



Annual report to residents 2020



sage
housing

Chair statement

Welcoming you home throughout turbulent times, while building better communities for the future – Alison Thain, Sage’s chair, reflects on 2020:

No one could have foreseen how 2020 was to turn out, as Covid-19 made our work and home lives more challenging. Even with these difficulties, we stuck to our purpose providing a sense of stability to our residents, in top-quality homes, with services to match.

First and foremost, I want to say thank you to all our residents, for your support and understanding. And to the Sage team for guiding and managing the business throughout the time when Covid held England in its grip.

During the year we helped 758 households onto the housing ladder through our shared ownership sales programme. We kept growing, acquiring 2,160 new homes from developers, to keep the prospect of a great place to live within reach of those who need it most. We let 979 of them to tenants nominated by local authorities, taking people off council waiting lists. The rest are on offer to prospective new residents.

During the year, we signed agreements with our developers to deliver a further 2,163 homes. That brings the total number of homes in the Sage pipeline to 13,894.

In some areas our services were hit by the pandemic. Where this was the case, we have identified them and their impact and looked to make improvements. As we continue to develop, each annual report will contain more information about us and our performance in providing services for you.

Much of that depends on our close work with Places for People, who manage our homes for us. Like everyone, they had to re-organise their way of operating in times of lockdown and social distancing, with guidelines and even laws changing around us all. Even so, most requests were met efficiently.

Nonetheless, our compliance with landlord’s gas safety requirements stayed at 100% throughout.

Feedback has been very encouraging, with residents reporting that the initial contact, communications, and sign-up process are effective and easy to use.

We pride ourselves on our engagement with you, our residents. During 2020, when we could not meet in person, we gathered your views online and via Zoom. We continued to share a quarterly newsletter with you all. And our regular surveys found 87% of you were satisfied. Looking ahead we are delighted to announce that we have now set up our first Resident Scrutiny Panel and four of our residents will be joining our new Non-Executive Director,

Cedi Frederick to help us improve our services and ensure your voice is heard.

The Resident Scrutiny Panel and our newly formed Customer team will make sure we are more accountable to all residents in every decision we make.

This year is shaping up to be a more normal year in which we can say “welcome home” to more and more people.

Alison Thain OBE
Chair



Letting our homes

We entered 2020 in a strong position. We had 1,163 homes under our management and care.

We make sure we allocate homes in a way that is sensitive to individual circumstances, which helps us strengthen our relationship with local authorities. We let 979 new homes in the year, despite the disruption of the pandemic.

2020 in numbers:



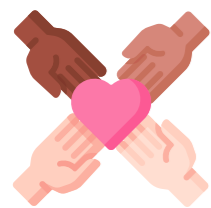
48%

of our homes were let to those in work



52%

of our homes were let to those not in employment



7%

of our homes were let to those of BAME origin



56%

of our homes were let to those aged 18-34, compared to the national average of 43%



64%

of our homes were let to households containing children under 16



86%

of our residents were satisfied with their moving-in experience

Housing services

By the end of 2020, there were 2,323 Sage homes rented out across England.

Rental units by region

East Midlands	358
East of England	771
Greater London	70
North West	220
South East England	662
South West England	63
West Midlands	138
Yorkshire & the Humber	41
Grand total	2,323

We work closely with Places for People (PfP) to manage them. PfP repair residents' homes, look after gas, fire and electrical safety and oversee other services. Our contract management team monitor all that, while service quality managers visit our sites regularly to ensure everything is working.



Find out more online
www.placesforpeople.co.uk

Key info

Rent arrears	4.6%
Number of anti social behaviour cases reported	78
Number of evictions	1

Ensuring homes are safe and well maintained

New homes

Our new properties are covered by guarantees from the housebuilder for a year. After that, Sage is responsible for repairs on the ones it rents out, but not for those in shared ownership. By the end of 2020, Sage had a total of 4,398 recorded

defects, of which 947 were closed. Most non-urgent repairs were on hold during the year due to the Covid restrictions, creating a backlog. It will be addressed as restrictions ease and is already significantly reduced in 2021.

Repairs

The pandemic and related restrictions hit Places for People's (PfP) response times throughout 2020. Consequently, of the 2,323 homes in management at the end of 2020, PfP raised and attended 1,183 responsive repairs, of which 95.44% were completed in time.

95.44%

Responsive repairs completed in time



Priority	No. jobs raised	No. completed in-time	Percentage completed in-time
Emergency (24hrs)	535	492	91.96%
Routine (28 Days)	648	637	98.30%
Total	1183	1129	95.44%

Safety and compliance

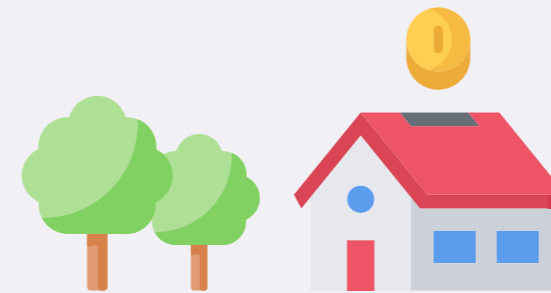
At the end of December 2020, we had 2,266 homes in management with gas installations. Each of these need an annual inspection. Places for People ensured 100% of all the required gas safety services were

completed despite the challenges of Covid. Sage carried out fire risk assessments on all the communal spaces in each of the 112 blocks under management.

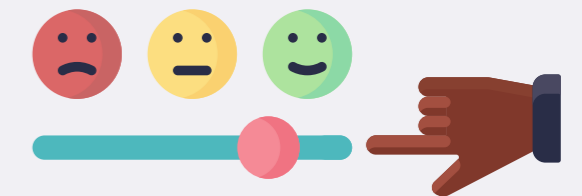
Value for money

We use the Value for Money Standard across our operations, to help make the most of our income and investment. That helps increase our number of homes and provide the highest level of service to our residents, while helping to control rents. The average rent per week in 2020 was £144.91 and in 2019 it was £136.46, an

increase of 6.19% During 2020, we also strengthened our customer experience team, appointing a Chief Customer Officer, to keep residents at the heart of what we do, especially during the disruption. Our customer satisfaction target for 2021 is 85% or better.



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Let us know what you think
Click Here to send us feedback

Listening to you

Giving our residents a voice is vital.

It helps our services improve and innovate, and it ensures we know what you need from us, helping us all work together. Our consultation in the spring of 2020 looked at seven specific ways we engage with our communities.

Resident responses to engagement proposals

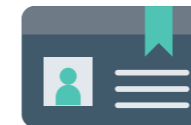
We asked, would you like...			% Tenants supporting	% SO supporting	% All residents supporting
1	Quarterly Newsletters 		67%	76%	69%
2	Involvement in generating ideas for the content of the newsletters 		17%	16%	17%
3	Taking part in occasional online Q&A meetings with managers and the CE 		25%	40%	28%
4	Completing survey questionnaires relating to services 		64%	67%	65%
5	Getting involved in testing new ideas for services 		49%	53%	50%
6	Becoming a local champion to help improve your scheme or estate 		20%	19%	20%
7	Joining the Sage 'member panel' and taking part in online discussions about changes or innovations to services 		19%	31%	22%

And so:



Quarterly newsletters

Quarterly newsletters are well underway, covering key topics, events and activities. The feedback has been positive. [Click here to see our latest newsletters.](#)



Member panel

We are working on setting up a Resident Scrutiny/Member Panel – we already have a small group of residents interested in being a part of this group, who will meet on a regular basis to discuss policy, complaints and services. [Click here to contact us and get involved.](#)



Regular surveys

Regular surveys are ongoing and already track lettings and shared ownership, moving in, defects and responsive repairs.

In October 2020, we held an informal resident consultation via Zoom on the management of our communal areas. Feedback received from customers was really positive:



“Thank you for organising the residents meeting. I found the PowerPoint presentation very helpful. It helped to focus us on where we are currently and where we would like to be in the future.”



“It’s reassuring to know that we have someone to talk to if we have any problems.”



“To involve tenants in policy and procedure reviewing is very positive and the right thing to do because we are the people who live here and therefore, we are the people who know what’s going on here and its us who need to know that the policies are fair and workable. Working together in partnership enables the tenants to have their say and take responsibility and ownership of their living conditions.”

Helping people into home ownership

During 2020, we helped...

758



purchasers make the first step onto the housing ladder with a shared ownership property.

76%



of shared owners were satisfied when moving into their new home, in this most challenging of years.

Our homes

We are growing our portfolio of shared ownership property, to bring affordable, quality homes within reach of more people. Our dedicated home ownership team can help you with information on

everything about becoming an owner, from welcome packs and lease queries, to granting permissions and helping you buy more of your home.

Services for shared owners

Much of that can now be done online, after we launched the “My Sage” portal in June. It allows easy access to documents, including guidance on leaseholds. It also helps our residents with what’s needed as shared owners, including setting up Direct

Debits, reporting defects and requesting repairs to communal areas. The portal proved popular, with 88% of shared owners signing up at least one household member to use it.

Visit the Shared Ownership portal
myhome.sagehousing.co.uk

Some useful terms about Shared Ownership

Shared Ownership

A system by which the occupier of a property buys a proportion of the property and pays rent on the remainder, typically to a local authority or Registered Provider (eg. housing association).

Staircase

A process where an owner of a Shared Ownership property purchases further shares of the property from the housing association who owns the remaining part.

Portal

A website allowing a customer immediate access to a business’s services and content via a user login

Direct Debit

An instruction from a person to their bank or building society authorising the organisation they want to pay to collect varying amounts from their account – but only if advance notice of the amounts and dates of collection is given.

Leasehold

Leasehold means that you own the property, but the land upon which the property is built is owned by the freeholder. This gives you the right to occupy the property for as long as the lease is valid. Freehold, on the other hand, means that you own the property and the land upon which the property stands.



What we have learned:

Through 2020, we continued to perform quarterly surveys. We included people who had used maintenance services via Places for People. Here is what we learned:



We also identified where you most wanted action on our estates and so we provided:

- CCTV to prevent fly tipping.
- Fencing to protect communal gardens.
- Additional bin and recycling stores.
- Better signage to ensure post is delivered correctly.
- Extra security lighting to alleyways and communal areas.
- Increased cycle storage.

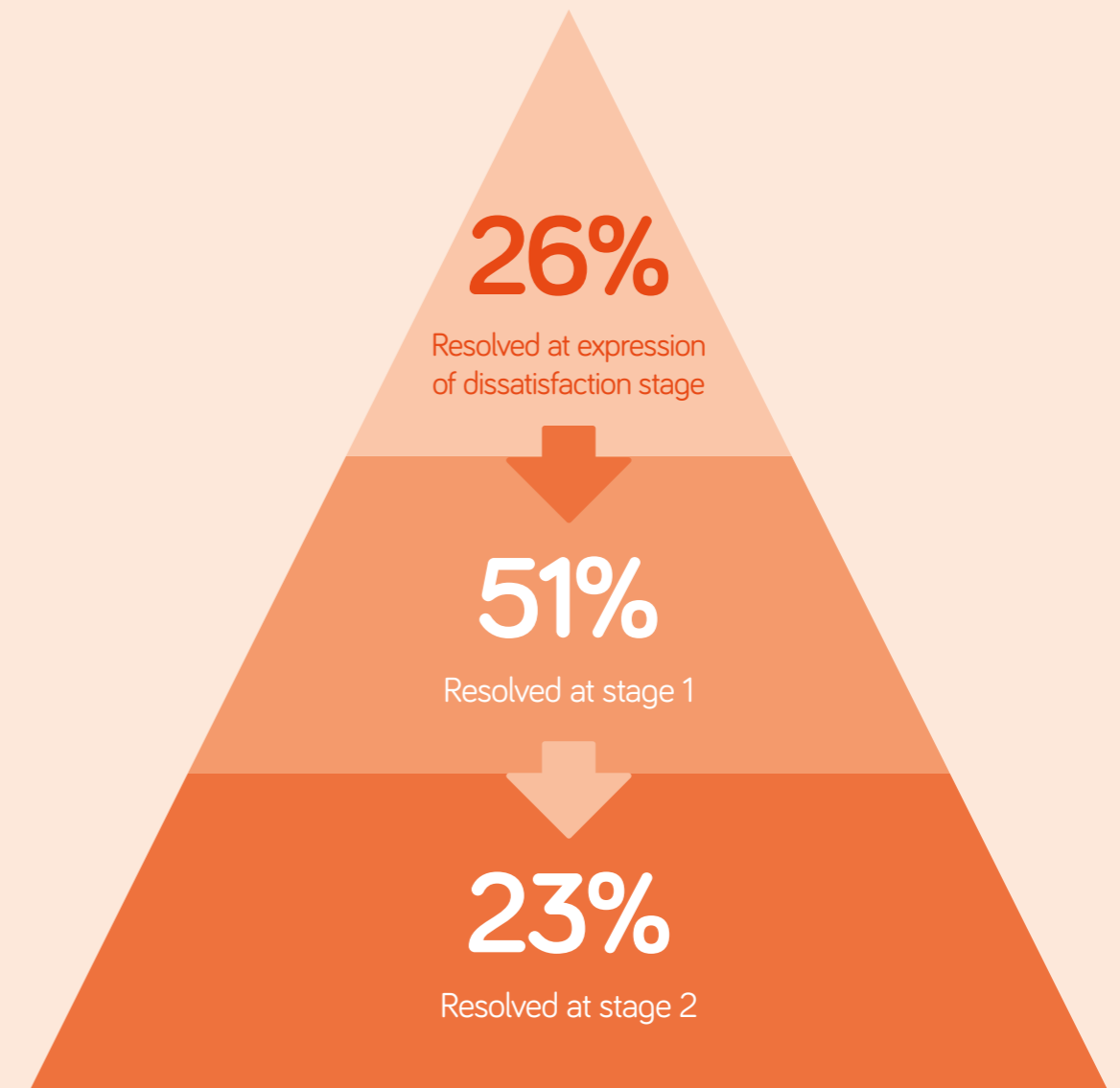
In 2021 we will be introducing a survey of people who had contacted Places for People for general enquiries to fully understand our services we provide to residents.

Complaints

When things go wrong, we are committed to putting them right, first time and fast. We have targeted times for responding to complaints and invested over the year in the people and processes needed to match our ambition for top-quality service.

In 2020, Sage and Places for People received a combined 35 complaints, and none of them were referred to the Housing Ombudsman.

The low number of complaints during 2020 was pleasing. But we will continue to track and follow up complaints so that our residents receive the best possible service.



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

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Find out more online

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