



Great homes, building futures

ENVIRONMENTAL,
SOCIAL AND
GOVERNANCE
REPORT
2021/2022



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At a glance



6,721

Number of properties



81.8% Customer Satisfaction



100%
of homes meet
the Decent
Homes Standard

G1 / V1

Highest
rating of
governance
and viability



Regulator of
Social Housing

**Official
adopter**

Together
with Tenants



97%
of our homes
have rents below
Local Housing
Allowance

85

new homes completed in
2021/22 & 128 in progress



53%

of existing
homes have
EPC C or
better



100%
of new homes
have an EPC C
or better. 92%
achieved EPC B








Saxon Weald
pays the living
wage

About us

Saxon Weald manages close to 7,000 affordable homes across Sussex and Hampshire, providing essential services to more than 10,000 people. As a community benefit society, we reinvest our income into the management, maintenance and building of homes. Over the last 20 years, we have built 1,750 new homes, making a valuable contribution to easing the chronic shortage of affordable housing in the South-East.

Our values and focus

Saxon Weald's values are what matter to us most. They guide us every day in everything we do. At Saxon Weald we will:

-  Be customer led
-  Be one team
-  Be forward thinking
-  Be inclusive
-  Do the right thing



Our corporate plan sets out three clear priorities:

Focus on our customers: we will engage with customers in a positive, open way. We will listen to their feedback and use it to ensure we are providing good quality services that meet customer needs.

Invest in our homes: our homes must be safe, warm and affordable while communal areas should be well looked after. We will invest in improving the energy performance of our homes, reducing our customers' fuel bills while improving our carbon footprint.

Be a great place to work: we seek to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. By investing in training, development and staff well-being, we equip our staff to deliver the best services to customers.

The Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS) for Social Housing

The Sustainability Reporting Standard consists of 12 themes and 48 criteria for us to show our performance against. These criteria align to international frameworks and standards, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This report covers our performance for the 2021/22 financial year. While we are able to demonstrate a strong commitment against all core criteria, we recognise there are some enhanced criteria where we need to develop our approach. We will address this through our asset, sustainability and development strategy to be published in January 2023.

The themes covered in this report are as follows:

	Theme	Criteria
Social	Affordability and security	C1 – C5
	Building safety and quality	C6 – C8
	Resident voice	C9 – C11
	Resident Support	C12
	Placemaking	C13
Environmental	Climate change	C14 – C19
	Ecology	C20 – C21
	Resource management	C22 – C24
Governance	Structure and governance	C25 – C30
	Board and Trustees	C31 – C41
	Staff wellbeing	C42 – C46
	Supply chain management	C47 – C48



Social criteria

Affordability and security

Through the turmoil and uncertainty of the past two years, the importance of a safe place to call home has never been more apparent. With the growing cost of living crisis, being able to afford that home is an increasing concern for many. For Saxon Weald, providing safe, affordable homes is the very essence of our business. Our rents are set below Local Housing Allowance rates and we offer security of tenure through assured tenancy agreements.

C1 – How our rents compare

Overall, our rents are an average of 52% of the median private sector rent in the area in which we work. Furthermore, our rents are an average of 61% of the Local Housing Allowance. Just 3% of our home have rents above the Local Housing Allowance. This is usually for supported living accommodation where higher service charges increase the total weekly rent.



C2 – An overview of our homes by tenure (as at 31 March 2022)

TENURE TYPE	NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	PERCENTAGE OF STOCK
Social rented homes	5,760	84.8%
Leasehold for older people homes	157	2.3%
Freehold of privately owned homes	530	7.8%
Shared ownerships homes	238	3.5%
Market rent homes	108	1.6%
TOTAL PROPERTIES	6,793	100%



C3 – Homes completed during the financial year 2021/22

DEVELOPMENT	AFFORDABLE / SOCIAL RENT	SHARED OWNERSHIP	TOTAL	%
Saxon Mills, Hassocks	15	-	15	17.5%
Eyles Close, Horsham	2 / 1	-	3	3.5%
Pathfield Close, Rudgewick	6	-	6	7%
Dunnings Mill, East Grinstead	4	-	4	4.5%
New Monks Park, Lancing	17	6	23	27%
Blenheim Road, Horsham	9	-	9	11%
Bennetts Road, Horsham	21	-	21	25%
Knapp Drive, Shermanbury	4	-	4	4.5%
TOTAL PROPERTIES	79	6	85	100%

C4 – Reducing the effect of fuel poverty

We have taken a data-led approach to creating our programme of heating improvements and energy efficiency works, prioritising those homes where we believe customers are most likely to be struggling. Up until 2020, we focused our efforts on providing more efficient gas central heating. In light of net carbon zero legislation, we are now prioritising improving the thermal efficiency of our properties, meaning they will use less energy to heat. This is good for customers' pockets as well as good for the environment. During spring/summer 2022 we undertook a pilot project of 37 homes, testing various thermal efficiency techniques and technologies to see which are most effective. The results will inform our future investment programmes.

In the shorter term, we regularly give our customers advice on how to find the best energy deals and save energy within the home.

Case study: Dennis Court

Seven bungalows at Dennis Court in Pulborough have undergone a major transformation to improve their energy efficiency. Works included new roofs, increased loft insulation, solar panels and external cladding. The properties look almost new on the outside while being much easier to keep warm on the inside.



From this...



To this...



C5 – Security of tenure

We want our customers to feel able to put down roots. We provide all our social housing customers with long-term security through assured tenancy agreements, following the successful completion of a 12-month starter tenancy. Our 108 private market rent customers have assured shorthold tenancies on a rolling term basis.



Building safety and quality

C6 – Gas safety

We carried out 100% of gas safety checks to our properties in 2021/22, however, in early April, we became aware that 68 of these (1.7%) had an error in the paperwork which made them invalid. This was rectified as a matter of urgency and procedures changed to ensure a repeat of the problem will not occur.

C7 – A commitment to fire safety

As at the end of March 2022, 91% of our homes had an up-to-date and compliant fire risk assessment. Those without were complex buildings where we had experienced some delays in completing our assessment programme. 100% of homes had an up-to-date assessment by the end of May 2022.

The complexity of the building determines the frequency of assessments: complex buildings have an annual fire risk assessment while standard buildings are assessed every three years.

C8 – Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

100% of our properties meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Resident voice

C9 – Enabling customers to hold us to account

As adopters of the National Housing Federation’s Together with Tenants charter, we are committed to having an open, honest and transparent relationship with our customers. We are also committed to listening to customer views, using this feedback and being accountable to customers for our decision making.

Two of our nine Board members are customers, ensuring resident views are heard at the most strategic level of the organisation. We also have a ‘customer voice’ Board working group consisting of three Board members and three colleagues, to ensure Board maintain a customer focus. The Chair of the Board writes an article for every edition of our newsletter, letting customers know what the main Board decisions have been about and what influenced those decisions.



We have numerous feedback channels and mechanisms, with a dedicated customer experience team ensuring customer voice is heard across the organisation. To extend our existing work, we launched a customer engagement plan in July 2022, offering an even more comprehensive range of ways for customers to give their views. This includes the creation of a formal customer review panel to ensure effective scrutiny of our services.

Customer feedback heavily influenced the creation of our corporate plan 2021–2024. A consultation exercise resulted in 1375 replies, with clear direction that investment in existing homes and neighbourhoods should be prioritised. We have also carried out a consultation on our retirement housing service and involved customers in a review of our domestic violence policy.

C10 – Measuring customer satisfaction

Saxon Weald measures overall customer satisfaction through monthly surveys. These are conducted via telephone on our behalf by IFF Research and, since March 2021, via an online survey system, CX-Feedback. Our online responses are received in real time, allowing us to take prompt action if we receive a dissatisfied response.

We also conduct a transactional repairs survey, and satisfaction surveys for leaseholders, new lettings and complaints handling. We send these surveys via email and text and providing service managers with regular reports on their results.

Our target for customer satisfaction is 85%, as set out in our corporate plan 2019 – 2022. Our average overall satisfaction from April 2018 – April 2021 was 85.4%.

The chart below shows that we were performing above target at the start of this period, but that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic can clearly be seen in our performance figures from April 2020 onwards. This dip in satisfaction is in line with many of our peers and is unsurprising as our service offer was deeply affected by government restrictions.



Satisfaction performance information is reported monthly to our Leadership Team and at every Board meeting.

Looking forwards, we have already begun work on implementing the Regulator for Social Housing's new tenant satisfaction measures, meaning we are well placed for when reporting begins in April 2023.



C11 – Managing complaints

We are confident that we offer customers a complaints process which is easy to access, responsive and solutions focussed. We have adopted the Housing Ombudsman complaints handling code and review our performance against the code annually. We offer customers multiple communication channels to make complaints and run a simple two-stage process. 96% of complaints are resolved at the first stage by the relevant service manager. We have a dedicated member of staff to respond to complaints at stage two of our process to ensure objectivity and consistency.

In 2021, we completed 81% of stage one complaints within the Ombudsman's timeframes. Where we don't meet the timescale, we keep in regular contact with the customer to explain the delays. Most often, this relates to outstanding repairs which can take some time to complete depending on the work. 100% of stage two complaints were responded to within timescales in 2021.

In the 21/22 financial year to date, we have had three cases investigated by the Ombudsman. One has been rejected and we are waiting on the outcome of the remaining two.

We run regular staff training to support effective complaints handling and share best practice. In terms of learning from complaints, we publish a monthly complaints summary on our intranet to raise awareness of the main reasons for complaints and recommendations for improvement. A more detailed report is presented quarterly to our Leadership Team. Examples of learning from complaints include making a CCTV drainage survey a standard part of communal drainage repairs diagnosis, as this reduces timescales and potentially costs. We have also changed the wording on our repair appointment texts following feedback.

Resident support

C12 – Supporting customers

Our Money Matters team consists of three specialist advisors who help customers maximise their income by ensuring they are getting all the financial support they are entitled to. They can help customers to claim welfare benefits, including supporting with tribunals and claims for backdated benefits. In 2021/22 the team helped 548 customers, resulting in additional income for those customers of £1.3 million.

We also employ a specialist tenancy sustainment advisor who works with customers who need intensive support to maintain their tenancy. This may be helping customers who are experiencing mental health issues, or those who have hoarding problems or even people struggling with bereavement. We work with other community organisations to ensure support is in place over the long term. We help an average of 25 customers per month.

Our housing managers partner with numerous organisations to provide practical support to customers who are struggling financially. This includes providing food bank vouchers, fuel vouchers and even sourcing free furniture and white goods through a local charity, Horsham Matters. In the 21/22 financial year we issued 713 food vouchers with a total value of £12,000.

In recognition of the cost of living crisis, in April 2022 we launched a financial crisis fund for customers, setting aside £100,000 to help people in urgent need. We look forward to reporting on the impact of this next year.

Case study: Highdown Court, Worthing

In terms of well-being, many of our retirement and extra care developments for over 60s offer activities and events aimed at supporting customers with their physical and mental health. One example is Highdown Court in Worthing where we partner with Worthing Active to run a life skills club open to residents and members of the local community. The activities provided include coaching members with memory, speech, reading and writing, IT skills and generally just socialising. This club is suitable for people with acquired brain injury, mild learning disabilities, mental health and those who may be socially isolated.



Place making

C13 – Supporting communities

With over 80% of our homes based in the Horsham District of West Sussex, we have a real commitment to playing our part in the local community. Small activities with a big local impact include sponsoring school events, supporting the Horsham Children’s parade and fund raising for local charities. We also run community days where staff volunteer to spend a day helping with a local project. This has included running craft events for older people, delivering Christmas parcels for Horsham Lions and giving communal gardens a facelift.

We also consider the local area whenever we are building new homes or redeveloping a site. At Slinfold village, our redevelopment of an outdated retirement scheme has also included securing outline planning permission for a new scout hut.

Case study: Rowena Court, Horsham

Residents of our flats in Rowena Court, central Horsham, shared a small enclosed communal garden that wasn’t being used as it was unattractive and cluttered with broken furniture. A team of nine staff joined forces with local residents to clear the clutter, create some flower beds and replace the furniture with new benches. A birdhouse and bug hotel provided the finishing touches. Six months after our visit we were delighted to hear the residents had added their own planting and held a community barbecue, with the garden becoming a used, useful space.



From this...



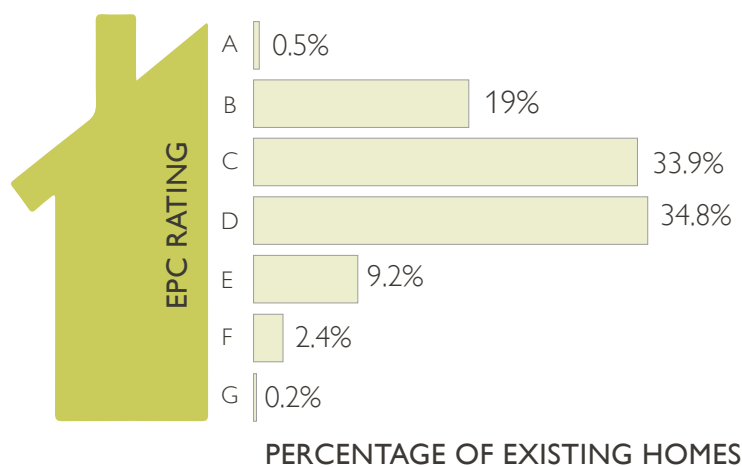
To this...



Climate change

C14 – EPC rating of our homes

Housing associations have been set the challenging energy efficiency target of achieving an EPC rating of C or above for all properties by 2030. Our first step was to establish our current position so we could create an investment plan which will enable us to meet the target. We have also undertaken several pilot projects to trial energy efficiency improvements in a selection of homes to see which measures have the best impact and for the best cost.



C15 – EPC rating of new homes

Of the 82 homes we built in the 2021/22 financial year, 92% achieved EPC B and 8% EPC C. Looking forward, all homes built will be designed to achieve a minimum of EPC A in operation, with the aspiration for some of them to achieve net zero carbon.

Case study: The Cobblers

This development will replace 17 outdated retirement homes, which have shared bathing facilities, with 12 one and two-bedroom flats for affordable rent. The new homes have been designed to achieve net zero carbon in operation. There will be no gas installed and the heating and hot water will be delivered using air source heat pumps. In addition, all of the new homes will have electric vehicle charging points installed, photovoltaic panels on their roofs and triple glazing, which will help to minimise energy costs for our customers.





C16 – Greenhouse gas emissions

The table below provides a summary of the carbon data we have been able to validate as our baseline. In collecting this data, we were pleased to note that while the average household in the UK emits 2.7 tonnes of CO₂e per annum, Saxon Weald's properties perform slightly better at an average of 2.1 tonnes per annum.

ACTIVITY	SCOPE	% OF TOTAL CO ₂ e	CO ₂ e EMISSIONS (TONNES P.A.)
HomeFix fleet	1	1	268
Communal and office electricity	2	4	766
Communal and office gas	2	14	2,513
Housing assets	3	81	14,662
TOTAL			18,209

We are aware however that there are areas of business activity where we are yet to capture data, this includes the footprint of our staff's commute and business travel and the supply chain of our materials and service providers. We are working with Trident Utilities Ltd to collect this information, with current estimates suggesting a total carbon footprint of circa 38,000 tonnes CO₂e per annum.

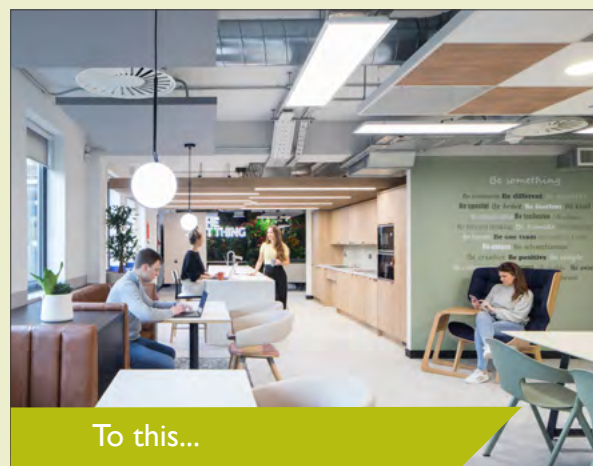
C17 – A proactive approach to energy efficiency

The measures we have taken during the year to improve our overall energy efficiency include:

- Replacing 89 inefficient boilers with A rated models
- Worked with developers to ensure new homes currently under construction achieve EPC A or above.
- Carried out a carbon zero pilot project across 37 properties to establish the effectiveness of various retrofitting measures.

Case study: Saxon Weald House refurbishment

In January 2022, our office re-opened to staff following major refurbishment. The project achieved a SKA Gold rating from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors as a result of achieving the highest standards of waste management, using sustainable materials and reducing water consumption. We have also eliminated the use of gas in the building and have installed more energy efficient heating and ventilation systems. To complement this work, we have added electric car charging points in our office car park and are now looking at ways to encourage staff to make the switch to an electric vehicle.



C18 – Mitigating climate risks

In terms of existing homes, we use local authority flood risk management strategies to highlight areas where our customers may be affected. We had one particular high risk development in Southampton, and have responded by installing flood-proof doors and flood barriers.

For new homes, we carry out comprehensive flood risk assessments on all potential development sites, homes and incorporate draught resistant planting and permeable paving into our landscaping proposals as well as providing SUDS where possible.

Case study: The Cobblers

At this redevelopment scheme, we will achieve a 64% improvement in habitat units through:

- Sowing public grass areas with a wildflower mix
- Sowing private grass areas with amenity turf
- Planting nine new trees
- Planting 200m of hedging
- Planting 128m² of native shrubs

C19 – Keeping customers well informed

We publish a customer magazine three times a year that we send by email or post. We use this channel to share information which may be useful including topics such as heating and ventilation, preventing condensation, preparing for winter and energy efficiency. We also have a wealth of information on our website and post regular environment-focused posts on our social media channels.

Ecology

C20 – Increasing green space and promoting bio-diversity

All new developments meet local planning requirements for bio-diversity. Features include creating wildlife habitats such as hedgehog boxes, insect hotels and even a frog subway. We will be building on this work on future schemes as part of our net zero carbon commitment.



C21 – Reducing the use of pollutants

Our grounds maintenance contractor avoids the use of pesticides wherever possible and only staff with the relevant National Proficiency Tests Council Module Certificates or British Agrochemical Standards Inspection Scheme LTD awards are authorised to use them. No product will be issued or applied before the operator has a copy of the relevant assessment and read and understood the limitations of the chemical to be applied.

Resource management

C22 – A commitment to responsibly sourced materials

Our employers' requirements for new developments state that all materials on site must be sustainably sourced. Where materials are substituted, these materials must offer a similar sustainable value. Several of our main contractors have developed sustainability policies in relation to both the sourcing and disposing of materials.

C23 – A commitment to robust waste management

While we do not yet have a formal strategy, the achievement of a SKA Gold rating on our office refurbishment project reflects our commitment to achieving the highest standards of waste management.

We have numerous clauses in our Employer's Requirements for construction work stating that they must aim to reduce waste as far as is practical. We receive updated waste management figures for each site under our control, with the contractor advising us of the waste materials on site and what percentage of these have been recycled.



C24 – Efficient water management

We are planning to develop our work on good water management as part of our upcoming property strategy. For new build developments, water management is considered as part of the Considerate Contractors Scheme. All new homes need to demonstrate water neutrality and we will achieve this by offsetting water usage in our existing properties.

Governance criteria

C25 – Registration and regulation

We are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (registration number L4299).

C26 – Achieving regulatory excellence

Our most recent regulatory review (November 2021) shows us as maintaining the highest possible rating of V1/G1.

C27 – A recognised code of governance

Saxon Weald follows the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020.

C28 – Providing a not-for-profit service

Saxon Weald is a community benefit society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (number 7971). As such, the money we receive in rents is re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes.

C29 – Managing risk

We have a robust risk management policy and framework, including a comprehensive risk map which is updated regularly. Our Audit and Risk Committee monitors risk through regular reports and the full risk map is reviewed twice per year. Internal audit of the risk management framework provides strong assurance of its effectiveness.

C30 – Adverse regulatory findings

We have not had any adverse regulatory findings relating to data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering or HSE breaches in the last 12 months.



Board and trustees

C31 – Demographics of our Board

MEASURE	DATA
Average age	55 years
% BAME	0%
% women	40%
% that have a disability	We are in the process of collecting this data

While we currently have no board members from ethnic minority groups, we are committed to improving this situation.

C32 – Board and management team turnover

We have seen a 39% turnover in our Board in the last two years. Four members left as they had reached the end of their term, while three left for personal reasons. In the same period, we have had a 6% turnover in our management team, where one member retired.

C33 – Board tenure

The maximum tenure for a Board member is six years, ensuring there is opportunity to bring in fresh opinion, experience and knowledge.

C34 – Non-executive directors

80% of our board are non-executive directors.

C35 – Financial leadership

All members of our Audit and Risk Committee have recent and relevant financial experience. The committee chair is a chartered accountant with extensive experience of social housing audit committees.

C36 – Number of executives on the Remuneration Committee

No executive directors sit on the Remuneration Committee.



C37 – Succession planning

Saxon Weald has recently concluded an organisational design review and the findings are being used in 2022/23 in framing a succession plan within a new people strategy.

C38 – External audit arrangements

Our current external auditor, Beever and Struthers, has been responsible for auditing our accounts for the last two years.

C39 – Independent Board review

We commissioned Campbell Tickell to carry out an independent review of our Board's effectiveness in March 2020. We will repeat this process every three years in line with best practice. Our Board Chair also leads an annual in-house review process.

C40 – The roles of the Chair and CEO

The roles of CEO and Chair are held by two different people, thus aiding accountability and corporate responsibility.

C41 – Managing conflicts of interest

Our code of conduct for staff and Board details our approach to managing conflicts of interest. All members are required to sign an annual declaration of interest, as well as declaring any relevant interests at the start of each Board and Committee meeting. Where a conflict exists, members may be excluded from a particular discussion or meeting, or ultimately, may be required to resign from the Board.



Employee wellbeing

C42 – Commitment to the Real Living Wage

We apply, and operate within, the provisions of the Real Living Wage in all areas of our business.

C43 – Gender pay gap

Our median gender pay gap is 16.4%. We have plans to address this as identified in our gender pay gap report available on our website. We are confident that we offer equal pay, with employees paid equally for the same or equivalent work regardless of gender.

Case study: Recruitment of more women into trade roles

In the UK, just two percent of tradespeople are female, a figure that has barely changed in 40 years. As our in-house repairs service boasts a 50-strong team of trades operatives, all of which are male, this is something we are keen to help address.

We have joined the Women’s Trade Network, an initiative founded by housing and property organisations to increase the representation of women in trade roles. We are pleased to report that we have just successfully recruited our first female electrical apprentice, who will benefit from hands-on training with our experienced team while completing her trade qualifications.



C44 – CEO-worker pay ratio

The Chief Executive to average pay ratio is 5:1. This compares favourably with FTSE 100 companies where the median ratio is 81:1 (Source: Deloitte).

C45 – Supporting the health of our staff

Staff wellbeing is a priority, and we are committed to supporting people with both their physical and mental health. We provide:

- a health cash plan with money back on day-to-day medical expenses
- an employee assistance programme, including access to counselling
- generous life assurance, pension and company sick pay
- access to online wellbeing training resources
- discounted gym memberships

We seek regular feedback from staff to help inform our wellbeing offering. We offer a range of different working patterns and hybrid working for many roles, providing a blend of working from head office/home. Our head office has been especially designed for collaborative working and to be an inclusive environment. Our health and safety team ensure health and safety risks are minimised and well managed.



C46 – Average employee sickness

The average number of sick days taken per employee during the 21/22 financial year was 9.

Supply chain

C47 – Commitment to creating social value through procurement

Ensuring contracts bring added value is an increasing concern, with Saxon Weald keen to develop a consistent approach. As a recent example, we have negotiated with our appointed estate agent for property disposals that they will donate £100 to local charities on our behalf for every sale. We also have a commitment from our catering contractor in our extra care schemes that they will support two resident events a month.

C48 – Considering the environmental impact of procurement

This is an area for development for Saxon Weald.



Saxon Weald is a housing association, established in 2000, managing approximately 6,800 homes across Sussex and Hampshire. We provide affordable rented and shared ownership homes for individuals and families, as well as properties exclusively for the over 55s. We also provide homes for market rent and shared ownership sale through our Weald Living brand.

We are a charitable community benefit society, with the money we make from rents being re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes. We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.



PlaceShapers
Together we help communities thrive



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
tpas
member 2022-2023

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