

# Customer Annual Report 2021

JANUARY 2021 - DECEMBER 2021



# A transformational year for Sage Homes



2021 has been an exciting and productive year for Sage Homes, despite the economic and social challenges we've all faced. Throughout the year we continued growing successfully as a business and we delivered 3,287 affordable homes across 179 sites.

I'm very proud of all our colleagues who have worked so hard to keep us focused and on course, despite the challenges of Covid-19 and economic uncertainty. Throughout it all, they've remained entirely focused on serving you – our customers.

This year, the Board and I spent time looking at our strategy and how we set the tone for Sage Homes. We considered our purpose and created new values, rooted within our own culture and drawn from our colleagues' insight. The new purpose, mission and values reflect the spirit of our people and the future direction of Sage Homes. They capture the importance of our customers to us and create a high standard for us to live up to.

In 2021 we put you first. Our projects included improving customer experience and delivery, investing in customer technology, and continuing to develop our partnerships. We also added more talent to our leadership team with Lucian Smithers, Chief Customer Officer. Lucian keeps us

prioritising customer service and making sure you stay at the top of our agenda.

During the year we partnered with Optivo, one of the country's largest housing associations to provide 420 new affordable homes that we'll own and Optivo will manage. This is part of our work changing how for-profit Registered Providers partner with central and local government and traditional housing associations.

This year we appointed a Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality (SHEQ) director to make sure our processes and procedures are as up-to-date and relevant as possible.

In 2021 we focused on new ways for customers to feedback to our Board. We started the Customer & People Committee while our Customer Scrutiny Panel is chaired by Cedi Frederick. This allows customers to have a powerful voice, helping us improve products and services at Sage Homes.

I want to say thank you to all our colleagues, our Board and our investors who have driven our achievements across this last year, and thank you to you – our customers – who continue to inspire and motivate us to provide comfortable, safe homes across the country.

**Alison Thain OBE**  
Chair



## A busy year filled with real change



2021 was an extremely busy year for Sage Homes. I was lucky enough to start as Chief Customer Officer in April and since then we've made great strides in understanding our customers better and meeting your needs.

A key part of supporting you better has been understanding your needs and frustrations. This year we created the Customer Scrutiny Panel, hearing your unfiltered voice and getting real insight into the communities our customers build. We also mapped out the customer journey from beginning to end, looking at where we're getting it right and where we can improve.

As a result of these findings we have started taking action on things that weren't working. One complaint was that our website was tricky to navigate, so we created a new homepage along with a helpful digital assistant who can communicate in multiple languages. Another recurring comment was around our defects processes being slow and confusing. We hired more people into our defects team and introduced Clifix – a digital tool that lets you have more control over the defects process, in real-time. We also simplified our complaints process, significantly reducing the time it takes for us to reply.

During 2021, we've also started laying the groundwork for more developments in the coming years. We created the Customer Improvement Plan, finding and targeting the areas we need to improve. We're also carrying out extensive work on our brand, reshaping how we speak to our customers and examining how accessible our communications are. Above all, this work is making sure we keep you, our customer, at the heart of everything we do.

We're making real progress but we've still got a long way to go. In 2021, we transformed how we work with you, our customers, and meeting your needs. We're continuing this work into the next year to meet our bold ambitions.

**Lucian Smithers**  
Chief Customer Officer

## OUR SURVEY RESULTS

# Improving how we talk to you

We sent all our customers a survey to find out how you like interacting with us and how we can improve. We found that...

### Only



**10%** SHARED OWNERSHIP

**11%** RENTAL CUSTOMERS

Customers like receiving paper communications

### And



**34%** SHARED OWNERSHIP

**57%** RENTAL CUSTOMERS

Customers are happy with our current online service

We hear you loud and clear. We want to share information with you, in the way you want to get it. We also found that...



**77%** SHARED OWNERSHIP

**71%** RENTAL CUSTOMERS

Customers like communicating with us by email

### And



**79%** SHARED OWNERSHIP

**80%** RENTAL CUSTOMERS

Customers want to talk to us using a mobile app

These results have shown us you want to communicate digitally, so we're focusing on our digital offering. We've redesigned our website homepage, adding a useful chatbot, so that it's more user-friendly.

### Looking ahead

In late 2021 we started a new project: redesigning the whole website to make it more user-friendly and accessible. This work will finish in 2022, alongside constant exploration of technology we can introduce to improve how we communicate with you.

**Got ideas on how we can improve the way we talk to you?**

Email us on  
**CustomerComms@  
sagehomes.co.uk**

## REPAIRS

# Keeping you safe

You deserve to feel safe in your home. At Sage Homes, your safety is of the utmost importance to us. Our compliance team works hard to make sure all fire and gas safety checks are carried out by qualified experts.

We've introduced new compliance technology, making sure we have real-time tracking of safety checks. We know when upcoming checks are needed and carry these out well within the required time limit.

We've recently doubled our compliance team, making sure we have plenty of resource to manage your home's safety carefully and safely. That's why in 2021:



### FIRE SAFETY

Shared ownership	Rental blocks
<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
of applicable homes checked for fire safety	

### GAS SAFETY

**100%**  
of homes checked have  
valid certification

## Reporting defects easily

We introduced Clixifix in 2021, a user-friendly platform which lets you log, track and manage defects in your defect liability period (DLP).

### What's a defect?

A fault with your home because something's not been built as it should have. If you're within your DLP, you can log these in Clixifix and the developer will inspect them.

### What's a repair?

A fault with your home that's happened through wear and tear.

### RESPONSIVE REPAIRS COMPLETED IN TIME

**60%**

Covid-19 made it challenging to reach customers. In 2022, we're addressing this and averaging over 80% by June

# Why we've changed

In 2021, we began work on improving Sage Homes' communication with our customers, looking at our purpose, mission and values and re-focusing them on you. We have changed our name from Sage Housing to Sage Homes, reflecting the comfortable, warm homes we help our customers create.

Our new purpose as a company is to focus mainly on supporting our customers to find safe, stable homes and helping them to make the changes they want in their lives.



## OUR PURPOSE:

Providing homes  
Inspiring change  
Improving lives

## OUR MISSION:

We make good  
homes affordable  
for people all  
over England

## OUR VALUES:

### Home for everyone

Creating loved homes and a welcoming workplace.

### Powering positive impact

Creating safe and environmentally friendly places.

### Enterprising for growth

Combining entrepreneurial spirit and technical expertise.

We look forward to launching and embedding this across Sage Homes in 2022, adding a structure to the way we help our customers find comfortable, well-designed homes.

HAVE YOUR SAY

# You said, we did

Take a look at some of the work we've done to make sure we're always offering you the best service.

## You said:

You needed developers to reply faster about defects.

## We did:

Set up regular meetings with developers, made sure they replied within an agreed time period, and escalated issues where appropriate.

## You said:

Rent changes were putting you in arrears because direct debits weren't changed in time.

## We did:

Improved our communications around rent increases and started making proactive calls to customers who hadn't changed their direct debit details.

## You said:

There were issues around bin stores being full.

## We did:

Put in extra bin store clearances and checked with managers that estate management services are running properly.



## ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

86

Cases reported

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING

232

Complaints resolved

37%

Resolved at expression of dissatisfaction stage

55%

Resolved at stage 1

8%

Resolved at stage 2

0%

Escalated to Housing Ombudsman

## Being a Customer Scrutiny Panel member

Natalie, a civil servant, left her partner in 2014 taking her son with her and only £6.50 in her pocket. She was isolated from friends and family, without a home, belongings or furniture, and battling mental health issues.

Since then, she has rebuilt her life, found a home, achieved promotion at work and made sure her son had the support he needed. She has reconnected with friends and family and started counselling.

Now living in one of our homes, Natalie is a key member of our Sage Homes Customer Scrutiny Panel. She guides and advises us on what it is to be a Sage Homes customer and how we can make our services better. She's an incredibly valuable member of the Scrutiny Panel and we're very grateful for her time and knowledge.



**“Getting my Sage home had a massive impact on my mental health break down recovery; it’s so much better than where I lived before. My new home makes me feel safe and comfortable, and it has really helped me turn my life around.”**



Cedi Frederick, Chair of the Customer Scrutiny Panel

### Interested in joining our Customer Scrutiny Panel?

Our Customer Scrutiny Panel currently meet virtually four times a year to give thoughts, feedback and ideas on living in a Sage Homes property. Their work shapes the services we provide.

Our shared ownership customers are well represented on the panel, but we are looking for more customers who rent to join us. If you're interested, please email [CustomerPanel@sagehomes.co.uk](mailto:CustomerPanel@sagehomes.co.uk) for more information.



## Finding a high-quality home

Tom wanted to get onto the property ladder, with a high-quality home in a good area for him and his young daughter. After two and a half years renting, he was ready to create his own home.

Looking into the Sage Homes shared ownership properties, Tom bought his new home in Derby, finding a great home in the perfect location for him. He said “The Sage Homes team have been great throughout the process and beyond, really helpful and responsive, and if there’s been an issue it’s been dealt with quickly.”



### CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Shared ownership

**58%**

Our target:  
60%

Rental customers

**80%**

Our target:  
81%

We know we still need to meet our targets. We’ve changed how we communicate with you, finding out where we’re going wrong. Our new customer improvement plan will help us address these areas and improve your satisfaction with our service.



“Shared ownership has meant that I have a lovely home for my daughter... I would still be renting now if it wasn’t for this scheme.”

# Our environmental and social work at Sage Homes

## Supporting local communities

We love helping local communities to bring people together in creative activities, particularly those on low or no incomes. In 2021 we worked with the Essex Community Foundation to help Matipo Arts deliver four multi-arts workshops to kids aged 6 to 15.



We also donated £25,000 to Crossroads Derbyshire, with help from our investors Blackstone and Regis. The organisation helps young women aged 16-24 who've faced domestic abuse. The money we gave will help refurbish essential housing.

Sage Homes also donated £13,440 to Lifeshare, who work with homeless people in central Manchester. The money will be used to provide breakfast across the year. We also supported the Trussell Trust and Secret Angels who work to provide food parcels and combat the need for foodbanks.

## Going green at Sage Homes

Making sure Sage Homes acts in an environmentally-friendly way is important to us and we're proud to say that in 2021, 97% of our homes were Energy Performance Certificate rated A or B meaning they are particularly energy efficient. This energy efficiency means our customers can save an average of £460 compared to the average UK home.

We have also made sure that all communal spaces for our homes are on a green energy tariff, matching the energy we use with the same amount of renewable energy.



## 2022: Sage community fund

We are working to formalise our charity work, creating a single fund which will support people through financial help, supporting their communities and exploring opportunities for education and training.

# Our progress so far

# 30,000

homes delivered by 2030



In 2021, we increased the amount of affordable housing we're going to provide by 50%.

WE'RE INVESTING IN MORE HOMES TO MEET THE NATIONAL NEED

# £496m

investment in affordable homes (a 25% increase from the last year)



# 97%

of our homes rated Energy Performance Certificate A or B



# 1,818

new affordable rent homes let

# 1,404

shared ownership homes sold

HELPING PEOPLE TAKE THEIR FIRST STEPS INTO THEIR OWN HOME

Homes for those aged 15-34

# 65%

Shared ownership

# 43%

Rental customers

Grew by

# 123

colleagues in 2021



# 142

local authorities now work with Sage Homes

# Diversity and Inclusion at Sage Homes

Making sure we are welcoming to all cultures and walks of life is important to Sage Homes. We know that embracing different perspectives makes our policies and practices more powerful for our customers and colleagues alike.

At Sage Homes, we have the Sage Together employee advisory panel, made up of colleagues who give their time to help us be more inclusive. The Diversity and Inclusion sub-panel works throughout Sage Homes to provide information and host events on topics such as disability, Black History Month, religious festivals, and Pride Month. They also celebrate special days such as International Women's Day.

Making sure we are inclusive as an organisation begins from within, and we're working continually to promote diversity and inclusion among our colleagues, raising awareness of current issues and different cultural events.



“With a lot happening in our busy world, it can be easy to stop learning about each other’s cultures and backgrounds. Our work at Sage Homes makes sure we celebrate and learn about each other’s differences, using this knowledge to make our practices as inclusive as possible.”

Melinda Nyoko, Chair of Diversity and Inclusion sub-panel





## Contact us

Sage Homes are here for all our customers.  
If we can do things better, please let us know.

**Sage Homes**  
Orion House  
5 Upper St Martin's Lane  
Covent Garden WC2H 9EA

**Telephone:** 020 8168 0500  
**Email:** [enquiries@sagehomes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@sagehomes.co.uk)

Find out more online  
**[sagehomes.co.uk](http://sagehomes.co.uk)**

## Need this in a different language?

Potrzebujesz tego w innym języku?

इसे एक अलग भाषा में चाहिए?

ਇੱਕ ਵੱਖਰੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ?

**Braille and audio versions also available.**

Please email [CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk](mailto:CustomerComms@sagehomes.co.uk)