

Housing Services

End of year performance report
1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

Digital Annual Report to residents

Welcome and introduction Councillor Emily Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Welcome to our annual report to residents, which sets out how we performed during 2023/24, along with our main achievements across the course of the year.

Involvement from our tenants is so important to us. We are incredibly grateful to our residents who have given up their time, working with us to help shape housing services. More recently a group of residents played a significant role in sharing their experiences and working tirelessly with us to procure our new repairs contractor, Breyer, a huge thank you to you all.

Over the last year, we have delivered our first affordable new homes built for social rent at Arun House and Ribble House in Chessington.

Despite various challenges, we have also found ways to continue delivering services and investing in your homes by spending on repairs, maintenance, and improvements. This included replacing kitchens, bathrooms and improving insulation levels as part of our long-term strategy to make your homes as energy efficient as possible. Additionally, we have focused on fire and building safety in line with new legislation and continue to work on cases of damp and mould.

The cost of living crisis continues to be very real for many of us, and it is a really worrying time as our energy, fuel and food prices are at a high. Our Financial Inclusion Fund continued to support residents this year, providing direct financial assistance to people who needed it, as well as more one-to-one support, helping people to manage their money, claim all the benefits they were eligible for and access advice and services from other trusted partners.

This report shares with you our tenant satisfaction measures, and over the last year 69% of our tenants feel they are treated fairly and with respect. We want our tenants and leaseholders to feel valued, listened to, and confident that we're acting on their views. That's why we have developed many ways to get involved from participating in focus groups, leading events and activities, reviewing and scrutinising draft proposals, and keeping tenants and leaseholders informed of service changes and initiatives. If you want to help us improve the housing services, please email involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk to find out more.

I look forward to the year ahead and welcome the opportunity to work and engage with many more of you to improve services further.

Best regards, Councillor Emily Davey

Our Vision and Priorities

Wale Adetoro - Assistant Director Homes

I am pleased to be writing to you, as there has been a lot going on across our Housing Services in Kingston over the past year, as well as some important changes and improvements.

July 2023 saw the publication of the new Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, which requires all social housing landlords to meet new standards. From April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing will inspect all social housing landlords, which includes councils, every four years. We will be assessed against a new core set of consumer standards, which includes new tenant satisfaction measures. The new tenant satisfaction measures use a standard set of questions which make it easier to compare different providers and highlight where we should concentrate our efforts. Please do take the time to engage with our survey provider, providers Acuity, if they get in touch - your views are important.

Local residents have also played a crucial role this year, particularly in selecting Kingston Council's new repairs provider. After undertaking a robust procurement process, the council awarded the Breyer Group the contract for housing repairs, maintenance and capital works contract covering more than 6,000 properties.

What this means for residents is the Breyer Group will be:

delivering a 24/7 responsive repairs service

providing an average of 16,850 home repairs each year

reducing the carbon footprint of properties

improving home insulation to enhance heating efficiency

offering local apprenticeships and work placements

remediating damp and mould issues

Finally, We still have challenges to overcome in the year ahead including managing the provision of temporary accommodation, which we will continue to work hard to improve.

Best regards

Wale Adetoro

Resident Engagement

Kingston Councils ambition is to include as many residents in all aspects of the Housing Service: commissioning and designing services, selecting contractors, monitoring performance, telling us what works well and what needs to improve.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact the council on **020 8547 5000** or email involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk to find out more.

Tea with the Mayor

Residents involved in our housing services were treated to a special tea with the Mayor, Cllr Diane White, who praised their commitment and involvement: " Our tenants play a vital role in supporting improvements across the housing service and feel listened to in council decisions."

If you would like to become involved in the housing service and hold the council to account, we are launching a range of groups that you may want to join. For more information contact the council on 020 8547 5000 or email involvedinhousing@kingston.gov.uk to find out more or see more details on page

Scrutiny

A positive example of tenants influencing what we do is when earlier this year tenants were at the heart of the project to choose a provider for the next 10 years of repairs and maintenance services for all council tenants and leaseholders.

Following a groundbreaking resident engagement initiative, Kingston Council awarded a £163 million housing repairs and maintenance contract to Breyer Group. Over 180 residents actively

participated in the process, with a dedicated group of resident evaluators selecting the best company for the job. This resident-led approach, involving the review of over 540 documents, ensured resident voices were heard and shaped the future of Kingston's council housing. The new contract with Breyer Group started on 1 October 2024.

Key Points:

- **Resident Involvement:** Over 180 residents, including dedicated evaluators, actively participated in selecting Breyer Group, shaping the future of their homes through the review of over 540 documents.
- **Resident Focus:** Resident-led decision making played a key role in selecting Breyer Group, and ongoing resident engagement remains a priority.

“For me, being part of a Scrutiny Team that endeavours to bring us all better Housing Services is not only time well spent but also an enjoyable experience and just so worthwhile.” Jackie Paddon, Scrutiny Member

Staff Recognition

Housing staff involved in the re-procurement process were also celebrated at an internal council awards event in June, acknowledging their hard work and collaboration with residents.

Kingston in Bloom

In the summer we launched a Kingston in Bloom Gardening Competition for all council tenants and leaseholders to participate in. We had over 80 entries and saw some amazingly well kept gardens across our council estates. Thank you and well done to everyone who submitted an entry. Judges assessed entries from 3 categories.

In November 2023 the winners of the competition were announced:

Estate Spring Cleans

An early spring clean up took place with housing officers, residents and our repairs contractor at the time, Axis. We know that lots of residents take real pride in their local area and want to see where they live kept clean, tidy and at its best.

That's why we arranged clean ups in Cambridge Gardens and Kingsnympton Estates in March. Both estates had a skip delivered for additional waste removal and extra litter picks took place.

Together

New homes and Regeneration

We welcomed residents into their new homes this year at Ribble House and Arun House.

These modern and sustainable homes are the first new council homes to be built in a generation in the borough.

The Francis Moseley Awards

The Francis Moseley Awards is an annual ceremony, celebrating the unsung heroes of our diverse community. The awards recognise the vital hard work carried out by residents, and shine a spotlight on the projects that are taking place in the borough that are making a positive impact.

This year's winners are:

- Cambridge Road Estate Community Board
- Poorvi Mehta
- Ayshwarya Madhureshan
- Keith Thomas
- Kate Kenyon - RBKares
- Jill Preston – CREst

Rent Collection

Rent Collected

97.4%

Thank you to all our residents paying their rent on time. We continue to work with residents to support the reduction of arrears.

We know the cost of living continues to impede residents. We would like to thank our residents for working with us to achieve low arrears for the year.

Financial Inclusion

The council's Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) provides holistic and tailored financial inclusion support for council tenants to help sustain their tenancies.

They provide support to council tenants in rent arrears, tenants signing up to a new tenancy and to those who have made a new application to Universal Credit.

Total income generated by FIT

Income maximisation - benefits £92,976

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit £105,986

Household Support Fund delivered £14,680

You can contact FIT on **020 8547 5591** or email: **financialinclusion@kingston.gov.uk**

Fairer

Financial Inclusion Case Study

Mr T was referred to the Financial Inclusion Team in January 2024 as he was struggling financially and was behind with his rent payments.

Mr T is a 39 year old single male living in RBK Bed & Breakfast accommodation and his 8 year old son stays with him half the week and worked up until December 2023. Due to both physical and mental health conditions he had to leave.

Mr T made a new claim for Housing Benefit from the date he became officially unemployed in Dec 2023 however his income had been significantly lower due to sick pay since July 2023.

The Financial Inclusion Team was able to draft a Housing Benefit reconsideration and submit this alongside supporting documents and as a result a Housing Benefit underpayment of £5,767.82 was applied to his rent account on 26/03/2024 significantly reducing his rent arrears.

We completed a new Personal Independence Payment claim with Mr T in March 2024. As a result of this in May 2024 he was awarded PIP Enhanced daily living amount for a total of 4 years, meaning over this time his income would increase by a total of £21,164.

Since Mr T was referred to the Financial Inclusion team we have secured a significant amount in welfare benefits entitlement.

The Team continues to support Mr T with his Universal Credit Medical assessment application and outcome.

Vacant Homes

When a council tenancy ends, the property becomes vacant and the council will ensure it is checked and fit for purpose for new tenants to move in.

There are a number of reasons why our properties are sometimes vacant for longer than we would like, including:

- Vacant properties waiting to be demolished - for example Cambridge Road Estate - these will stay empty until demolition.
- Older people accommodation - these often have shared facilities, such as bathrooms, which aren't always attractive to new tenants. We are working on how we can make improvements to these properties.
- Sometimes properties aren't in the best condition when a tenant leaves for many reasons, including general wear and tear and the age of the building. Certain checks need to be done and if major works are needed, this can take longer.
- Unfortunately, in some cases properties haven't been looked after and will require a lot of time and work to bring them back to standard. If the property has been vandalised, we will recharge the damages back to the tenant.
- We are working hard to improve the turnaround time of vacant homes in the borough, ensuring properties are worked on promptly and delays are reduced.
- Typical turnaround times are currently ranging from 6 weeks right up to 6 months depending what the property needs to bring it back up to standard.

Customer satisfaction with repairs

In February this year the Housing Ombudsman announced the NEW Code for complaint handling became statutory on 1st April 2024. The Ombudsman would like all landlords to have strong local complaint handling and a positive complaint handling culture – resolving complaints earlier.

Every quarter tenants are contacted and invited to take part in a telephone interview, these form our Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The survey is designed to collect the views of approximately 200 tenants per quarter.

Thank you from our residents

Thank you for the detailed letter regarding the missing tile from the roof. I am pleased to say that this was replaced just before Christmas. And also Axis have carried out other work to house next door - fixed leak and cleared garden.

Thank you again for your thorough investigation on this problem.

And a good outcome.

Get involved and make a difference.

Our resident engagement opportunities include:

- Housing Repairs Group
- Housing and Estate Services Group
- Scrutiny
- Housing for Older People

Complaints

Stage 1 Complaints

Housing Repairs	20 7
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Stage 2 Complaints

Housing Management	19
Housing Repairs	52

Ombudsman Complaints

There were 6 Ombudsman complaints during the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

We continue to encourage resident involvement.

We want to continue to inform residents about services and give them the opportunity to check and challenge how well the housing service is doing.

To get more involved in our resident housing groups [visit our website](#).

We will:

- Involve residents in decision -making processes over issues that affect them
- Support the development of residents associations
- Provide residents with a variety of methods to tell us what they think of the service
- Learn from complaints and make use of them to improve services.

How complaints are handled

The council views complaints as a crucial indicator that can drive positive change, manage risks, enhance resident insight and engagement, reduce the cost of failure, and demonstrate compliance.

The response timescales for complaints are defined by the Housing Ombudsman as follows:

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days.
- Response to Stage One Complaints within 10 working days.
- Response to Stage Two Complaints within 20 working days.

Some of our Service Improvements

- The Residents Scrutiny and Resident Repairs Group, continue to work with the council to improve services and levels of engagement. They are involved in performance monitoring of services and are able to influence policy and improvements.
- Visit residents in their homes or attend the estate wherever possible to gain an understanding of the situation.
- To build on positive complaint handling by tracking complaints, resolutions and having greater accountability by formal monitoring and reporting.
- Checking in with the customer on a regular basis to establish progress is being made or resolution has been agreed.
- Lessons learnt protocol implemented.
- Training for all officers.

Home Improvements

Nearly 600 improvements have been delivered by our team this year from energy-saving and damp measures to new kitchens and bathrooms and adaptations to meet tenants needs.

If you are a council tenant, you can carry out major home improvements with our written permission. We encourage you to maintain and improve your home. Details to support this can be found [here](#).

327 homes received new energy efficient boilers

47 homes received new windows

47 homes have received new kitchens

41 homes have received new bathrooms

Adaptations

66 homes have been adapted to meet the tenant's needs

Occupational therapy (OT) can help support you if you're living with illness, old age, frailty or disability.

If you're finding it difficult to do daily tasks and activities, our occupational therapists can give you advice or assess you for practical help like equipment or adaptations to your home.

Details can be found [here](#).

7 buildings have had improvements and renovations to communal parts

Greener

The Housing Service continues to support a greener Kingston - we have again delivered in the region of 500 council home improvements that bring energy saving benefits to our residents including new windows and doors and energy efficient boilers.

The council was awarded the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund which has enabled 9 properties to be completed with solar panels. Work on another 57 properties will be carried out later in 2024 with solar panels, external wall and proved ventilation. Kingston Council has no properties with any dangerous cladding.

Air Source Heating System installed

The council this year delivered a communal boiler replacement scheme (Large scale Air Source Heat Pump) at Four Oaks. The initiative, part of RBK's commitment to carbon reduction, includes a comprehensive overhaul of the heating infrastructure, installation of solar panels, new radiators, and modern control systems. This work enhances energy efficiency, reduces CO₂ emissions, and improves resident comfort with easy-to-use wall-mounted controllers. This project exemplifies RBK's shift towards sustainable heating solutions, prioritising greener energy alternatives and fostering partnerships for a more eco-friendly future.

Business assurance and compliance

We are legally required to carry out compliance checks on your homes to ensure we comply with all relevant legislation and requirements as a landlord.

Health & Safety inspections 100%

Gas Safety 100%

Electricity Safety 90.35%

Fire Safety Inspection 100%

Cases where we have not been able to achieve 100% compliance are primarily because we have not been able to gain access to the property. We strongly encourage all residents to allow access to ensure the safety of their home.

Other areas of compliance:

Fire safety equipment

Emergency lighting

Lightning conductor testing

PAT testing

Lift servicing

Asbestos surveys

Water monitoring

100% complete

Safer

Kingston is one of the safest boroughs and we are committed to making it even safer for everyone. Councils have a duty to ensure that buildings under their control comply with appropriate legislation and corporate standards.

Damp and Mould

RBK treats each household with respect and works to ensure that the accommodation that is provided is free from serious hazards, including damp and mould and that homes are livable.

We will treat cases of damp and mould seriously, to protect tenants' health and wellbeing.

If you are suffering with damp or mould in your council home please contact our repair service to book an appointment to have this assessed

Your Views:

Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2023/24

Listening to residents is a priority and we use your views to influence service delivery.

In telephone surveys required by the Regulator of Social Housing, over the last 12 months you have told us that you are not always satisfied with the service you receive from Kingston Council.

This specific question focused on how happy you are with the way Kingston Council's Housing Services maintains your homes and delivers key services.

Across three waves (May 2023, November 2023 and February/March 2024), many of you took part in the survey. A sample of tenants were invited to take part through either a telephone interview or online questionnaire.

We want to do better and are putting in place an action plan to respond to this feedback.

1,085 tenants took part out of a total of 4,206* (981 by telephone and 104 online)

Overall Satisfaction 63%

Around **six out of ten tenants** are satisfied with the overall service provided by Kingston Council's Housing Services.

The table below shows a national and local comparison of our results for overall satisfaction with the housing service.

You can view the full survey results here [now live](#).

Regulatory requirements

Housing Services is now a Regulated Service from 1 April 2024.

We are regulated by the [Regulator of Social Housing \(RSH\)](#) and their website shares the consumer standards we are expected to achieve.

England comparison median 69.8%

London Boroughs 59%

How every penny in the £ is spent

Pie chart

Thanks for reading!

For further details on housing visit our website:
www.kingston.gov.uk/housing-regeneration