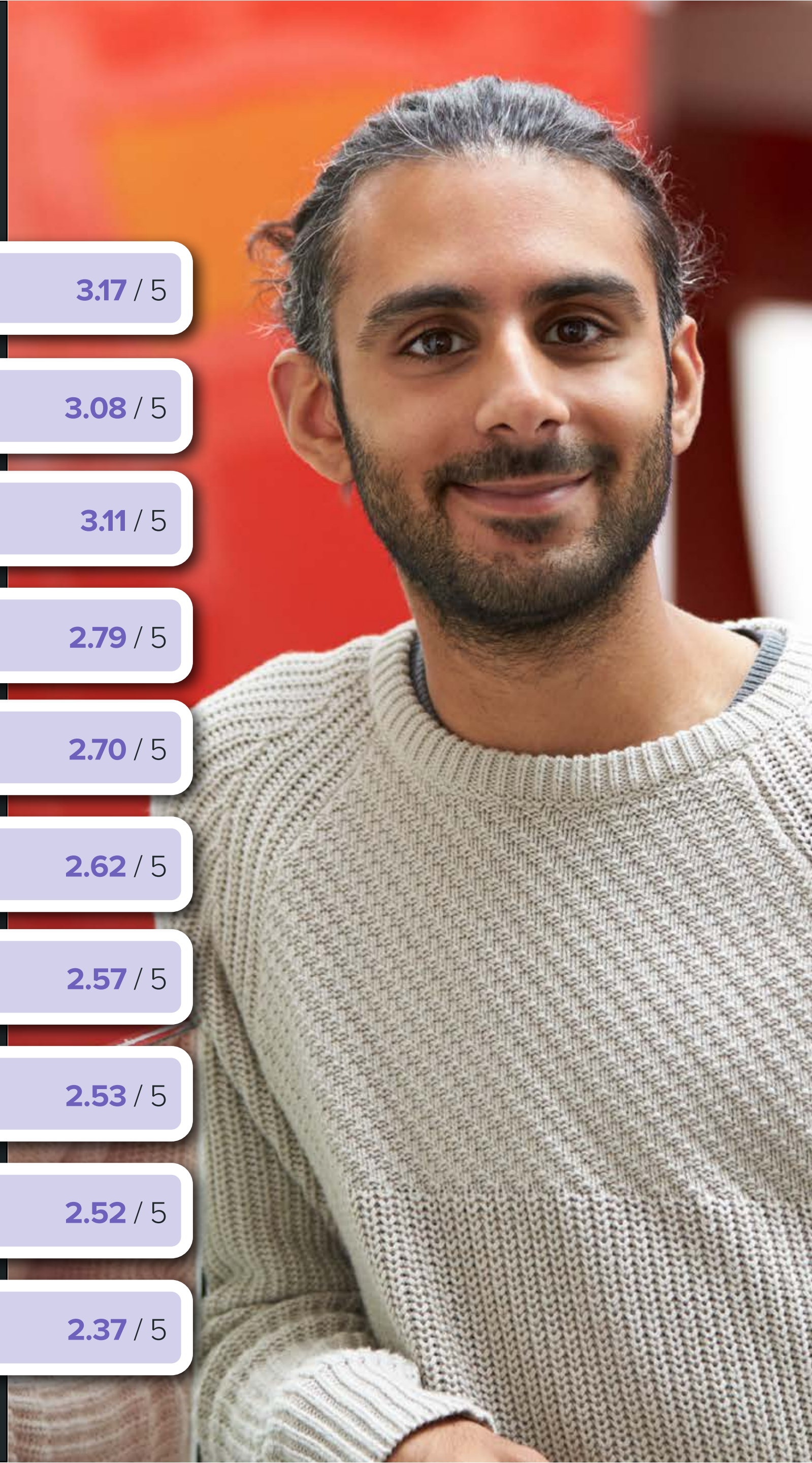
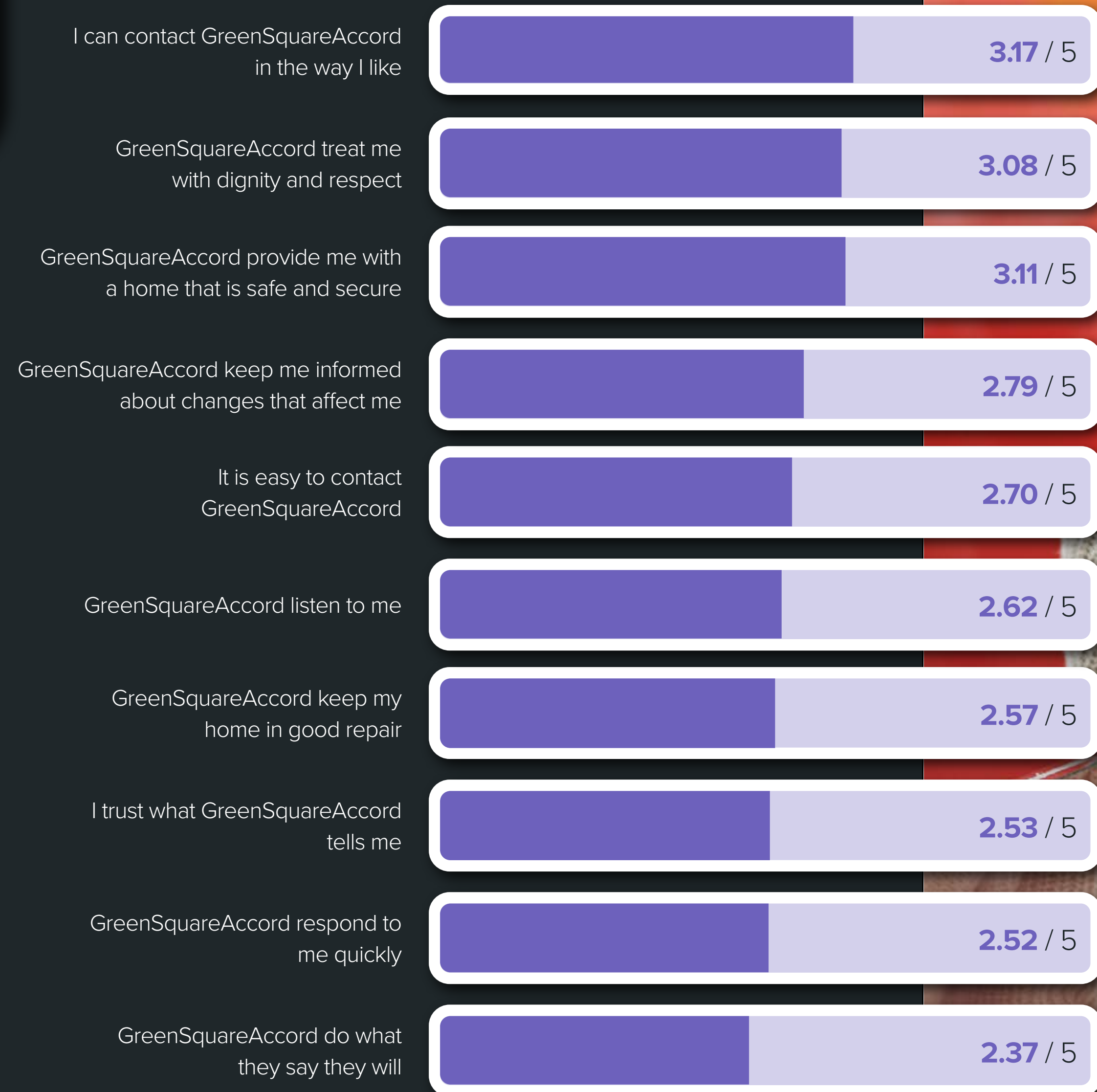


Listening to our customers



We send surveys to our customers to see what they think about the services they receive. This gives us the chance to identify where we can make improvements.

A summary of the feedback we received in 2022-23:



Changing the way we measure satisfaction

The Social Housing Regulator, the Government body which regulates all social housing landlords, has created a new system for assessing how well landlords are doing. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures were introduced in April 2023 and will require all landlords to survey customers.

There are 12 measures, including how landlords are keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, effective complaints handling, respectful and helpful tenant engagement, and responsible neighbourhood management. We have worked to make sure we are ready to implement the new measures, and this is how we will capture satisfaction moving forward.

We introduced our 'How We're Doing' monthly performance infographic on our website and social media channels, focussing on the services you have told us you value the most.



You said	We did
We weren't getting back to you when we said we would	Introduced our customer contact service standard and procedure which guides colleagues through our expectations for recording and responding to any customer contact
We weren't letting you know if we were running late or couldn't make an appointment to carry out a repair	Introduce regular daily checks for overrunning morning appointments which could impact on our attendance at afternoon appointments so we can contact customers and let them know we might be late or need to move the appointment
We weren't communicating effectively when we considered an anti-social behaviour case has been closed	Introduced a consistent way of informing customers when we are closing a case before surveying them on their satisfaction on our handling of it
We weren't answering the phones or responding to emails quickly enough when you accessed services through our contact centre	We focused on recruiting and retaining colleagues in our contact centre to be able to manage the volume of contact effectively and improve our response times
We didn't share performance information with you, and you couldn't hold us to account for the service levels we were providing	Introduced our <i>how we're doing</i> monthly performance infographic on our website and social media, focussing on the services you have told us you value the most

Learning from complaints

We always strive to get things right first time and when things go wrong, we are committed to putting them right and learning from our mistakes.

In 2022-23 we received 4,694 complaints. Most of these (3,402) were resolved when the customer first contacted us, and we were able to put the problem right straight away; step one of our complaints process.

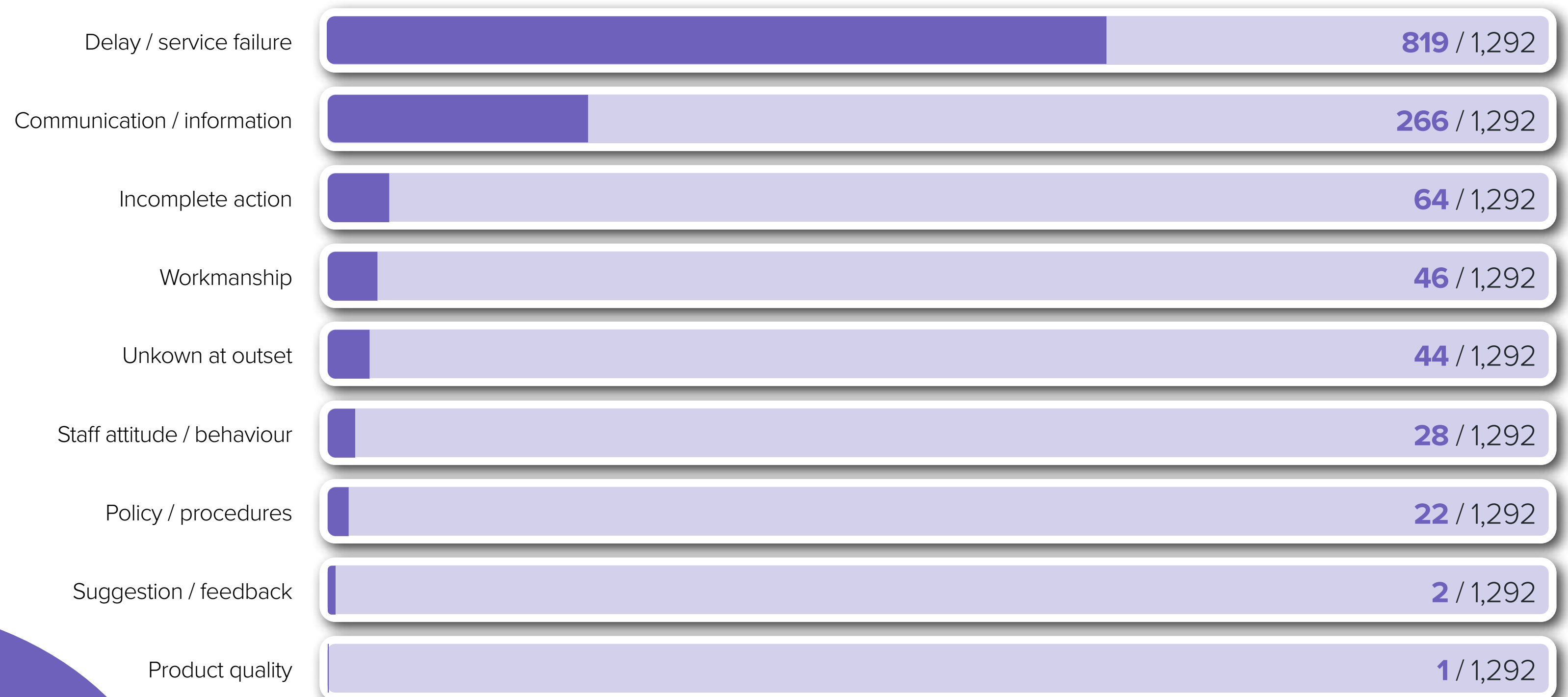
1,292 of the complaints were handled at step two and were investigated and responded to by our dedicated Customer Care Team. 145 complaints were reviewed by a director at step three of our process following a customer request to ensure the complaint was handled fairly and reasonably at step two.



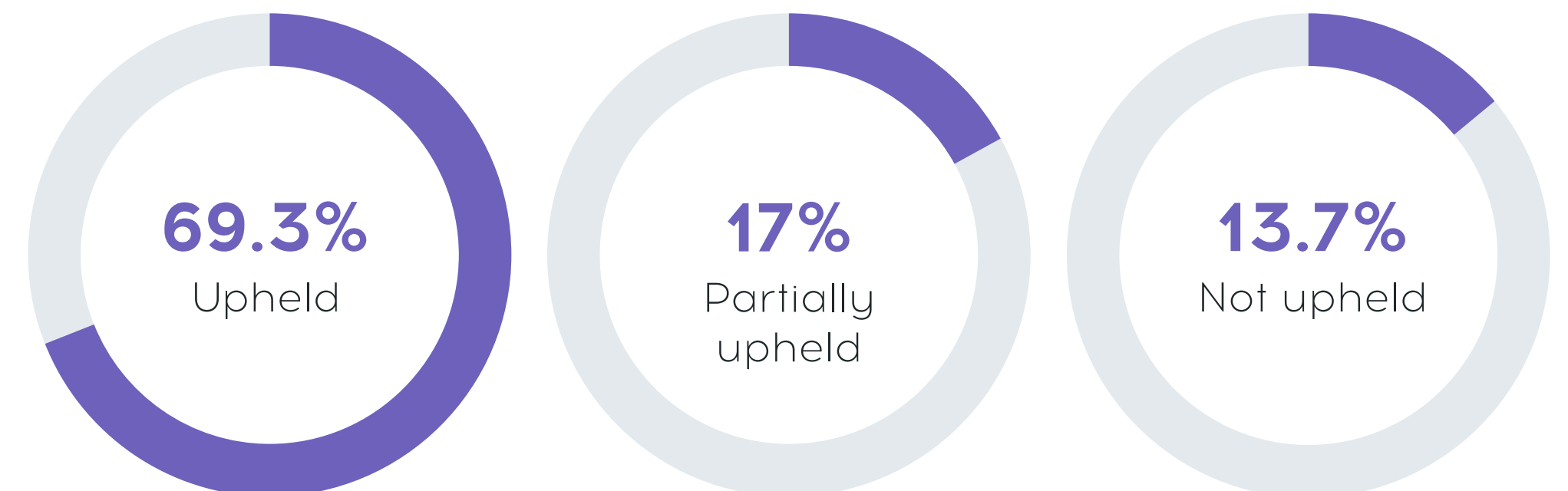
We are required by the Housing Ombudsman to publish a self-assessment of our complaints each year. Read our latest assessment [here](#).

We do all we can to resolve complaints at each step of our internal process. If these are all followed, and customers are still unhappy with the outcome, we advise them to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. In 2022-23 the Housing Ombudsman reviewed 17 complaints relating to our services.

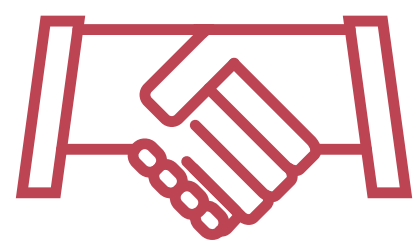
Here is a breakdown of the complaints we received about our landlord services:



Here is a summary of the outcome of these complaints:



Involving our customers: a new approach



We know we can only provide great services by actively involving our customers.



Our new customer involvement and empowerment strategy outlines how we will achieve this as part of our commitment to improve our customer offer.

We launched the strategy in early 2023. It has been shaped with customers and includes a new set of guiding principles which will provide the foundation for more effective and meaningful engagement and involvement.

At the heart of this strategy is the launch of our new offer which provides a menu of engagement customers can choose from to suit them.

It also brings together our commitments as a social landlord to ensuring the effective involvement and empowerment of our customers in meeting the mandatory regulatory compliance standards and how we continue to explore ways to improve our engagement.

Introducing our Customer Panel

Our Customer Panel works in partnership with us to make sure the customer's voice is heard and used to influence and drive improvements. The panel also provides assurance that we are conducting ourselves in an open, transparent, and accountable way.

Our panel is reflective of the diverse customers and communities we serve and includes representation from each locality area and is inclusive of everyone regardless of sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, marital status, or family or caring responsibilities.

The panel also has responsibility for overseeing our customer focus groups as a way of gathering and considering customer feedback and any local issues or themes customers are unhappy about or want to work with us to improve.

We recruited our new Customer Panel in 2022. Watch Sarah Mason, our Chair, explain the group's role and how it will help to drive service improvements.

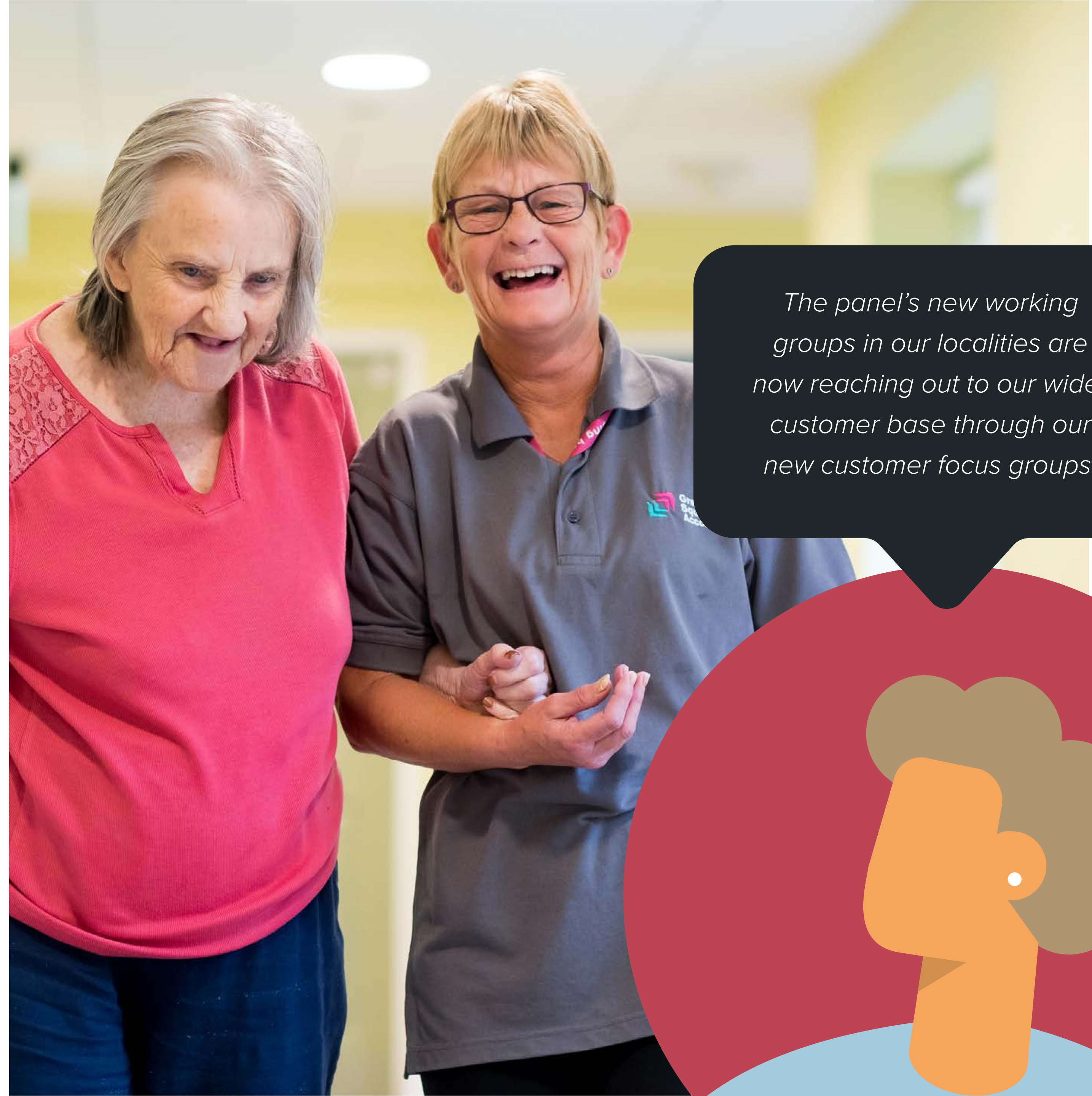
Our Customer Panel: the story so far

Since it was formed in October 2022 the panel has been at the heart of our work. Here are some of the things customers on the panel have achieved and influenced:

- Inputted into our new customer involvement and empowerment strategy
- Given feedback on our rent increase information
- Changed the damp and mould process following feedback to make it more customer friendly
- Been involved in shaping some of our policies
- Worked on the way we report on our performance through our monthly infographic, making it clearer for customers to understand
- Awarded four Community Impact Fund grants to local community groups and organisations
- Developed four working groups in our localities who will work on the following over the course of the year:
 - Repairs and maintenance
 - Customer complaints and customer experience
 - Shaping our building safety: damp mould and condensation, and health and safety communication.

For 2023-24 the panel's priorities will be to continue to focus on the above, asking questions, holding us to account, getting involved in important messaging to customers, and providing feedback on new policies.

The panel's new working groups in our localities are now reaching out to our wider customer base through our new customer focus groups. They'll look at specific service areas across GSA, ensuring we make changes to services that benefit our customers.



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Repairs: an improving picture



Customers consistently tell us our repairs service is the most important service we provide.

Over the last year we've made significant changes to drive improvements and we're pleased we have been able to improve our performance significantly.

One of our priorities has been to drive down the backlog of repairs, caused mainly by the impact of the Covid pandemic, and improve the speed with which we can deal with repairs requests. We have invested significantly in our team to start to reduce the backlog. With the additional resources and the hard work of colleagues we have started to see real improvement, by April 2023 we had reduced our work in progress numbers down from 13,800 to 11,500 and this has continued to fall in 2023.

A key factor has been increasing the number of repairs requests which are fixed right first time. In April 2022, we completed 73 per cent of repairs jobs in one visit and by April this year this figure was up to 81 per cent. By reducing the number of return visits we have improved the efficiency of our service.

We're pleased to see this translate into improvements in our performance figures, and most pleasing of all is the increase in customer satisfaction from 83% in 2021-22 to 88% in 2022-23.

We will continue to reduce our backlog and make further improvements to our service in the coming months and years. In April 2022, we announced that we would be working with Jewson Partnership Solutions (JPS) to deliver a ground-breaking repairs and maintenance scheme.

Starting with a pilot project in Wiltshire, we installed several smart containers which our operatives use to manage their own supplies of materials to help them complete repairs first time. We currently have smart containers in Swindon, Chippenham and in the Midlands region.

Our smart containers work in a similar way to Amazon lockers. When operatives need parts, they order them to the locker via an app called Avail which alerts them when they are ready to collect along with a code to gain access.

Since we launched the initiative last year, our customers have seen real benefits such as an increased number of repair jobs completed first time and faster turnaround times due to reduced waiting periods for materials.

In 2022 our smart collection points were recognised with a highly commended award at both the Housing Digital Innovation Awards and the UK Housing Awards.

In numbers



Total repairs completed
54,770
2021-22: 51,158



Repairs completed right first time
81%
2021-22: 73%



Emergency repairs completed within target
97%
2021-22: 95%



Customer satisfaction with repairs
88%
2021-22: 83%

A greener future

We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and in April 2022 we launched an electric vehicle trial. We have added three electric Renault Zoe vans to our fleet. The new vans are smaller making them ideal for use by supervisors who tend to require fewer parts and equipment to carry out their work. The electric vans have been leased for a three-year period so we expect them to reduce our carbon footprint during that time.



Services which reflect challenges our customers face



We know that life is more challenging than usual for people in our communities, and we want to do all we can to help customers live well in their homes.

An important part of this is being able to provide services which respond to the needs of people in our communities.

In 2023 we ramped up our work to help customers to sustain their tenancies and deal with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Over the last 12 months, our Financial Skills and Tenancy Sustainment Team supported more than 1,300 people with proactive support. We also created a cost-of-living hub on our website, featuring guidance and links to support and ran an email campaign for customers. In 2023 we have launched a Tenancy Sustainment Fund, which allows us to make targeted interventions for customers.

We believe supporting people and groups in our localities is a central part of our role. In these pages you can read more about how our initiatives have offered help.

We were pleased to launch our Community Impact Fund in 2022, which has already supported individuals and groups across our localities with grants of up to £500.

A local service

At a challenging time for everyone, it's more important than ever that we can respond to the needs of our customers in their communities.

Our locality model focuses our work around four localities across our operating geographies so we can deliver our general needs housing services in a focused, collaborative way that meets the needs of our customers.

Each locality area has a Locality Board, made up of colleagues from our tenancy management, customer care, estates, assets, surveying and repairs teams. The Boards meet regularly, they are responsible for identifying performance issues and developing joined-up, local approaches to improve services for customers in the localities they serve.

We launched our locality model in 2022 and it's already having a positive impact on our work. We know that receiving responsive services is something our customers want, and the locality model will enable us to deliver this. We are committed to enhancing and embedding this model.



How every £1 of rent is spent

29p Interest costs

21p Routine maintenance

14p Depreciation of housing properties

13p Management costs

11p Planned and major repairs expenditure

9p Supported Housing and care

3p Void loss





2022-23 highlights

- Worked with 1,308 customers (980 new customers and 328 customers who they continued to work with from a previous year).
- £514,956 of extra benefit (backdated) has been secured as a result of support and or applications made.
- £31,532 of extra benefit for customers has been secured.
- 277 court proceedings / evictions have been prevented.
- Partners including Glasspool, Baron Davenport, League of Helping Hands, WED and Family Fund, and Children in Need have made charitable grants to the value of £63,421 for customers in need of white goods and other household goods such as beds and bed linen.

Supporting customers to sustain their tenancies and live well

In a challenging financial environment, we understand our customers' situation can change. Our Financial Skills and Tenancy Sustainment Team provide free, confidential and independent advice to help customers assess and improve their financial situation.

Our teams have achieved life changing outcomes for many customers.

Jill's story

Due to a relationship breakdown Jill was left to manage all the bills and household finances for the first time on her own.

We arranged a home visit to put Jill's mind at rest, and we supported her through an income maximisation calculation. We were then able to advise Jill that she would be entitled to full Housing Benefit, council tax reduction and pension credits.

What was achieved with our support:

- £99.26 per week, full Housing Benefit paid directly to GSA
- £66.85 per week paid to the customer from pension credits with a back pay of £334.35
- A council tax reduction in place reducing Jill's payment to 0.

Offering guidance

We launched a cost-of-living hub on our website in recognition of the growing challenges faced by people in our communities. It signposts customers to a range of advice, support, and resources, including:

- Support with utility bills
- Advice on how to keep energy bills down
- Financial support available to help customers through the cost-of-living crisis
- Support finding work
- Food banks and other emergency support
- Support with mental health.

We ran an email campaign directing customers to the hub and it has received more than 5,000 visits since we launched it in September 2022.



Visit the hub here.

"GSA took some of the weight off my shoulders and made me feel like I could cope with moving forward again financially." Jill



Investing in your communities



Creating places where customers want to live means investing in services which are broader than our landlord service. We work with partner organisations to deliver projects which provide a range of support to people living in our communities.



In 2022-23 our Customer Panel reviewed nine applications and awarded eight projects £3,760 of funding.

Community Impact Fund

We launched the Community Impact Fund in October 2022. It offers grants of up to £500 to community groups and organisations whose projects benefit our customers and their local communities.

The fund is aimed at supporting the work of tenant and resident groups, local charities, voluntary and community groups, and organisations who operate in our areas to develop projects that deliver outcomes that benefit our customers and the communities we work in.

In 2022-23 our Customer Panel reviewed nine applications and awarded eight projects £3,760 of funding.



Barton Community Association, Oxford, Christmas Event

We funded £450 towards this through the Community Impact Fund.

It took place on Saturday 17 December and 44 local residents at the community centre attended. Guests were treated to a seated zumba gold session before lunch. This was followed by a few games of bingo and some hearty Christmas songs. Lunch was served by volunteers, and one volunteer, dressed as Santa, completed a delivery service to those residents who are housebound or were unable to get to the centre on the day.



Find out more about the Community Impact Fund and make an application here.

Supporting young people and families

Our Hall Green and Selly Oak Families Teams coordinate early help for children and families in the Hall Green and Selly Oak constituencies of Birmingham on behalf of Birmingham's Children's Partnership. In 2022-23 we supported over 600 families with a further 440 supported in partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust.

As part of this service, we coordinated government hardship grants for households reaching almost 8,000 people in 2022-23.

In Wiltshire we partnered with the Rise Trust to support the delivery of a youth group on the Hill Rise estate in Chippenham as well as running regular outreach sessions. The Rise Trust delivered 11 sessions of youth engagement a week across North Wiltshire and they registered almost 700 young people in 2022-23.

Helping people into work

We have worked with Youth Action Wiltshire for more than a decade. The project provides support for young people facing a range of challenges – including victims of crime and carers. The focused support helps young people face and overcome these challenges and develop their confidence and skills. We supported 105 people through this project in 2022-23.

We were one of the lead partners for Black Country Click Start – a Big Lottery Fund and European Social Fund project to help tackle poverty and social exclusion. The six-year project ended in March 2023, with 3,363 people having received tailored support on everything from applying for jobs to helping people become more confident using computers and the internet.

Supporting older adults

We co-ordinate the Neighbourhood Network Scheme in Hall Green, Birmingham, on behalf of Birmingham City Council. We work with social services and local organisations to connect older people to activities/services to help them stay living at home independently for as long as possible. During 2022-23 we awarded grants to 18 projects to a total value of £169,426 and invested £19,500 in training.

Working with partners

We also have Planning for Real, the nationally renowned community planning process, as part of our team. GSA, Peabody and A2Dominion make up the Blackbird Leys Housing Consortium in Oxford and this year, Planning for Real has led a stakeholder review to update the ambitions of this partnership.



Investing in your homes



We want to make sure all our homes are safe and comfortable for customers, and we made significant progress in 22-23.

We made big strides in our Building Safety Recovery Plan – completing the priority work we identified and improving our compliance in all core safety areas.

We are completing detailed stock condition surveys on our home, and this will inform a comprehensive five-year investment plan, with a commitment to spend more than £130m on our properties.

Making your homes safer

The Building Safety Act became law in April 2022. This makes important reforms to give residents more rights, powers, and protections – so homes across the country are safer. We welcome the new requirements, which place more responsibilities on landlords to make sure their homes are safe, and we are committed to work with our customers to satisfy the new requirements.



Read more about the Building Safety Act and what it means.

Our commitment

Investing in our existing homes is one of the core objectives in our Simpler, Stronger, Better strategy, which outlines our priorities for the coming five years. This includes investing:



£27m

to bring our homes in line with fire and building safety regulations



£93m

to make sure all our homes are maintained to a high quality for our customers



£16m

to bring all our homes up to a minimum EPC C energy efficiency rating



In numbers



Gas safety compliance

99.96%

2021-22: 99.8%



Electrical safety compliance

87.44%

2021-22: 66.58%



Fire safety compliance

99.81%

2021-22: 84.88%



Heating Hub

In the run up to the cold season we created a Heating Hub on our website and proactively communicated practical advice and support with our customers on how to avoid and tackle damp and mould, and how to contact us to report a problem.

[Visit the Heating Hub](#)

Tackling damp and mould

High profile cases, including the tragic case of Awaab Ishak, have highlighted issues with damp and mould in housing association properties. We are committed to tackling damp and mould in our homes. In early 2022 we conducted a thorough review of our approach to damp and mould cases to make sure we have the right processes and procedures in place to manage this challenge effectively.

The review helped us identify where more work needs to be done to prevent and monitor damp and mould across our homes. These learnings shaped a new policy which was introduced last July, detailing our new approach to tackling the challenge.

This means when a case of damp and mould is reported to us it is now essential for our surveyors to book in two follow-up appointments six to eight weeks apart to make sure the issue has been resolved.

We also recruited a dedicated Damp and Mould Coordinator to support in the management of these cases.

A warmer, more energy efficient future

In March 2023 we learned we had been successful in a bid for Government funding to invest in making our homes more energy efficient.

Matrix Housing Partnership, which we are a member of, secured £12million funding to invest in 905 homes across its seven landlord members in the Midlands and Southwest.

The funding from Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, which manages the UK Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will see 273 GSA homes upgraded from below EPC C to an energy efficiency rating of EPC C.

We are committed to investing £16m to bring all homes up to an EPC C rating over the next five years. Securing this funding will help us to achieve that goal.

Caring into the future

We provide a wide range of care and support across a range of settings to help people in our communities live independently.



In numbers



Customers supported
38,182



Customer satisfaction
93.4%
2021-22: 93.3%



CQC compliance
88%
National target: 85%



Complaints
53
2021-22: 144

We were delighted to support more than 38,000 people through our services in 2022-23 and customer satisfaction with our services remained very high at 93.4%. We are particularly proud that the highest scores related to people feeling they had been treated with dignity and respect (95.5%) and as an individual (95.5%).

Meanwhile 88% of our services were fully CQC compliant in 2022-23, against the national benchmark of 85%.

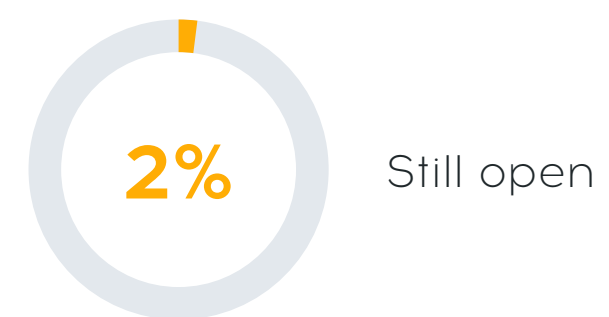
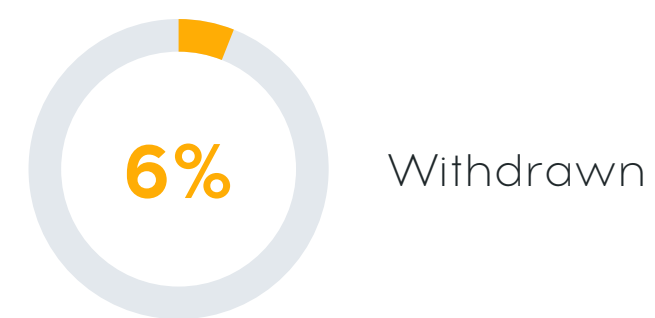
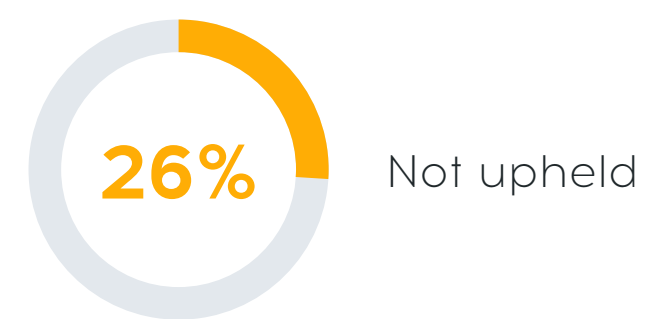
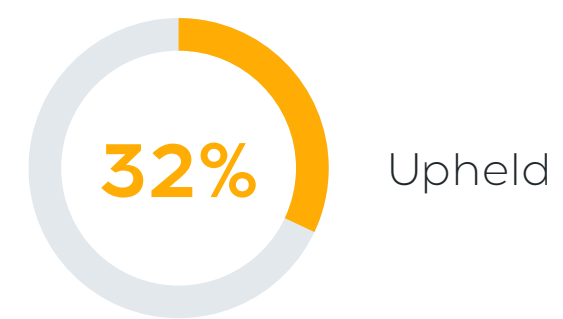
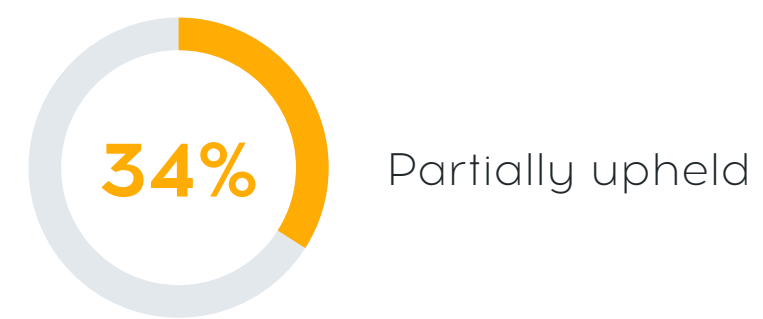
We received 53 complaints in 2022-23 compared to 144 in 2021-22, and the majority; 79.2%, were closed at the first stage.

Of the diverse range of services we offer, highlights included our Housing First and Criminal Justice Services, where we achieved a non-reoffending rate of 93% for our customers.

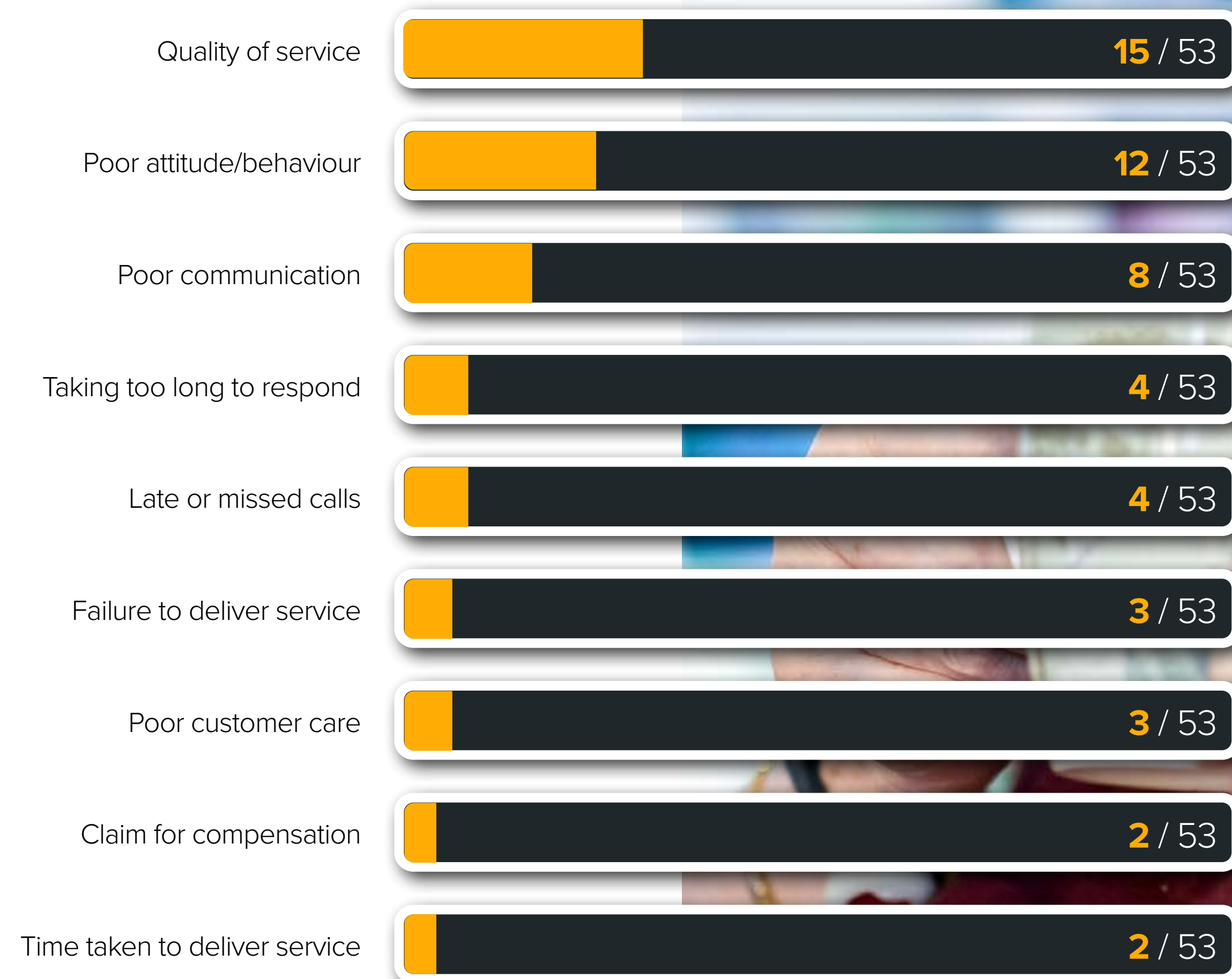
Our long-term business strategy includes a commitment to improve the financial resilience of our care and support services so that we can continue to provide services sustainably and where we can make the biggest impact.

Learning from complaints

Given the nature of the services, we deal with complaints about our care and support services separately. We received 53 complaints for our care and support services in 2022-23 compared to 144 in 2021-22, and the majority; 79.2%, were closed at the first stage. Here is a breakdown of the results of complaints and what they were about:



Reasons for complaints:



A glimpse inside our care and support

We provide a wide range of care and support, including residential care, supported living, extra care schemes, community support and care in the home. Here are some highlights from the last year.



In fine voice

Amber Wood care home is one of our dementia centres of excellence located in Burton. Last Christmas, Amber Wood's choir featured in the National Care Forum's (NCF) 2022 advent calendar. The choir performed for a select gathering of family and friends of the residents.

Chris, whose mum is a resident at Amber Wood said: "Joyce, my mum, has always loved music and enjoyed singing hymns during church services when she was younger. Being part of the choir at Amber Wood really lifts mum up and brings her out of herself. She doesn't need to tell me this, I know from the smile on her face."

Paws for thought

Pet therapy dog George visited one of our dementia centres of excellence to spend time with customers at our Bowbrook care scheme. Greyhound George and his owner Rachel have visited Bowbrook twice now, with plans for George to visit weekly to provide pet therapy for customers there. Bowbrook also has a resident cat and budgie who are well loved by the customers and have become a huge part of the home.

Singing for the Brain

Singing for the Brain is an initiative developed by the Alzheimer's Society, bringing people affected by dementia together to sing a variety of songs they know and love in a fun and friendly environment. It also includes vocal exercises that help improve brain activity and wellbeing.

Our Dementia Care Manager and two more colleagues are trained to run the sessions in our care schemes. The sessions take place once a week.

Dementia Champions

In September 2022 we launched our Dementia Champions initiative which consists of colleagues from across our residential services who have volunteered to complete training to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in the care of people with dementia.

Our Dementia Champions encourage, support, and motivate others to make a positive difference to people living with dementia within the care setting. They also help to promote and raise awareness of dementia. Each service now has a group of nominated staff and Dementia Champion Group meetings take place once a month to facilitate training and share best practices.

Flushing myths about domestic abuse

Earlier this year Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) launched the Flushing Away the Myths campaign to challenge common misconceptions about domestic abuse and promote their services.

In just one month of the campaign launching, more than 1,200 posters tackling myths about domestic abuse had been placed in bathrooms across Gloucestershire. The posters were decided to be placed in bathrooms because for someone experiencing domestic abuse, going to the toilet might be one of the few times they can check their phone without being monitored. The posters contain a QR code which links to information and support on the GDASS website.

In the first month the campaign has also gained huge support from a variety of organisations including Gloucestershire Constabulary, GE Aviation, Cheltenham Football Club, Gloucestershire County Council as well as pubs and gyms across the county.



Our Dementia Champions encourage, support, and motivate others to make a positive difference to people living with dementia...

Building new homes in your communities



The effects of the housing crisis are felt across our localities and providing new, affordable homes for people who need them is a central commitment for us



In 2022-23 we were pleased to complete 451 new homes and you can read about some of our developments on the next page. We have also started building on a number of sites and over the course of the next year we expect to complete a further 655 homes.

We are committed to building new homes but given the financial pressures on our sector, like many housing associations we have had to reconsider our long-term investments to reflect the need to invest significantly in our existing homes. While we have scaled back our plans for the coming years, we remain committed to building new homes.

In numbers



Homes completed 2022-23:

451

Homes we expect to complete by 2023-24:

655

Homes we expect to complete in the next five years:

1,800



Recent developments



Balds Lane, Lye

Working with Owl Partnerships, under a design and build contract, we are transforming the former site of Jubilee Works, on Balds Lane, into 89 affordable homes. The development will comprise 35 houses and 54 apartments all of which will be available for an affordable rent. The housing scheme is well connected by public transport having the No9 bus route running close and Lye Rail Station is less than a mile away providing connections to Kidderminster, Worcester and Birmingham.



Great Somerford, Wiltshire

As part of the larger Broadfield development built by Backhouse, we are providing a total of eight new affordable homes with three available for shared ownership and the remainder earmarked for affordable rent.

The development includes one-bed maisonettes alongside two- and three-bedroom houses. All incoming residents will have complimentary outside storage, their own parking space and have a view of fields and a nearby fishing lake.



Orwell Park, Oxfordshire

We are providing 32 affordable homes with eight available under a shared ownership scheme and another 24 homes for affordable rent, in Sutton Courtney, Oxfordshire.

The new homes, part of the larger Orwell Park development built by Linden Homes, are comprised of two and three-bed houses and one and two bed apartments. Deep consideration to the environment has been given throughout the Orwell Park development with plenty of trees planted, landscaped spaces and nine of our homes have been fitted with electric vehicle charging points



Cotswold Gate, Oxfordshire

Earlier this year we handed over keys for shared ownership homes in the larger Cotswold Gate development built by Lioncourt Homes.

The affordable homes at Cotswold Gate, purchased by us, meet a variety of housing need by providing one, two, and three-bedroom dwellings. We own 45 homes in total at Cotswold Gate with 32 for affordable rent and another 13 made available under a shared ownership scheme. The development boasts a new fully equipped play area for young children as well as designated parking spaces and private gardens for residents in the affordable homes.



Eagle Works and Canalside Close, Walsall

Earlier this year, Eddie Hughes MP, visited two of our affordable housing developments in his Walsall North constituency. The MP observed progress made on construction at Eagle Works in Willenhall and Canalside Close in Blakenhall Heath.

The two developments will deliver a combined total of 84 affordable homes.

All the new homes across both schemes will be built using low carbon LoCaL Homes Eco-200 off-site closed timber panel system, which will reduce construction times on site, and achieve savings overall in terms of carbon release. The external wall panels will have a brick slip system applied in the Walsall-based factory.



Virtually plastic free homes, Redditch

Work is now complete on a ground-breaking project to build the first virtually plastic free homes in Europe and the UK. Owned and built by GreenSquareAccord the revolutionary development is providing 12 affordable homes built using carefully sourced plastic free alternatives as an example of what can be achieved to reduce environmental impact.

The new homes have been constructed using timber panels from GreenSquareAccord's award-winning, low carbon manufacturing facility, LoCaL Homes. Each apartment features wooden kitchen units and aluminium window frames, wiring using a mineral based insulation and solar thermal heating systems.



Keeping your communities safe

We believe everyone deserves to feel safe and secure where they live and we work with our partners to keep our communities safe.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour and in 2022-23 we handled a total of 716 cases. We use preventative measures, early intervention, partnership working, support and legal action to tackle ASB; our objective is to act quickly delivering a swift, proportionate and flexible response which is victim centred. The most common cases we dealt with in 2022-23 were:

 Noise
201

 Harassment / threats
160

 Drug related
97

Taking ASB to Parliament

We attended the launch of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on anti-social behaviour (ASB) at Westminster. Almost 4.5 million people living in homes in England experience the negative impacts of ASB. We were one of seven housing associations and Midlands' police to form the AAPG to combat ASB, and to provide landlords with the authoritative support to help comply with the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The group are committed to discussing how ASB affects customers and the issues impacting local authorities, housing providers, and other stakeholders in addressing it. They will also contribute to the development of policy and legislation around ASB.

A partnership approach in Gloucestershire

We have signed a pledge developed by Safer Gloucestershire promising that anti-social behaviour (ASB) will be taken seriously, made easier to report and tackled in partnership. We sat with representatives from local councils, Gloucestershire Health and Care Foundation Trust, Bromford Housing and Young Gloucestershire to commit to the pledge as part of a county-wide community safety partnership.

Protecting communities in Walsall

An area of Walsall was being dominated by local individuals and families causing nuisance in the estate. We worked with local police, councillors and MPs, Walsall Council, whg and residents who attended weekly meetings to discuss a plan. Some injunctions were obtained, community protection warnings were served and planned police operations helped to reduce the ASB. As a result, the local authorities and residents, the estate is calmer and crime reports have reduced.

Walsall policing team wrote to thank us, and the other agencies involved for their help and support enabling them to obtain a Criminal Behaviour Order against an individual who had caused issues in multiple areas since 2021. The individual caused problems in Walsall earlier this year and GSA obtained an injunction to exclude them from the area.

Moving forward

We aim to improve our ASB case management system by streamlining our systems. The single system will make it easier to ensure the ASB procedure is being applied in the same way across our organisation.



Investing in our people



We recognise that to deliver great services we need motivated, engaged colleagues.

As a major employer we also recognise our role in giving people in our communities the opportunity to gain employment and develop their skills. In 2022-23 we made some important changes to empower our colleagues to do the right thing for customers and support more people into work.

Skills to provide a great service

We want to do everything we can to make sure our colleagues have the skills they need to provide a great service for our customers.

Over the past twelve months, we have standardised our performance and development review (PDR) process. We are now rolling out the new scheme across our organisation and ensuring managers are confident in supporting colleagues through the process. A consistent approach to monitoring performance and supporting individual colleagues' development will help us deliver better services to our customers by creating clear lines of accountability.

Supporting people in our communities into work

At GSA we have over 50 apprenticeship programmes available for new starters and current employees who are looking to develop.

We have 18 new apprentices working for us in teams across care and support, repairs and maintenance and digital services.

We work with our training providers to attach accreditations to some of the apprenticeship programmes we deliver. This means that the programmes we offer come with widely recognised qualifications.

Charlie Jones

Business Development Coordinator, Care and Support



"My apprenticeship has benefitted my career massively; it has given me the opportunity to work with the central Care and Support Teams closely who have each enabled me to grow into my own job role and expand it further."

Sunny Sandhu

Assistant Housing Officer



"My apprenticeship gave me so much confidence to grow and I feel more driven than ever to develop my career. I learnt a lot during the 18 month-long course and would say to anyone considering further study 'don't be afraid to start again!'"

THE GSA WAY

We recognise the way we do things is just as important as what we do. In September 2022, we launched The GSA Way which sets out the culture and behaviours we expect all our colleagues to live and breathe.

The GSA way is comprised of five commitments, and a series of behaviours which sit underneath each of them. One of our five commitments is we believe our customer is everything and beneath this sit a series of behaviours we expect from all colleagues:

- Knowing what matters to our customer
- Putting their needs first
- Keeping our promises
- Owning to the end.

The GSA Way is the way we do things and was developed with a commitment to our customers at its heart.

[Watch this video of our colleagues explaining the GSA Way.](#)



A long-term plan to become a great landlord



We recognise our organisation and the world around us has changed since we launched our Simply Brilliant Together strategy back in 2021; just after GreenSquareAccord was created.



We said in 2021 that we wanted to work with our customers to put them at the heart of everything we do and create a stronger, better organisation. While this ambition has not changed, our approach to achieving it must.

In our 2023-28 business strategy we set out a renewed approach with three core pledges at its heart: to make ourselves Simpler, Stronger and Better. Under these pledges sit four focused objectives and a range of projects which will make sure we deliver on our promise.

We believe passionately in our purpose to be a great social landlord, and our duty to be an organisation which can deliver the biggest impact for people in our communities long into the future. The plans outlined here will empower us to achieve this.



[Read more about our plans to become a great social landlord](#)

[Watch our strategy animation:](#)