

Agenda Item No:

Report To: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 21st March 2024

Report Title: Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan

Report Author: Joanne Burns
Job Title: Tenant Engagement Officer

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bill Barrett
Portfolio Holder for: Housing



Summary:

It is essential that tenants are asked regularly how they feel about services that we provide, for us to address issues and learn from both positive and negative feedback. As part of the new requirement from the Regulator of Social Housing, we asked how satisfied tenants are with their homes and how we look after them, as well as how they feel we manage our services and interact with tenants.

The report informs of the results of the 2023/24 annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey based on the Regulator's 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

We received a score of 63.2% satisfaction for the overall services provided by Ashford Borough Council. For those that were very satisfied, a third said that they were happy with the speed and punctuality of handling queries and a fifth due to staff helpfulness and friendliness. For those tenants that were dissatisfied in general, over half referred to issues with the speed and completion of repairs.

When looking at housing service areas in more detail, tenants were more satisfied with elements focusing on homes themselves – such as well-maintained properties and clean and maintained communal areas. Lower scoring areas tend to revolve around our interactions with tenants rather than their homes, such as our approach to complaints handling, anti-social behaviour and listening and acting to tenants' views.

To deliver improvements we have developed a cross-service action plan to address issues raised via survey feedback, setting targets based on the median satisfaction levels of other local authorities within the same area.

For detailed results of the survey, commentary, and our action plan, please see **Appendix 1**.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: All Wards

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is asked to note the publishing of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey results and initial action plan for Ashford Borough Council**

Report Overview: The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 sets regulatory requirements that all registered providers must adhere to, to drive improvements in the quality of housing and housing services for tenants. The Regulator of Social Housing has set standards and a Code of Practice for registered housing providers to ensure that they engage with tenants, taking their views into account in decision-making and about how their housing services are delivered.

As part of these requirements, the council is obligated to carry out an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey to gauge how Ashford Borough Council as a landlord, and its services are perceived. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) set out by the Regulator ask for feedback on a variety of areas such as anti-social behaviour to repairs. How satisfied our tenants feel will provide a benchmark to improve our services and track our performance.

The report presents the results of our 2023/24 survey, sets them in context of other social housing providers and establishes an action plan for improvements to be made in 2024.

Financial Implications: The satisfaction survey has highlighted and identified vulnerable individuals, homes and areas that require investigation. Therefore, there may be resource implications to remedy and make improvements.

Since the survey, extra resources have been added to the Housing Team, therefore the action plan will have relatively low financial and resource implications as current staffing and facilities will be mainly utilised.

Legal Implications: Ashford Borough Council has an obligation to carry out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey pursuant to the Regulator of Social Housing's requirements. Further there is an obligation to publish the results of the survey. Whilst developing an action plan in light of the results of the survey is not a legal requirement, it is a prudent step commensurate with the objectives of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey requirement.
*Text agreed by
Principal Litigator on
28th February 2024*

Equalities Impact Assessment: See Attached

Data Protection Impact Assessment:	N/A
Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):	There is a regulatory obligation to carry out an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey using the prescribed Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) questions. We must submit this perception data, along with specific operational data, to the Regulator and publish the results with the public. If we fail to publish and submit data according to the technical requirements set out by the Regulator we will be in breach of their requirements and action could be taken.
Sustainability Implications:	None
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	None
Contact:	joanne.burns@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233 330573)

Report Title: Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results and Initial Action Plan

Introduction and Background

1. As part of our obligations to the Regulator of Social Housing, a satisfaction survey is carried out annually with tenants. The survey evaluates tenant perceptions of specific areas of our housing service and captures general views of our performance.
2. There are twelve mandatory questions (Tenant Satisfaction Measures, TSMs) asked about Ashford Borough Council as a landlord, with the ability to tailor additional questions. Tenants rate how satisfied they are, and additional detail can be provided as to why that score has been chosen.
3. The main aims of the TSMs are to provide greater transparency about a landlord's performance and inform the Regulator about how well they are complying with consumer standards that have been set.
4. All tenants, including those in properties managed by our PFI contract with Moat Housing, were invited to participate in the survey and provide feedback via telephone, post or online across a six-week period starting at the end of August. All satisfaction results must be published and provided to the Regulator and shared with tenants for transparency and help hold us to account.
5. Every survey comment and response have been examined and analysed to formulate an action plan to address issues raised, with the aim of improving satisfaction levels for tenants.
6. The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the results from the annual tenant satisfaction survey.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

7. A summary of how satisfied our tenants are against the 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures, as follows:

SUMMARY OF RESULTS



63.2%

Satisfied with the service provided by Ashford Borough Council



65% Repairs



67% Treated fairly & with respect



59% Time taken to repair



27% Complaints handling



66% Well maintained home



62% Clean communal areas



72% Safe home



60% Keeps tenants informed



49% Listens and acts on tenant views



45% Anti-social behaviour handling



52% Positive neighbourhood contribution

TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2023/4

8. We found that those that aged +65 were more satisfied than those under the age of 25. This is mirrored in higher satisfaction levels for those living in bungalows and our independent living schemes.
9. Tenants in rural areas tended to have the highest satisfaction levels, with lowest satisfaction seen in more urban areas where we have a higher concentration of properties and therefore a higher proportion of people residing.

10. Regarding the TSMs, tenants were most satisfied with a home that they felt was safe (72%), being treated with fairness and respect (67%), and a well-maintained home (66%). The latter two areas being key drivers of overall tenant satisfaction and important to get right.
11. Tenants were less satisfied with our handling of complaints (27%), anti-social behaviour (45%), and listening and acting on tenant views (49%). These are the main topics that we have focused on improving within our action plan, as well as addressing issues raised with our repairs service that are leading to overall dissatisfaction with Ashford Borough Council, and dissatisfaction with complaints handling.
12. Detailed results with commentary, key findings, and our improvement action plan, are available in **Appendix 1**.

Equalities Impact Assessment

13. Members are referred to the attached Equalities Impact Assessment.
14. We recognise that our tenants have a wide variety of backgrounds and characteristics. By annually surveying tenants as part of our wider engagement remit, we can tailor our housing services to meet individual tenant needs.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

15. The survey and results were conducted and verified by our research partner TLF a customer research agency specialising in customer experience, to ensure that our survey met sample size and representativeness requirements of the Regulator. We were commended by TLF for the level of awareness that we had generated using social media, our website, and printed communications prior to the survey to encourage tenants to respond.
16. We carried out a census survey providing all tenants the opportunity to provide their views. A variety of response methods were supported to reduce barriers to responding and boost accessibility. Telephone, online link, postal and in person interviews were all offered. A total of 1,041 responses were received, representing a response rate of 20%. Of these responses, 58.8% were completed online via a weblink sent out by email, 39.7% by telephone and 1.5% by post.
17. The action plan has been developed in conjunction with teams and management across the housing service and is based on the feedback received via tenant comments and overall ratings received across the satisfaction measures. An action plan is not a statutory requirement. However, a structured process of addressing negative perceptions must take place, otherwise we are not fulfilling our commitment to listen and act upon tenant views.

Next Steps in Process

18. The survey results and action plan will be communicated to tenants via the next quarterly housing newsletter and made available on the council's

website. Presentations to relevant staff and Management Team have taken place over the last few weeks.

19. The survey results will be submitted to the Regulator along with required operational data from our service. We will also publish this data on our website.
20. Management Team have committed to support the delivery of the action plan and processes will be put in place to develop, share, and monitor the service improvement plans directly related to improving tenant satisfaction. Regular reporting to management will also be developed.

Conclusion

21. Conducting an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey and publishing the results fulfils a commitment to the regulator and forms part of our requirements of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).
22. The results enable us to quantify how tenants perceive Ashford Borough Council Housing Services and see how we compare to other housing providers. Using this data allows us to focus on those areas that require improvements as well as share best-practice from those where we perform well.
23. Examining each comment submitted enables us to react and resolve any outstanding issues and redress negative perceptions directly with tenants.
24. The action plan provides reassurance for tenants, members, and the Regulator that we will dedicate cross-service resources to commit to improving our services.

Portfolio Holder's Views

22. This report provides Cabinet and Members with a comprehensive set of data points on how our residents responded to our questions, how they feel about our various services, and how this allowed us to frame an Action Plan which is our methodology for improving the service we provide for our tenants. In simple terms whilst we are performing relatively well in certain areas, and our overall scores are within the average range of the councils we surveyed, there are still a lot of areas that need improving and it is this improvement that I as Portfolio Holder will be looking for over the coming years.

Cllr Bill Barrett
Cabinet Member for Homes & Homelessness

Contact and Email

23. Joanne Burns, Tenant Engagement Officer
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Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the

potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

9. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.

10. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:

- Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
- The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

11. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or

service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	<p>Joanne Burns Tenant Engagement Officer</p> <p>Rebecca Smith Housing Operations Manager, Income and Neighbourhoods</p>
Decision maker:	<p>Cabinet</p>
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	<p>The Cabinet is recommended to publish the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey results and action plan.</p>
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	<p>21st March 2024</p>
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey for the year ending March 2024, where tenants are asked for their perceptions of Ashford Borough Council as a landlord and the services it provides.</p> <p>The report benchmarks our results in context of other social housing landlords and shares a cross-service action plan in 2024 to address issues raised via survey feedback.</p> <p>The outcome of the action plan is to improve the satisfaction levels for our tenants by listening to and acting on what is important to them.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 establishes regulatory requirements that social housing providers must adhere to drive improvements in the quality of housing and housing services. The Regulator of Social Housing sets consumer standards for landlords to be more accountable and engaged with their tenants.</p> <p>The report, as presented, will detail the survey results and set out the Council's actions to improve our housing services and their perception to tenants.</p>
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? 	<p>A Tenant Satisfaction Survey for the year ending March 2024 was carried out across six weeks from the end of September.</p> <p>The results are presented in this report and feedback has been analysed against protected characteristics of age, race and sex, where data is available. Some survey responses were anonymous.</p> <p>Tenants of Black, Black British, Caribbean or African, and those of Asian or Asian British ethnicity had higher levels of satisfaction with Ashford Borough Council housing services, than those of White or mixed ethnicity.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>Overall satisfaction increases with tenant age. Tenants over the age of 66 had higher levels of satisfaction with housing services compared to other age categories. Those aged 35 and under had lowest levels of satisfaction than other age categories.</p> <p>Male tenants are reporting higher levels of overall satisfaction than female respondents for nearly all services aside from complaints and being informed about things that matter to them.</p> <p>The action plan is produced from key findings and areas highlighted by tenants to require improvements. By addressing issues highlighted by these differences in views we can look to learn from those with higher satisfaction scores and improve satisfaction for those with lower scores.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	None	Positive
Middle age	None	Positive
Young adult	None	Positive
Children	None	Positive
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	None	Positive
Mental	None	Positive
Sensory	None	Positive
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	Positive
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	Positive
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	Positive
<u>RACE</u>	None	Positive
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	Positive

<u>SEX</u> Men	None	Positive
Women	None	Positive
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	Positive
<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	None	Positive
Former service personnel	None	Positive
Service families	None	Positive

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	There is no negative impact to mitigate in relation to the survey results and action plan.
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Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?	
Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide , alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance .	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

Conclusion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The due regard for equality has been considered throughout this report and no negative impacts are determined. There is no unlawful discrimination arising from this report. The proposal meets the aims of the equality duty.

<p>whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring will be completed through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• publishing of survey results to Regulator and tenants• tracking of improvements/changes against the action plan• tenant feedback and annual tenant satisfaction survey 2024/5
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>11th January 2024</p>

Version: 1.0

Published: 1st March 2024

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results & Action Plan

2023/4

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INTRODUCTION

Starting on 21st August 2023 and ending 3rd October 2023, a tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by TLF, a customer research agency specialising in customer experience. The project adopted a census approach allowing all tenants the opportunity to participate in the survey. A multi-mode approach was used with telephone interviews, email invitations for surveys to be completed online, or a postal survey sent directly to tenants. In-person survey interviews were also offered. This variety of response mechanisms allowed us to broaden the survey reach and accessibility.

The questionnaire comprised of 12 prescribed questions, more commonly known as TSMs or Tenant Satisfaction Measures, set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. Landlords are permitted to add some additional questions to probe in more detail about responses. TSM questions gauge the perception a tenant has for various areas of their housing service by asking them to rate their satisfaction levels. There was no incentive offered to those completing the survey.

A copy of the questionnaire featuring all 12 TSM questions and our additional probing questions, can be seen on page 24.

All questions in the survey are regarding Ashford Borough Council as a landlord and the services it provides.

Prior to the survey being conducted, the Tenant Engagement team sent an information postcard to all tenants to bring it to their attention. Awareness was also raised via our website, social media, our annual tenant report, and our tenant newsletter called Housing Matters. We were commended by our research partner for the level of awareness that we had generated prior to the survey to encourage tenants to respond.

DATA COLLECTION

In total, tenants in all 5,204 LCRA (low-cost rental accommodation) properties, including 276 managed by Moat Housing, were approached for their feedback about our housing service.

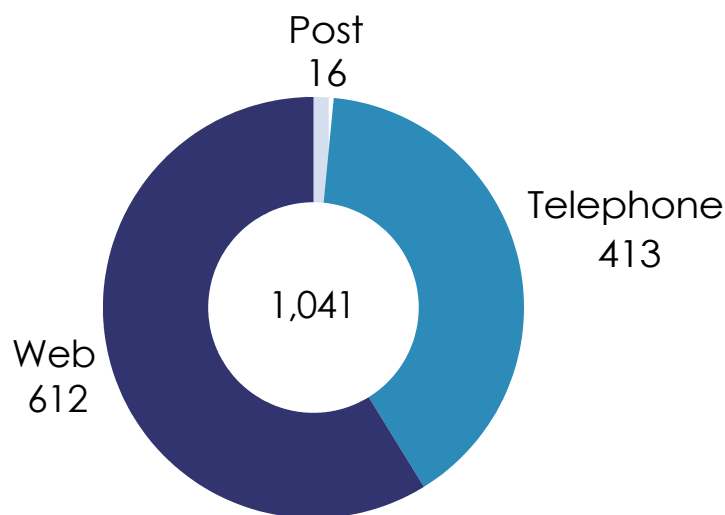
At the end of the data collection period, a total of 1,041 responses were received, representing a response rate of 20%. Of these responses, 58.8% were completed online via a weblink sent out by email, 39.7% by telephone, and the remaining 1.5% by post.

The high number of responses received means we have a 95% confidence level that the overall percentage of tenants satisfied with Ashford Borough Council is within +/-2.9%. This means that for anyone that has not answered the survey we can be very sure that they would answer +/-2.9% above or below the satisfaction percentage we received.

Weighting was not necessary to represent the population, as results reflected the tenant population by age group and tenure type.

Satisfaction with our services is classed as those that have said that they are fairly or very satisfied. It does not include any recorded as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Survey responses by media type

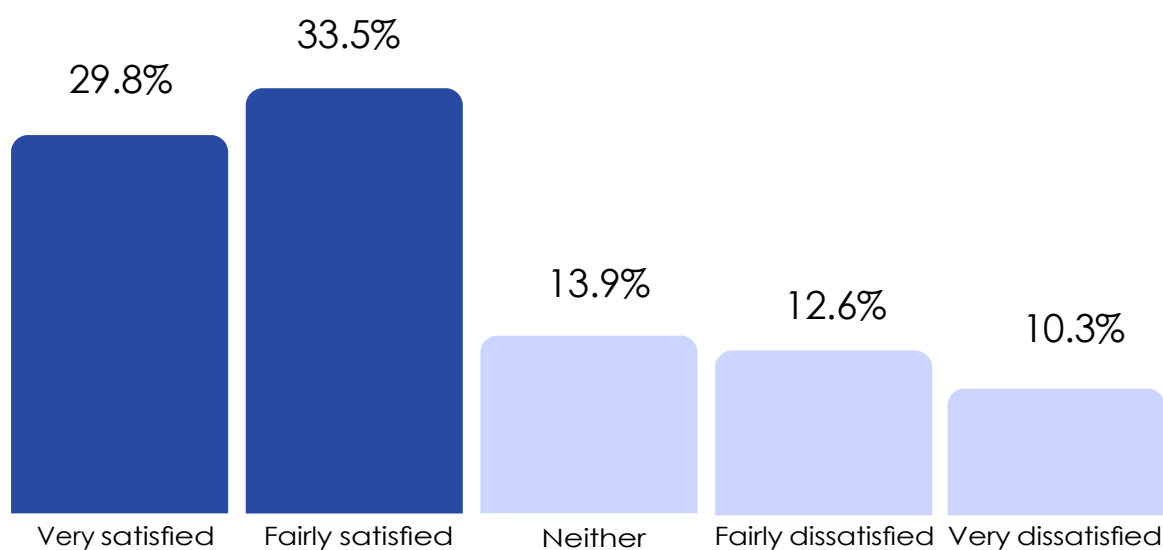


OVERALL SATISFACTION

6/10



Six out of ten tenants were satisfied with the service provided by Ashford Borough Council **(63.2%)**



Of those that were very satisfied, 32% said that they were happy with the speed and punctuality of handling queries, 20% said it was due to staff helpfulness, friendliness, and professionalism, and 18% saying that they have never had a problem with our services.

For those that were dissatisfied with our overall service, 53% said that it was the speed and completion of repairs that were an issue, with 13% mentioning property maintenance, and the quality of repairs and contractors.

Suggestions from tenants of what would help improve their overall satisfaction, focused on improving the speed and completion of repairs, maintenance of communal areas, and the ease of reporting repairs.

THE HOME AND REPAIRS



Seven out of ten tenants are satisfied with how safe their home is **(72%)**



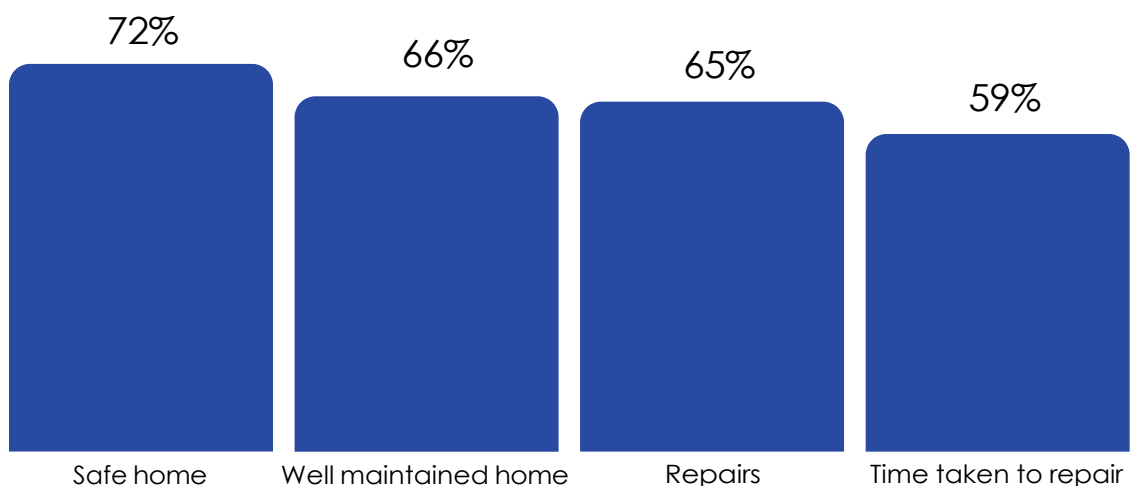
Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied that their homes are well maintained **(66%)**



65% are satisfied with the repairs service they received in the last 12 months



59% are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair



NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT



More than three-fifths of tenants are satisfied their communal areas are kept clean **(62%)**



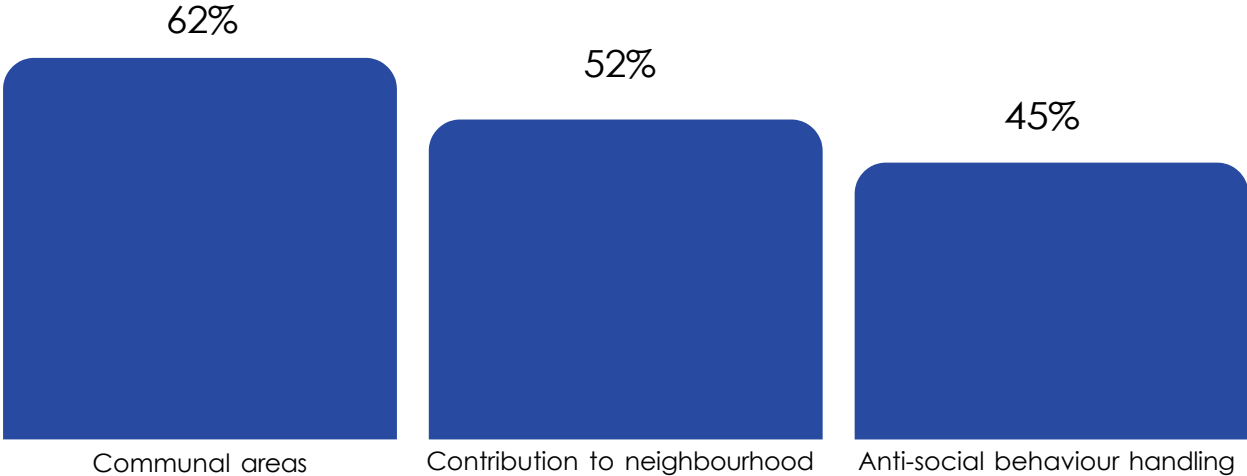
52% of tenants are satisfied with the positive contribution made by Ashford Borough Council to their neighbourhood



Less than half of tenants are satisfied with how the council deals with anti-social behaviour **(45%)**



11% of tenants stated that they had reported anti-social behaviour to Ashford Borough Council in the past 12 months



COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT



Half of tenants were satisfied that Ashford Borough Council listened and acted upon their views **(49%)**



6 out of 10 tenants are satisfied with how informed they were **(60%)**



Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied with the council treating them fairly and with respect **(67%)**

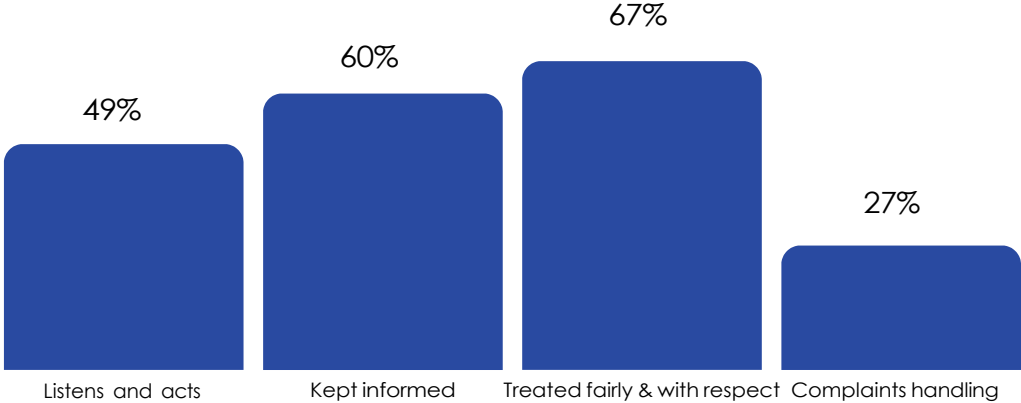


Less than a third of tenants were satisfied with the Council's approach to handling complaints **(27%)**



42% of people stated that they had made a complaint to Ashford Borough Council in the past 12 months

279
tenants want to engage in improving housing services



SUMMARY OF RESULTS



63.2%

Satisfied with the service provided by Ashford Borough Council



65% Repairs



67%

Treated fairly & with respect*



59% Time taken to repair



27%

Complaints handling



66% Well maintained home*



62%

Clean communal areas



72% Safe home



60%

Keeps tenants informed



49% Listens and acts on tenant views



45%

Anti-social behaviour handling



52% Positive neighbourhood contribution

*key drivers of satisfaction for tenants

BREAKDOWN

SERVICE AREAS

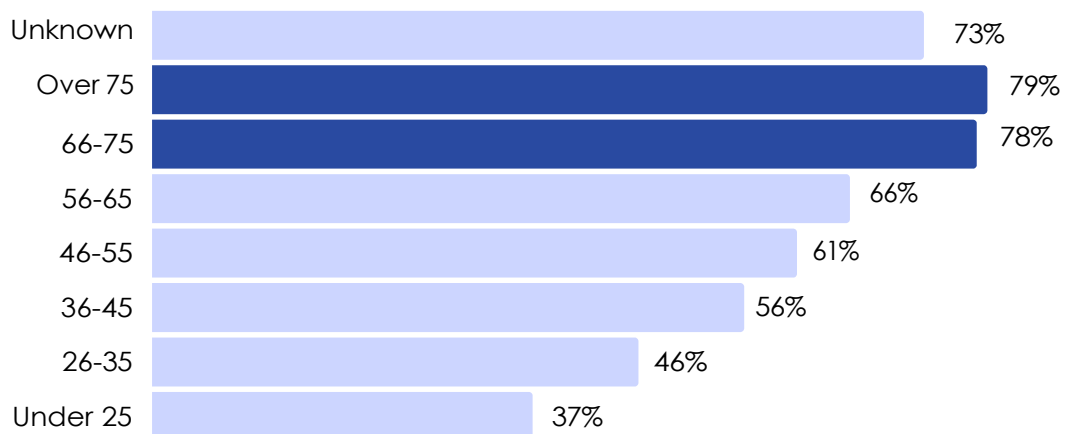
The highest scoring service areas with where tenants expressed satisfaction mainly focused on properties, such as the provision of a safe home, well maintained homes, repairs, and clean and maintained communal areas.

The lowest scoring service areas in regards to satisfaction tend to involve our interactions with tenants. Our approach to complaints handling (by those having made a complaint), handling of anti-social behaviour (ASB), listening and acting upon our tenants' views have the lowest satisfaction scores.

Drivers of overall satisfaction are the TSMs of 'listening and acting upon tenants' views', 'a well maintained home' and 'treats us fairly and with respect'. Ensuring satisfaction with these drivers is high, will help to improve overall satisfaction scores for Ashford Borough Council, as these factors have a large impact on residents.

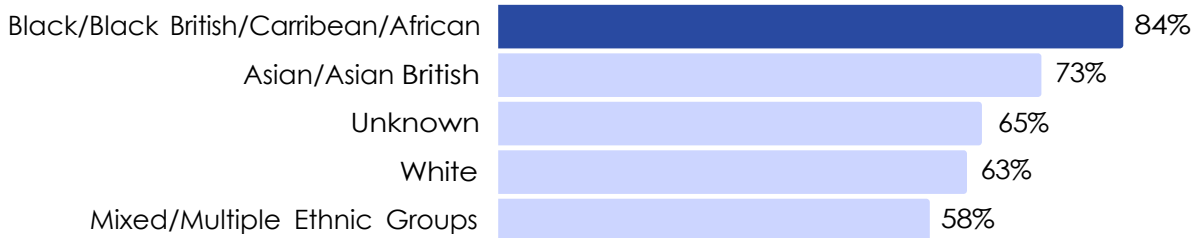
AGE

The highest satisfaction levels were amongst those aged 65+ and those that lived in independent living schemes. Those under the age of 25 were the least satisfied. These top and bottom levels of age category and their connection to satisfaction levels follow a similar trend across other landlords too. Younger tenants have stated that the speed of our repairs and communication with them is not fast enough.



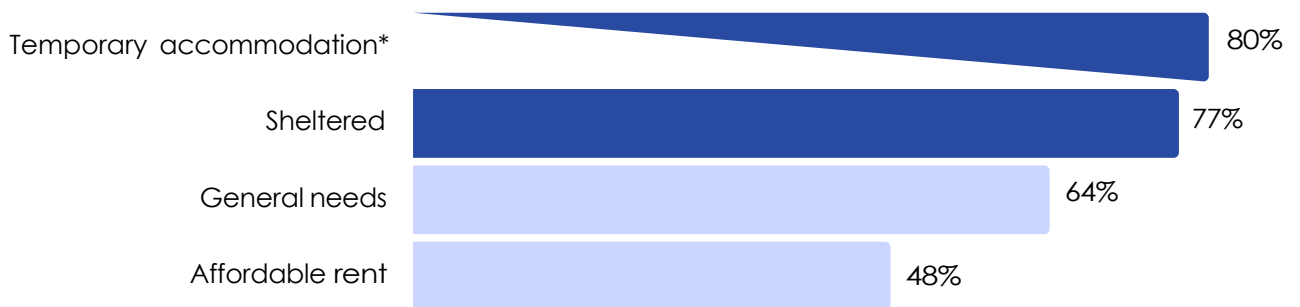
ETHNICITY

Higher levels of satisfaction were reported by those of Black/Black British/Caribbean or African ethnicity, while the lowest levels were shown in our White or Mixed/Multiple Ethnic groups.



TENANCY TYPE

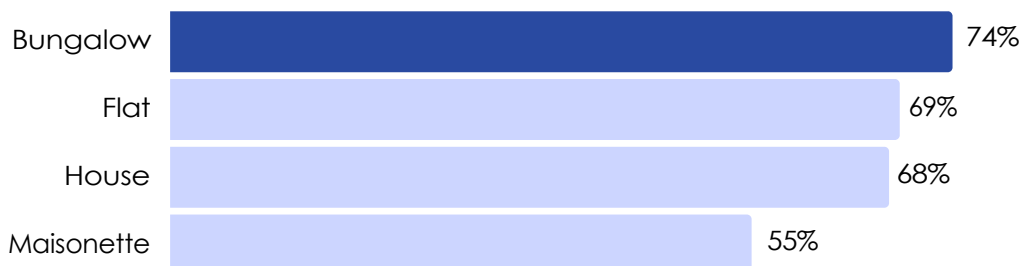
Those living in independent living schemes had the highest levels of overall satisfaction, while those living in affordable rent properties having the lowest levels of satisfaction. Temporary accommodation tenants also displayed high levels of overall satisfaction, albeit from a smaller proportion of tenants responding to the survey.



*5 responses

DWELLING TYPE

Those living in bungalows reported the highest levels of satisfaction, which corroborates the age demographic for those property types also having high satisfaction levels. Those living in maisonettes reported lower levels of satisfaction. Interestingly, those living in flatted accommodation and houses had very similar satisfaction levels.



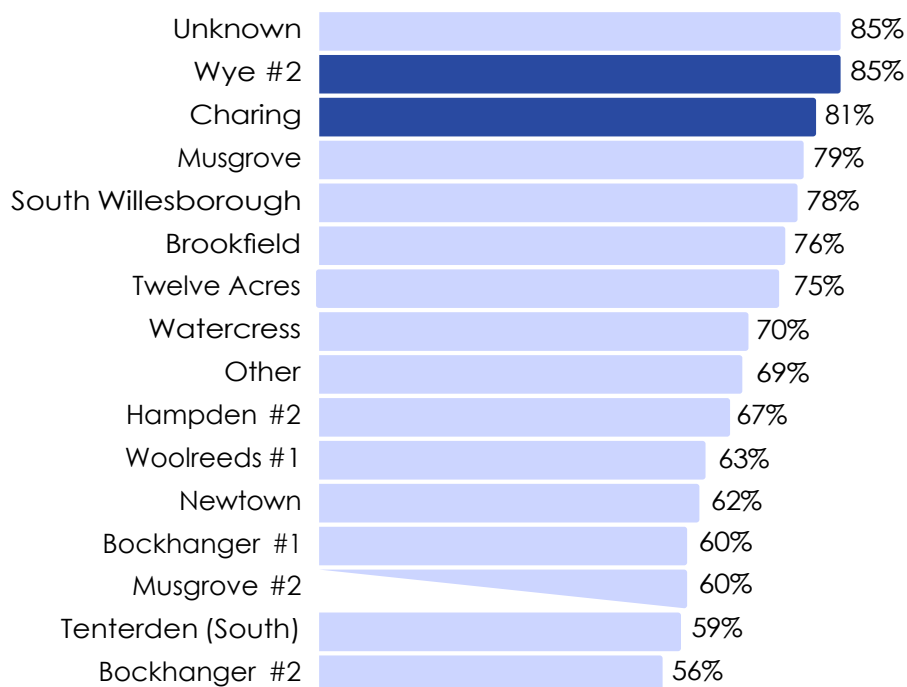
MANAGEMENT

Moat Housing manage 257 of our properties via a PFI contract. Of the 64 responses from those tenants, it was found that there was a higher level of satisfaction with those managed by Moat, compared with properties managed by Ashford Borough Council directly. Moat tenants reported that this was due to any repairs or problems being dealt with quickly.



WARD

Regarding locality, there tends to be a higher level of satisfaction for those living in more rural areas of the borough such as Wye and Charing. Figures for Wye have also been boosted by independent living schemes falling into their remit with high satisfaction levels. The areas with lowest satisfaction are mainly those where we have a higher concentration of properties and therefore a higher proportion of people residing there. For example Bockhanger #2 comprises of many of our higher rise blocks of flats, which can lead to amplified dissatisfaction with cleanliness of communal areas, and anti-social behaviour, due to the greater number of residents living there.



FOCUS ON REPAIRS

A section of the survey looks at repairs, and tenants were asked to feed back more detail about their repairs experience. The repairs TSM question (65% satisfaction) was only available to be answered if the respondent had said 'yes' to the qualifier question 'Has Ashford Borough Council carried out a repair to your home in the last 12 months?' Out of all survey respondents, 6 out of 10 said that they had a repair carried out (613 people) in the past year.

Overall satisfaction with Ashford Borough Council was not affected by whether someone had received a repair in the past year or not – 64.8% for those with a repair, vs. 62.9% for those who had not.

For those who did say yes to having a recent repair, the time that it takes for the repair to be carried out scores 59% satisfaction. The comments in the probing questions indicates that tenants would like repairs carried out faster and in one visit, rather than across multiple visits. This is clarified on the further probe question of 'Do any of the repairs you have reported in the last 12 months still need work doing to complete them?' of which nearly half said yes (48.3%).

An outstanding repair has a detrimental effect on our repairs satisfaction levels as can be seen in the chart below. If a repair has been completed, repairs satisfaction scores 85%, almost double the satisfaction levels of repairs still requiring work. Our tenants live with outstanding repairs every day so it is understandable how this will have an effect on their perception of the service.



Further details provided about outstanding repairs focused on a lack of communication about the progress of a repair. Comments were also made regarding repeat visits and repairs that require remedial works multiple times.

It is important to note that the responsive repairs service that was being evaluated for the survey was provided by the contractor, Equans. This service has since been taken in-house from 1st December 2023.

FOCUS ON COMPLAINTS

The complaints TSM question (27% satisfaction) was only available to be answered if the respondent had said 'yes' to the qualifier question 'Have you made a complaint to Ashford Borough Council in the last 12 months?' Out of all survey respondents, 268 tenants said that they had made a complaint (28.1%) in the past year.

Typically, this TSM receives a lower score than other questions across all landlords, with the current median for similar sized landlords being just 31%. Although there is no provision in the survey for tenants to elaborate why they are dissatisfied with complaints handling, comments made elsewhere in the survey can allude to some reasons. Dissatisfaction with repairs is mentioned across 52% of those that were also dissatisfied with our complaints handling.

From the 238 (86.1%) of respondents who chose to provide their details, we were only able to reference 25 of these as complaints raised formally with our Housing Resolutions Team across the same period. This indicates that respondents could be raising concerns informally with us or are making complaints to, or about, other areas of Ashford Borough Council rather than Housing. For example, there were many negative comments about waste services and potholes.

It is important to note that those who answered yes to having made a complaint had a lower overall satisfaction score with us. If no complaint had been made, our overall satisfaction was scored at 72.6%. When a complaint has been made, this was far lower at 42.3%. Providing a poor service to tenants can understandably have a very detrimental impact on their satisfaction with us.



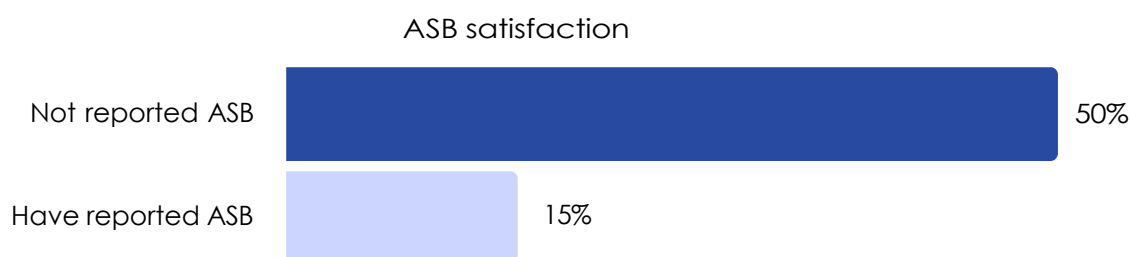
Unfortunately the outcome of some complaints, even if they have been handled according to procedures and guidance from the Ombudsman, may not provide the result that a tenant desires, leading to dissatisfaction.

FOCUS ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The TSM regarding our handling of anti-social behaviour (45% satisfaction) was available for all respondents to rate, unlike the repairs and complaints handling questions where a qualifier question had to be met before being able to respond.

Here we were able to add an additional probing question to ask if tenants had reported anti-social behaviour in the last 12 months. Overall, 11% of tenants (102 people) said that they had reported anti-social behaviour in the last year.

For those saying that they have reported a case with us, their satisfaction score for our handling was just 15%, with a large proportion expressing being very dissatisfied. For those tenants that have not reported ASB to us in the last 12 months, they provided a satisfaction rating of 50%.



Although no further probe questions were asked within this topic due to survey limitations, comments captured in the overall satisfaction question relating to ASB indicate reasons why. A lack of action, limited communication and a lack of timely responses to cases being raised, being the main causes.

Some 52% of responses for this TSM question were answered anonymously, however for those that we can see details for, eight of them were officially logged as cases with the housing team.

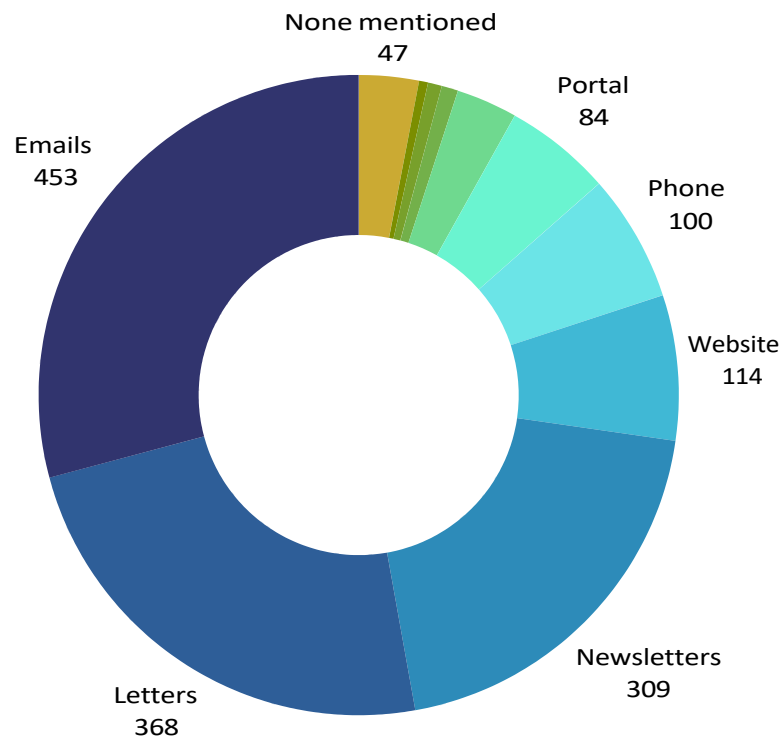
As with complaints handling perception, the outcome of an ASB case even when handled according to procedures, may not provide the outcome that a tenant desires, leading to dissatisfaction.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ASKED

BEING KEPT INFORMED

As part of the additional questions we were able to ask within the survey, we chose to ask how best tenants wanted us to communicate with them. This is important to ensure that we keep our tenants informed about their housing service.

Most tenants preferred contact via email (29%), followed by letters (24%) and then newsletters (20%).



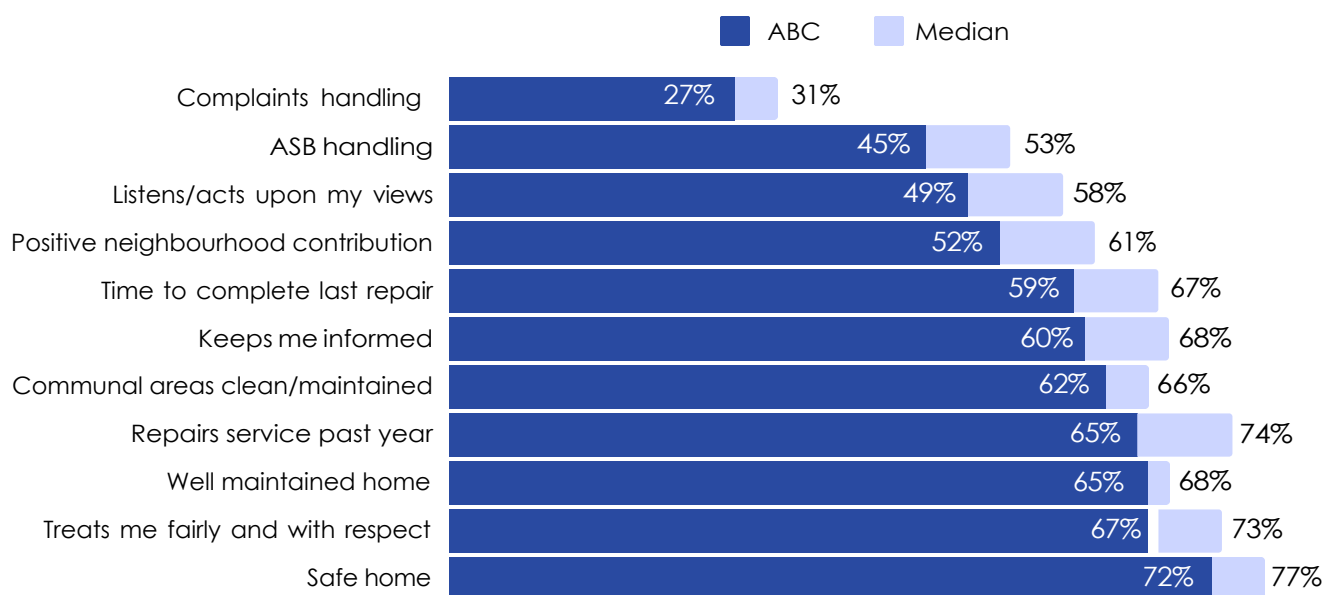
ENGAGEMENT

We also asked if any respondents would like to be involved further with the housing service to help drive improvements. Just over a quarter of respondents (259 tenants) said that they would like to contribute. This provides a pool of tenants that we can lean on to learn from their experiences with us and collaborate on projects to make our service better.

BENCHMARKING

The perception of our services by tenants must always be the top priority, however it is useful to be able to benchmark ourselves against other social landlords, particularly local authority housing providers. By doing so we can look to see what areas require further focus, and learn best practice from high performing landlords.

Through Housemark, a leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector, we can view data currently submitted by local authorities in their South-Central area that have less than 10,000 properties. The chart below shows where we place when compared with the median across these providers.



As more local authorities submit and publish their satisfaction data, we will be able to view where we stand within a local peer group of Ashford's geographical vicinity. This will provide a more like-for-like comparison, considering the regionality, property, and tenant characteristics more specific to this area of Kent. This should be available to view later in 2024.

The benchmarking results demonstrate how some TSM questions, such as complaint handling, generally see a lower percentage rating, no matter who the landlord is. We can see that our housing service is performing below the current benchmark median across all questions, however the smallest difference is shown for complaints handling, communal areas being clean and well-maintained, and homes being well-maintained.

The largest percentage difference can currently be seen across listening and acting upon tenant views, the positive contribution we make to a neighbourhood, and satisfaction with our repairs service in the past year.

INITIAL ACTIONS IDENTIFIED

The Housing Management Team and Housing Services have analysed the feedback, and have identified initial actions to help address some of the dissatisfaction expressed by tenants. An ongoing process of improvements will evolve based on further discussions with tenants and the service team.

Every single comment provided on the survey has been reviewed and key issues driving dissatisfaction have helped to inform our action plan. We have selected those areas that we feel will make a positive impact on our tenants.

Each year that we run the survey, the Regulator, tenants, and Housing, can track our TSMs to see how our actions are affecting our satisfaction scores.

To ensure that our action plan is SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) we have set targets for satisfaction scores in the next annual survey for 2024/25. These are based on the current median for landlords in the South-Central area with less than 10,000 properties, as provided by Housemark. We have allocated specific teams to work on set projects, and have provided them with timescales to put plans in place.

As the year progresses, we will review and rate each action to see our progression, and target resources if they are required.

The following pages detail these actions by TSM question topic.

ACTION PLAN

TSM	2024/25 target	Action No.	Proposed action	Team	Timeframe
Complaints handling	31%	1	Feedback survey about how a complaint was handled to be sent to tenants upon conclusion of a complaint	Complaints Handling	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		2	Regular analysis and learning from complaints feedback to be reported internally and externally	Tenant Engagement, Complaints Handling	Ongoing from Q2 2024
		3	Complaints handling training to be scheduled for housing staff	All housing staff	Q2 2024
		4	Monitor complaint responses to meet designated timescales provided by Ombudsman (unless due to exceptional/circumstances agreed with complainant)	All housing staff relevant to specific complaint cases	Ongoing from Q2 2024
		5	Continued development of the Internal Complaints Handling Group. This is comprised of officers from across housing meeting regularly to case manage complaints effectively	Repairs, Neighbourhood Services, Tenant Engagement, Complaints Handling	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		6	Develop and conduct a tenant scrutiny panel to review anonymised complaints, and assess our application, processes and outcomes	Tenant Engagement	Annually from Q2 2024
		7	Raise awareness of how to make complaints, and our complaints handling process to tenants	Tenant Engagement, Comms Team	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		8	Officer attendance of HQN complaint handling virtual drop-ins. These meetings share advice and learning from complaints case studies	Complaints Handling	Fortnightly from Q2 2024
		9	Ensure timely completion and publishing of annual self-assessment against Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code	Housing Management, Complaints Handling	Annually from Q2 2024
		10	Assess viability of dedicated staff resource to deal with complaints within Housing team	Housing Management	Q2 2024

ACTION PLAN

TSM	2024/25 target	Action No.	Proposed action	Team	Timeframe
Anti-social behaviour (ASB)	53%	1	Provide clear tenant guidance and raise awareness on ASB services within Housing, including what to expect, what is classed as ASB, and timescales where possible. To be included in new tenancy information packs	Neighbourhood Housing, Tenant Engagement	Q2 2024
		2	Promoting and being active with other local organisations for Anti-Social Behaviour Week	Neighbourhood Housing, Tenant Engagement, CSU Team, Moat Housing	1st - 7th July 2024
		3	Training for Housing Officers on how to effectively handle cases involving ASB	Neighbourhood Housing	Ongoing from Q2 2024
		4	Feedback surveys about how ASB cases are handled to be sent to tenants upon conclusion/closure of a case	Tenant Engagement	Q2 2024
		5	Publish number of ASB cases and feedback results to tenants. Publish learnings from tenant feedback	Tenant Engagement, Neighbourhood Housing	Q2 2024
		6	Improve communication with tenants regarding updates to their case	Housing Digital, Neighbourhood Housing	Ongoing from Q1 2024

ACTION PLAN

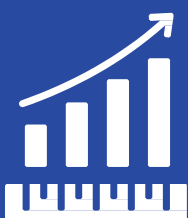
TSM	2024/25 target	Action No.	Proposed action	Team	Timeframe
Repairs	74%	1	Improve customer service levels and availability of staff for tenants to get in touch with the repairs team	Repairs	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		2	Transactional data for repairs performance and completed repairs feedback to be published, and learning shared internally/externally to drive better service	Repairs	Ongoing from Q2 2024
		3	Attendance at meetings and tenant engagement events, such as Estate Walkabouts, to share knowledge about repairs and challenges faced, and hear the experiences of tenants	Repairs, Tenant Engagement, Neighbourhood Housing	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		4	Explore additional reporting methods for repairs that might benefit tenants e.g. webchat	Repairs, Housing Digital	Q3 2024
		5	Provide visibility to tenants of estimated dates for planned maintenance and upgrading of bathrooms, kitchens, roofs, and double-glazing	Planned Maintenance, Housing Digital	Q3 2024
Time to repair	67%	1	Improve efficiency for repairs job allocation. Fix first time/ appropriate trade sent to jobs	Repairs	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		2	Monitor adherence to average time taken to attend repairs and notice given to tenants for appointments	Repairs	Ongoing from Q1 2024

ACTION PLAN

TSM	2024/25 target	Action No.	Proposed action	Team	Timeframe
Listens to and acts on upon tenant views	58%	1	Publish results of Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSMs), and ensure feedback from those that were happy to provide details in survey is followed up by relevant teams	Tenant Engagement, Repairs, Neighbourhood Housing	Q2 2024
		2	Roll out new Tenant Engagement Strategy to set out ways and methods that tenants can engage with Housing, to enable us to hear and act upon views	Tenant Engagement	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		3	Promote and report "You Said, We Did" with tenants in newsletters, annual report, web, and social media, to let them know what we are doing based on their feedback	Tenant Engagement, Comms	Ongoing from Q1 2024
		4	Ensure information regarding tenants is up to date, to ensure that we are tailoring services to their needs and have correct contact information for the next annual satisfaction survey	All Housing	Ongoing from Q1 2024
Positive Neighbourhood Contribution	61%	1	Estate action days - litter picks, grounds maintenance	Tenant Engagement, Neighbourhood Housing	Summer 2024 onwards
		2	Promote tenant contribution in Estate Walkabouts (inspections), becoming estate champions (Estate Mates), and improving engagement with those that have communal and shared areas	Tenant Engagement, Neighbourhood Housing	Ongoing from Q1 2024

CONCLUSION

The Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey and TSM scores set a tangible base for tenants, the Regulator, and Housing, to track how we are performing.



MEASURE

We must continue to ask tenants what they want from our services and how we can do better.

UTILISE

We must use the valuable information provided by tenants in the TSM survey to galvanise a plan of action.



IMPROVE

Plans must lead to improvements in tenant satisfaction, helping us to be a landlord with happier tenants in better homes.

TSM SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. [TP01] Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Ashford Borough Council?

1a If very satisfied probe "Why would you say you are satisfied?"

1b If Fairly satisfied or Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied probe "What could Ashford Borough Council do to make you satisfied?"

1c If fairly or very dissatisfied probe "Why would you say you are dissatisfied?"

2. [TP02 qualifier] Has Ashford Borough Council carried out a repair to your home in the last 12 months?

Yes (Go to Q3)

No (Go to Q5)

3. [TP02] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall repairs service from Ashford Borough Council over the last 12 months?

4. [TP03] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it?

4b Do any of the repairs you have reported in the last 12 months still need work doing to complete them?

If Yes (Go to Q4c)

No (Go to Q5)

Not applicable/don't know (Go to Q5)

4c Please can you briefly give more detail on this?

5. [TP04] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council provides a home that is well maintained?

6. [TP05] Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council provides a home that is safe?

7. [TP06] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council listens to your views and acts upon them?

8. [TP07] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council keeps you informed about things that matter to you?

9. [TP08] To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following "Ashford Borough Council treats me fairly and with respect"?

10. [TP09 qualifier] Have you made a complaint to Ashford Borough Council in the last 12 months?

Yes (Go to Q11)

No (Go to Q12)

TSM SURVEY QUESTIONS

11. [TP09] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Ashford Borough Council's approach to complaints handling?
12. [TP10 qualifier] Do you live in a building with communal areas, either inside or outside, that Ashford Borough Council is responsible for maintaining?
- Yes (Go to Q13)
 - No (Go to Q14)
 - Don't know (Go to Q14)
13. [TP10] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council keeps these communal areas clean, and well maintained?
14. [TP11] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that Ashford Borough Council makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?
15. [TP12] How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Ashford Borough Council's approach to handling anti-social behaviour?
- 15a. Within the last 12 months have you reported an incident of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) to Ashford Borough Council?
- 16.[extra question] How would you like to be kept informed about things that matter to you as a tenant? Please tick all that apply
- Articles on the council's website (www.ashford.gov.uk)
 - Messages on the Tenant Portal (www.ashford.gov.uk/tenants-portal)
 - Tenant newsletters and bulletins
 - Emails
 - Phone calls
 - Letters
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Other, please state below
 - None of the above (single choice)
17. Finally, would you be interested in getting more involved to help improve the housing service? This could be by joining a formal group, or more informal methods such as giving us your feedback via surveys we send you.
- Yes – please provide your contact details and a member of the engagement team will get in touch
 - Name and Email address fields: (if yes)
 - No
- [contact] Are you happy for Ashford Borough Council Housing & Support to contact you in relation to the feedback that you have given during this survey, if Ashford Borough Council wish to do so?
- Yes
 - No

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all tenants that took part in our annual tenant satisfaction survey. Your views and feedback help us improve our services.

CONTACT

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