

LiveWest

A home for everyone



Annual report for customers

Year ended 31 March 2023

Foreword

Welcome to our latest customer annual report. This provides you with an insight into many of the wider activities across LiveWest, along with an update on how we have performed over the last 12 months.



In a year where there has continued to be economic and political uncertainty, we have maintained our support for customers through our Tenancy Sustainment team and this has been pivotal in supporting our customers who are facing the challenges brought about by the cost of living crisis. This report highlights some of the support and advice we have provided.

We know how important maintaining a high-quality repairs service is to customers and, whilst we have seen a further year of high demand for repairs, the benefit of having more repairs delivered by our own LiveWest Maintenance team has allowed us to resource accordingly and improve the length of time it takes to complete a repair. This has helped our Repairs team receive higher levels of customer satisfaction this year.

Despite the challenges in the housing market, we have also continued to address the lack of affordable housing in the South West and I'm pleased that we have delivered a further 951 much-needed new homes for families this year. Continuing to build new homes remains one of our key priorities in the year ahead.

We also welcome the strengthened rights of customers through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and will continue to ensure that our customers influence and shape our future services and standards. We are proactively monitoring our performance against the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing and are performing strongly compared to the housing sector and our peers. We will continue to publish our performance quarterly on our website.

Finally, I would once again like to thank you for your ongoing support throughout the last year and please do talk to us if you would like to get more involved as a customer or need any help or advice.

James Reseigh

Director of Neighbourhoods

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Highlights for the year

We've reinvested

 **£152m** on completing new homes

 **£339m** on letting new homes to customers and supporting you

 **£2m** on community investment and hardship grants

 **£89m** on maintaining and improving our existing homes

 **£9m** repairing empty properties (voids)

 **£21m** carrying out repairs

 **£19m** on replacing kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and boilers

 **£10m** on keeping our homes safe

Overall customer satisfaction

86%

85% of you agree your home is well maintained

82% of you were satisfied with the repairs service

90% of you were satisfied with your new home

91% of you were happy with our lettings process

80% of you agree your landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods (customers in Low Cost Rental Accommodation, LCRA).

100% of our homes met the Decent Homes Standard

96%

of you were happy with the service you received from our Customer Service Centre

1,071 compliments received from our customers

1,813 complaints received

93% of these complaints were resolved as part of the initial call

63% of you were satisfied with the way we handled your complaint

111k+ we completed 111,319 repairs

100% of our fire assessments and gas servicing were up to date

93% of you were happy with the last repair we completed for you



Supporting customers in crisis

With the country facing its biggest cost of living crisis in decades, our team has seen a continued increase in customers coming to us for help with crisis support, energy problems and not having enough money to make ends meet.

As prices continue to rise, people are having to make more difficult decisions about what to cut back because they just do not have enough to live on. We made changes to our grants in 2022-23, to ensure we could continue to offer support to our customers through the cost of living crisis.

With the significant rise in the cost of energy and food bills over the last year, it has been our priority to continue helping our customers with their food and energy bills through our Crisis and Hardship grants.

- In 2022-23 our teams have assessed and managed **2,040** referrals for support.
- Of these, **1,784** customers were offered support from us.
- We have supported customers to unlock **£1.8million** in additional benefits.
- Our tenancy sustainment officers have assessed and awarded **1,079** Crisis and Hardship grants to customers, at a value of over **£151,000**.
- Our Tenancy Sustainment team is currently supporting **685** customers.

This year, a common theme of requests for support has been around financial hardship. Because of this, the focus of our support is to ensure our customers are maximising their income.

We have achieved this by supporting with budgeting advice alongside help with navigating the benefit system and accessing Universal Credit, Disability, and other welfare benefits that they were entitled to.

This year we have also focused on providing energy advice for our customers, particularly those in or at risk

of falling into fuel debt. Our energy advice officer has been available to support with help to look at ways to reduce energy costs and find solutions to energy issues. Through advice and guidance, we have been able to alleviate some of the financial pressure, assisting customers to keep their homes warm and put food on the table.

We have been able to provide support on a one-to-one basis as well as in group sessions with customers, including some of our sheltered schemes and customer groups. We have also worked in partnership with energy advice organisations to help deliver support for customers struggling with their energy costs.



Repairs update

This year, we have faced challenges in delivering our repairs and maintenance services as we have seen demand from customers increase and, at the same time, we have had some delays in recruitment of our trades colleagues. Overall this has meant that unfortunately customers have had to wait longer for repairs. During the year we delivered over 111,000 responsive repairs and 82% of our customers told us they were happy with the repairs service.

In October 2022, we heard about the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. This rightly resulted in a focus on finding and addressing any damp and mould in your homes. We worked with our customer group, InFocus, to update our damp and mould policy and introduced a new special Damp and Mould team. Our Internal Maintenance team has continued to grow as we brought more services in-house rather than using contractors. This included a new Remote Diagnosis team based in Exeter and new Roofing team in Devon and Cornwall. In the West of England, we increased our repairs and maintenance capacity, recruiting new teams to carry out responsive

In 2022-2023 our Repairs teams completed:

-  **111,319** response repairs
-  **758** bathrooms
-  **718** kitchens
-  **23,191** gas services
-  **2,347** fire risk assessments
-  **6,342** electrical safety tests
-  **136** legionella assessments
-  **1,300** asbestos checks in communal areas
-  **1,587** minor aids and adaptations
-  **512** major aids and adaptations (disabled facility grants)
-  **6,248** fire door inspections (between Nov and Mar)

repairs, electrical testing and undertake kitchen and bathroom installations.

The majority of your repairs are now carried out by LiveWest colleagues rather than external contractors, and we believe that this provides you with both a better service and better value for money. Through our recruitment process, we want to ensure that our Repairs team is also now more inclusive and diverse. At the end of March, we had 17 female trades people, compared to just 5 in April 2021. We have also recruited 15 more trade apprentices, taking the total trade apprentices, trainees, and improvers to 26. The age of our apprentices range from 17 years old to over 40 years old.

“I would like to pass on my gratitude for the engineer who attended. They were extremely polite and really well mannered; they did some extra bits for me as well and he explained in detail why he was doing what he was doing. He gave me information to help sort further problems which are not covered by LiveWest and went above and beyond!”



“I have just had a new bath fitted and I would like to say thank you to the team who did the work, they did a superb job. They were clean, tidy and didn't stop. Credit to the company.”

“The repair went absolutely brilliantly so I'm dead impressed. He was really good and I'm really happy with the operative's work. He even rang me about an hour after he left to check in to see if everything was okay with the repair, thank you.”

Your views matter

At LiveWest we are proud to be an official ambassador for the Together with Tenants initiative and to be supporting and working with the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign, the only landlord in the South West to be doing this.



We are committed to working with our customers to continually review and improve the standard of the services we provide.

We continue to do this by creating new and engaging ways for customers to have their say on our strategies, policies, and services. This can include being a member of one of our customer engagement groups, taking part in surveys, attending focus groups, and joining conversations on our Facebook group called Your Views.



InFocus

InFocus is our customer scrutiny group led by LiveWest customers, the Chair and Vice-Chair.

The group provide oversight and scrutiny to ensure that customer feedback is listened to, acted upon, and used to improve the way we deliver services.

InFocus meet quarterly with their most recent meeting taking place in Exeter where they reflected on the past year. They were also updated on our progress against our Customer Services Strategy Action Plan and agreed timescales for our delivery of their recommendations.

Over the past year InFocus has worked with us on a range of topics including:

- Our Enhanced Building Safety Resident Engagement strategy.
- Our Neighbourhood Management policy.
- Our Service Charge policy.
- Our Customer Engagement policy.
- Our Damp and Mould policy.
- Attending training on equality, diversity and inclusion.



Friends of InFocus

We know that not all our customers have the time to commit to being a full member of InFocus so this year we have introduced a new way for customers to be part of scrutiny, with reduced time commitments. Our new Friends of InFocus group take part by sharing their experiences on services and reviewing the group's recommendations and service review reports.

Estate Services Champions

Our Estate Services Champions work with us and give us feedback on how our grounds maintenance, communal cleaning and communal fire alarm contractors are performing, ensuring that communal areas are well maintained and safe. We have over 120 Estate Services Champions covering from Penzance to Cheltenham, who each month provide feedback using a short online survey.



Working in our communities

Slow cook, low waste competition

To help our customers with the cost of living and to save energy, we gave away 90 slow cookers as part of our Slow cook, low waste competition.

We asked customers for their top tips to reduce food waste, with 90 winners receiving slow cookers.

Slow cookers are an energy efficient way of cooking, using much less energy than an oven would, even over a long time.

We also asked customers' for tips to create a Slow cook, low waste recipe booklet, which includes advice and information about using slow cookers and some recipes to try.

Jane, from Devon, said:

“

I've been looking at slow cookers because it was on my shopping list to get after Christmas so when I saw this, I thought I would enter to see if I could get one. At the moment I'm trying to save as much electricity as possible and this will save a few pennies so I can afford to put the heating on.

I've never used a slow cooker so this will be experimental but I'm hoping to get involved in cooking evening meals and get started with it. If I've got any leftovers, I generally take them over to my neighbour who lost his wife last year, so this will be great for that.”



Volunteer beekeepers at Ladden Garden Village

Seven new volunteer beekeepers will now be looking after 60,000 of Ladden Garden Village's busiest residents – bees! We funded volunteers to go on a beekeeping course, as well as providing bee suits to help with looking after the beehives.

Our resident, Chelsea, who took part said: “I suffer from anxiety so volunteering will give me the chance to meet and get to know new people from the village. In the summer hopefully, it will be hands-on so it will be a good way to get outside.”



Mural of children's artwork created in Okehampton

We provided a donation for a mural to be created of artwork produced by children, which has been added to the sensory garden playground at Okehampton Primary School. Two local artists worked with children to create the mural, which is themed around nature.

Melissa, Community Engagement Manager for Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, said: “It was amazing to have this piece of art created

by local artists working with the children from Okehampton Primary School. Every individual drawing by the children was included thanks to the amazing skills of Franca Westaway, who managed to make it into one cohesive piece of beautiful art. It has really brightened this entrance way for parents and children.”

Supported housing update



1,600 customers are currently being supported across all our supported housing services.



89.0% of customers in short-term services positively moved on to permanent accommodation.



81.6% of customers in short-term services agreed the support provided helped them achieve their goals and aspirations.



78.4% of extra-care customers were happy with the services provided.



91.9% of extra-care customers were satisfied with the quality of their home.

Our five areas of focus are:

- **Older people** - There is significant demand for good-quality, purpose-built accommodation for older people across our region.
- **People with a learning disability** – We work closely with our local authority partners to provide a range of accommodation for these customers.
- **Young people** – We are seen as a go to provider across the region for young people, and this will continue to be a focus with extensive, purpose-built accommodation.
- **Managing agent provision** – We have long-term relationships with other organisations who provide specialist services to our customers.
- **Adult and families services** – We will work with local authorities to support more adults and families into homes and reduce homelessness.

“

Having a home for me and Eliza has made all the difference. The support has helped me to be more independent and given me the confidence to improve myself. I'm really excited to be starting my course!”

Kelisse's story



Kelisse had been living with family whilst she was pregnant, however due to overcrowding in the home she moved into our supported accommodation in Barnstaple, giving birth a few days later.

Since moving in, Kelisse has been supported by Amanda from our Tenancy Sustainment team to develop life skills

including budgeting and paying bills, getting training and finding permanent accommodation, which has seen her confidence grow.

“I would never have thought I could have done that but listening to Amanda deal with people on the phone, then having a go myself with support showed me how to

sort things out, and I can do things for myself now.”

Kelisse has been inspired to become a midwife, recently starting a college course. She has also been provided with a laptop after successfully applying for a LiveWest Opportunity Grant.

Our work to resolve anti-social behaviour

We take anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases seriously and are committed to supporting our customers to resolve ASB issues.

We take action where necessary using the tools available to us as a social landlord and work with our partner agencies to resolve ASB across our communities, ensuring our customers feel safe in their homes.



How to report ASB

You can make an ASB report via our website, by email or by reporting directly to your housing officer.

0300 123 8080 

[livewest.co.uk/
report-anti-social-behaviour](https://www.livewest.co.uk/report-anti-social-behaviour) 

enquiries@livewest.co.uk 

Our Housing Officer, Tom Bolton was recently praised by the police for his proactive approach when responding to a serious case which involved ASB in a LiveWest property in Bristol.

The police had contacted us following a serious assault where one of our customers had been taken to hospital. Our customer was extremely anxious about returning home, where she lived alone.

Whilst she was in hospital, the police and our Housing team worked together to get a closure order to ensure that no one, including our tenant, could return to the property.

Closure orders allow the police or local authority to secure a property and exclude all occupants. To obtain a closure order, the police need to prove that it is necessary to close the property to others, including the tenant. To secure this order, the police will provide supporting statements from LiveWest and from neighbours.

Our two main concerns in this case were for the welfare of our customer and the safety of her neighbours. Once the closure order was granted, we secured the windows and doors to our customer's home, ensuring no one could gain entry.

Whilst the customer was in hospital, we found suitable temporary accommodation for her through the Bristol Homelessness Prevention team. We also purchased her a new phone as her



last one had been stolen by the perpetrator; this was vital to ensure LiveWest, police and support agencies could contact her with ease.

Our Tenancy Sustainment team made a crisis referral to help find our customer additional support and ensure that her social housing account on HomeChoice was up to date.

Working closely alongside Bristol-based charities, we made sure that she was receiving the right medication and that she had everything she needed to ensure her stay in temporary accommodation was comfortable, whilst we supported her with her housing options.

“

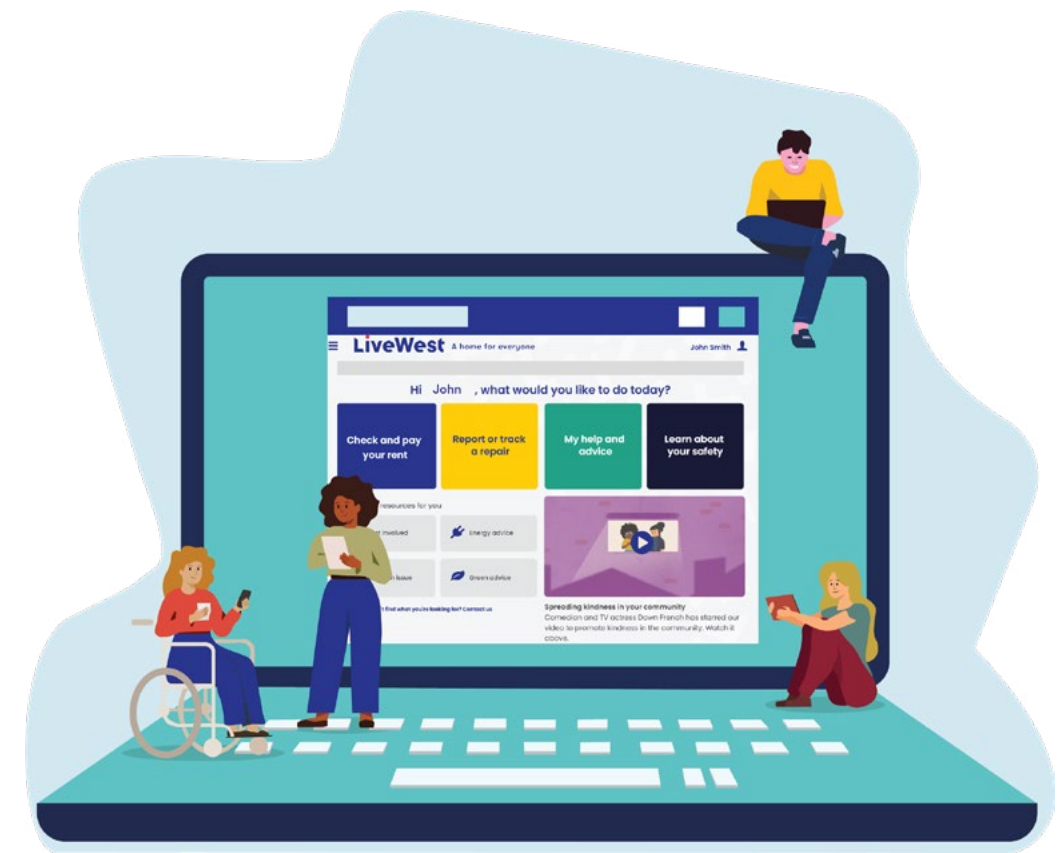
To maximise the tools available to us, we must work in partnership with the police and other agencies to make sure our customers and colleagues are safe. Cases such as this are complex and difficult to resolve as victims may be vulnerable to exploitation”.

Tom Bolton,
Housing Officer

Our priorities for the next three years

Over the next three years we will continue to improve our digital services.

We will be improving the functionality of our customer portal by providing helpful information for our customers to access, including advice on home safety, cost of living advice and key contacts from LiveWest.



Our updated customer portal is now live

Report and track your repairs and make payments through the improved customer portal.

If you have used our portal before, you may notice that it is looking a bit different. We have been working closely with LiveWest customers to make improvements to make sure our portal works better for you.

Redesigning the old portal with accessibility in mind, our new portal's refreshed design means it's easier to use, helping more of our customers access the features available.

Our new portal offers a better way to report and track repairs, helping us to identify and fix them for you first time. We have also improved the way you pay your rent, with a new area to help you keep track of your account balance and manage your payments.



We will continue our focus around improving our complaint handling process, focusing on listening, learning, and putting things right. We will do this by reviewing our current processes and making positive changes to ensure we put things right quickly for our customers.

To improve our customers experiences, we will be increasing the customer engagement activities that we offer to enable our customers to share their views and priorities with us. This will help us to identify where we can make improvements to our services.



How you can get involved

There are many different ways you can give us your views, from taking part in a quick survey or attending a focus group or even joining our customer scrutiny group, InFocus.

Take part in our exciting campaigns for you to give your views on our different services, strategies and policies. We really want to hear what you have to say. We ask for your views in a variety of ways, including surveys, polls, questionnaires and focus groups.

Your views matter to us, to find out more about all of the ways you can **get involved, click here.**

Join us on social media

Find us on **Facebook** at **@WeAreLiveWest** and join our Your Views group to see more about what has been going on and how you can share your thoughts and opinions with us.

Or Instagram **@WeAreLiveWest**