

ANNUAL REPORT 2018 - 2019



Promoting
Independent
Living



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Front cover image:
Customer Louise, with Care & Support staff member Khadija at the Rosedene Q Team visit

Inside front cover image:
Ian and Mark at the Waterlooville Q Team visit



Jane Harrison (Chair) Jeff Skipp (CEO)

Welcome

from our Chair, Jane Harrison and CEO, Jeff Skipp

Welcome to Ability Housing Association's annual report for 2018-2019. It's been a busy year with positive progress across our portfolio of services. We've pulled out some of the highlights here.

Update

During the year, we have implemented a new housing management structure, so that we focus support to our tenants and customers to help you maintain and increase your independence. By keeping the Housing and Support Officer to tenant ratios low, we have provided the staff resources to develop even stronger relationships with you, enabling us to engage with you better, and to make early interventions, minimising the need for formal actions and providing more tailored support.

Some 98% of our tenants received tenancy audits and property MOTs, which has helped resolve any issues early on, and we invested further in our planned and responsive maintenance provision. This includes Landlord Health & Safety and completing a five-year cycle of electrical testing.

We have also introduced a new property compliance officer role, alongside a new compliance management IT system to give us an even greater overview of health and safety conformity in real time.

In Care & Support, we have continued to focus attention on providing quality services to people with higher or more complex needs, who are the farthest away from community living. We have been able to reduce the amount of support hours some of these customers require, giving them more autonomy and control over their lives. This is against a continuing background of insufficient financial resources allocated to social care.

To deliver great services, we need great staff, so we have expanded our training to include Positive Behaviour Support, supporting people with Alzheimer's and palliative support, and increased management and leadership training for our supervisory staff, and the number staff who complete QCF Level 5 in Health and Social Care. This approach will help us retain the people we need to deliver the best possible provision for our customers.

Meanwhile, we have instigated a major overhaul of our ICT hardware and software, ensuring we are underpinned by a robust infrastructure; and introduced a new platform in housing, finance and care, that gives us transparent and real-time information and greater management insight, enabling timely decision making.

We also outsourced our payroll provision and implemented a new HR system, which are already having a beneficial impact on our business.

You'll find further information on these and many the other encouraging developments at Ability during the year in the pages of this report.

Our Highlights

Customer surveys for both Care & Support and Housing

We are always interested to find out what you think of our services and how we are doing delivering them. Therefore, we sent out our annual survey forms earlier in the year with a series of questions that we asked you to complete.

We have received an excellent response from you, and we are now compiling and analysing the responses. Once we have completed this, we will review what you are telling us and report back to you in the next copy of 'Windows' magazine.

Some of our customers told us:

"I feel much better since being supported by Ability Housing. I like the service."

"I'm very happy with the service you provide. Please keep it up. Thanks a lot."



Q Team Visits

Ability's Q Team carried out the following visits in 2019:

- Loddon Court, Reading on the 8th August 2019
- Yew Tree Lodge, Ruislip on the 5th September 2019
- Rosedene, Woking on the 3rd October 2019
- Across our three services in Waterlooville on 15th November 2019



Q Team visit at Loddon Court



Chris at Yew Tree Lodge Q Team inspection

This provided a great opportunity to speak to customers and their families about their opinions on the level of support they receive, and any improvements that needed to be made will be followed up on and implemented by the Service Manager/ Team Leaders.



Loddon Court

Tenders

We successfully won our retenders in both the London Borough of Merton and Hillingdon areas to continue to deliver Care & Support services. As part of the Hillingdon tender, we have launched an Out of Hours Telephone Support Service for customers.

[see page 10 for more information]

Your Home



Keeping you safe and happy in your homes is of vital importance to us, so we have been making further improvements to our housing and property teams and services that we supply to you

Property Services Team

In 2019, we grew our in-house Property Services Team to strengthen the oversight and management of services and began preparation work for new IT systems, collecting and collating more data about our properties in order to improve our business processes.

Health & Safety

We continued our focus on Landlord Health & Safety, strengthening the team, reviewing policies and procedures and bringing in a specialist compliance management IT system.



Contractors BCHA

Electrics

We completed the move to a five-year cycle for electrical installation safety inspections and created a new post of Property Compliance Co-ordinator, who was recruited in the autumn of 2019, in order to centralise the administration of property compliance work. The new Housing and Support Officer team provide additional support to monitor and manage Landlord Health & Safety work, including fire safety inspections.

Facts & Figures:



of homes gained gas safety certificates.



of housing stock have had a tenancy audit/property MOT.

Repairs

Last year, we prioritised implementing a new model of service delivery for our property management and repairs service, better adapted to our geographical spread and to the needs of our customers.

We moved away from a single provider to establish our own supply chain of a small number of regionally-based main contractors for responsive repairs and void refurbishment work, supported by other specialist service providers.



This has included a project management resource to deliver planned maintenance, such as the replacement windows and doors at Balfour Drive in Liss, Hampshire.



New windows and doors at Balfour Estate in Liss, Hampshire

Plans for 2019 - 2020:

- We will continue to develop the new housing management structure to provide focused tenancy sustainment support to meet tenants' needs.
- The Housing and Support Officers will continue to work more closely with the Property Team, assisting with Health & Safety inspections, including fire safety and asbestos condition re-inspections, and working with tenants, to ensure that timely access is provided to their homes.
- We measured housing tenant satisfaction with the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) in the autumn of 2019. This format allows Ability to benchmark our performance as a housing association against other providers using the same process. Ultimately, the survey results will help us to further improve our service provision to our tenants.

Your Tenancy

Housing and Tenancy Management Services 2018-2019

Team Structure

Last year we reported that we would be implementing a new housing management structure to provide more intensive tenancy sustainment support for our tenants and residents.

This team is now in place:

We recruited six Housing and Support Officers, regionally-based, plus a central Lettings and Project Officer.

The new recruits have brought to the team a wealth of previous experience in property and housing management, including hostels, supported and sheltered housing, local authority and housing associations, student accommodation and the private rented sector. Two were promoted internally, previously working as Supported Housing Assistants, and we are supporting them to gain a Chartered Institute of Housing professional qualification in housing practice.



Wishbone Way



Housing Team as of July 2019

Plans for 2019 - 2020:

- Tenant engagement will also be strengthened by working with the proposed volunteer Housing Representatives, who will be tenants working alongside our Housing and Support Officers. This initiative is in its early stages and we hope to progress with this in 2020.

- We are also implementing a new housing management IT system, called Pyramid, which will continue to roll out into 2020. This will allow for the capture and management of comprehensive property and repairs data, leading to further service improvements.

The Housing Survey - What you told us:

“This property is ideal for disabled tenants with good access, good bathroom and kitchen.”

“We have always loved every minute we have lived here; our little house is our palace. Thank-you.”

“Repairs are slow.”

Estate Inspections

Your Housing and Support Officers have prioritised home visits and estate/scheme inspections getting to know their customers and properties.

Tenancy Audits

The team has completed tenancy audits/property MOTs for 98% of our stock, with the aim of ensuring properties continue to meet our tenants' needs. The new central Lettings and Project Officer post has resulted in significant progress in letting our empty properties, work which will continue into next year.



Balfour Estate in Liss, Hampshire



Window condensation

Plans for 2019 - 2020:

- Over the coming twelve months, we will continue to develop the new housing management structure to provide focussed tenancy sustainment support.

- We will continue to develop and maintain strong relationships with customers and to build relationships with Care & Support providers and other networks.

Involving You

Working with our customers so that you can live more independently

Hillingdon Services Overview

Hayes Park Lodge Short-term supported housing



Within the London Borough of Hillingdon Ability provide services including supported living, short-term supported housing, floating support and residential care.

Our Hillingdon services are based at Hayes Park Lodge, Hamlet Lodge and Sessile Court. Each provides person-centred support, helping customers to make informed choices and achieve their aspirations, and ensure their safety and wellbeing, working in partnership with families and agencies.

This includes support in areas including; daily living skills, and budgeting; education, training, voluntary work and employment; healthcare appointments; leisure and culture; accessing the community; building relationships; repairs; health and safety and wellbeing; and drug and alcohol support/signposting.

We also run our mental health and wellbeing services at Hayes Park Lodge, Hamlet Lodge, Sessile Court, a Mental Health Floating Support Service and launched an out of hours Telephone Support Service in December 2019.

Hamlet Lodge Short-term supported housing



Out Of Hours Telephone Support Service

The Telephone Support Service is for current customers and those who have previously received support from our Hillingdon Floating Support service only, who may be in crisis or at a risk of crisis, and may feel unable to cope and need reassurance and guidance.

The Telephone Support Service hours operates between: Monday to Friday 5pm to 8am and 24 hours on Saturdays and Sundays.

The telephone service will initially be operated by staff. Next year, customers will be trained and supported, so that they can provide help and guidance to customers over the phone.

Customers have been accessing the service when they have felt they would like additional support, outside of their normal supported hours.

Sessile Court Short-term supported housing



Promoting Independent Living

Telephone number: 0808 196 2148



www.ability-housing.co.uk

Waterlooville Services Q Team Visit

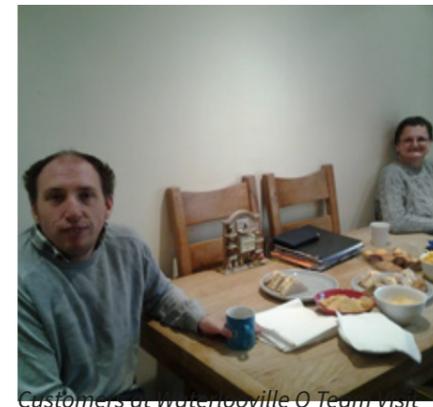
Customers at the Waterlooville services based at Stakes Road, Orsmund Close and Golden Court, took part in a Q Team visit in November 2019.

Below is some of what they told us:

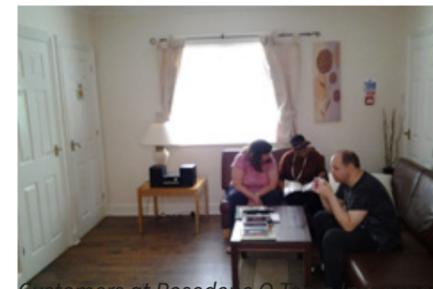
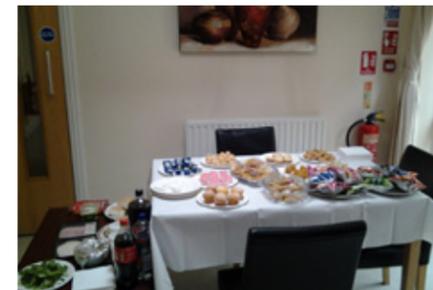
"I speak to staff and tell them what things I'd like to do."

"I like it [here], but want to be more independent and get my own flat."

"I'd like to do voluntary work at a charity shop."



Customers at Waterlooville Q Team visit



Customers at Rosedene Q Team inspection

Rosedene customers say what they think:



Angie

"Personal care. Staff take me out if I want to go dancing or listening to bands."



Andrew

"I like living here. Treated good by the staff."



Wendy

"I'm happy living here. I have made friends with people."



Tom

"I get listened to. I speak to staff if I'm not happy."



Louise

"I like the staff. I have a nice room."

Your Support

Supporting independent living

Care & Support

Ability Care & Support delivers services in seven local authority areas in England and supports our customers to live independently in the community. Our services include 'step down' mental health, supported living, community support in peoples own homes and residential care, and we support people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health.

Due to the consequences of the funding shortfall experienced by local authorities, commissioning now focuses on people with more complex needs, and so Ability Care & Support has had to adapt to this demand by evolving our services to support people who have more complex needs that require higher packages of care and bespoke support. This will ensure that Ability will remain relevant in a changing social care landscape, provide a viable business model which is financially sustainable and fits with our value of supporting independence.



Birthday party at Fiddlers Green

Quality

Ability Care & Support has five registered CQC locations to ensure we deliver quality services for the customers who use our services to make certain that we are the provider of choice, and have systems and processes in place to deliver good quality Care & Support that is safe, supports customers to achieve their aspirations and wellbeing and facilitates working in partnership with families and stakeholders.

Overall, we have maintained a high standard of quality by ensuring that services are audited regularly by our customers through the Q-Team, local managers and Care4Quality, our external quality auditors.

People Development

With recruitment being a challenge in the sector, we have dedicated our effort to recruit, develop and retain a high performing and functioning workforce led by strong local leaders. To achieve this Ability has employed a dedicated recruiter to support managers with timely recruitment of staff to deliver the support customers require.

To deliver services well having a competent well trained and motivated workforce is vital to enable staff to support all our customer groups effectively, and staff are well trained with skills and abilities to deliver care and support that is good, effective and safe.

Our dedication to staff training such as Care Certificate training to all support staff, regulatory face to face training, extensive e-learning through Social Care TV, and specialist bespoke training for services based on the needs of our customers has made sure that we retain a competent and highly skilled workforce.

Facts & Figures:

We received:

13

Care & Support complaints.

Of these 13;

10

Were about support:

3 of which were about staff attitude.

7 of which were about support levels.

3

Were about anti-social behaviour.

All of the complaints received above were thoroughly investigated, and were resolved at stage 1 of our 2-stage complaints procedure.

Management Restructure

We have enhanced our management and leadership induction and training such as Lead to Succeed training for all levels of management to assist them to develop and increase their leadership skills and knowledge.

A Management restructure of Care & Support commenced in September 2019. The new structure will increase management support, responsibility and accountability for service delivery and improve overall quality and effectiveness.

Customer Focus

Growing and retaining our Care & Support business is crucial in a market predicated on competitive tendering therefore maintaining existing business as well as winning new business is essential to Ability's financial sustainability. This year Ability has sustained its business both in Merton and Hillingdon after a competitive tender process.

The new service in Merton is for Housing related support and a Floating Support service which offers a flexible short-term tenancy related support service that helps people who require support to develop and maintain their skills to live independently in the community.

The Hillingdon Mental Health Well Being service at Sessile Court, Hayes Park Lodge, Hamlet Lodge and the Floating Support service were retained this year. As part of this service Ability has been commissioned to provide an out of hours Telephone Support Service for current and previous Floating Support service customers who may be in crisis or at a risk of a crisis.

We have increased our business organically over the period and ensured full cost recovery by working in partnership with the local authorities with whom we do business and we continue to reconfigure existing services and develop new services for customers with more complex needs focused primarily in the areas of mental health and learning disability.

Staff Changes

Last year we said goodbye to valuable members of staff; Rita Asamoah, former Director of Care & Support, Sheila Mitchell, former Support Services Manager and Gina Rocque-Drayton, former Surrey Support Service Manager.

Plans for 2019 - 2020:

- We have increased our business organically over the period and ensured full cost recovery by working in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders.
- We continue to reconfigure existing services and develop new services for customers with more complex needs focused primarily in the areas of mental health and learning disability.
- We will also focus on new managers and consolidating Ability's support offer by ensuring team and individual effectiveness as one of the preferred outcomes of having motivated and valued teams.
- We will train and support Hillingdon customers to become out of hours Telephone Support Service volunteers.
- The Hillingdon Mental health well-being service at Sessile court, Hayes Park lodge, Hamlet Lodge and the floating support service.
- As part of this service Ability has been commissioned to provide an out of hours Telephone support service for current and previous floating support service customers who may be in crisis or at a risk of a crisis.
- We will continue to reconfigure existing services and develop new services for customers with more complex needs focused primarily in the areas of mental health and learning disability.

What Care & Support means for Steve and Stephen



Steve, Waterlooville

Waterlooville customer Steve regularly volunteers at his local hospital radio station.

"I have lived at Orsmond Close for around four years. I volunteer at Queen Alexandra Hospital radio. I do my own show every Tuesday each month from 9am to 11am. I get collected and I go with my support worker to the hospital. We get music requested from patients or listeners send their music requests in via email. I'm making my own podcast with my friend and I have a YouTube channel."

Steve also has been helped by Care & Support staff to improve his living skills and wellbeing. This has enabled him to be more independent and to complete tasks such as tidying his kitchen. For his effort's he was awarded an Ability 'Customer of the Year Award.'



Stephen & parents at YTL Q Team Visit

Stephen has made friends at Yew Tree Lodge and gets involved in different social activities organised by the service.

"I like going to the Wren Club."

Stephen feels that he *"is helped by staff,"* to do things such as; shaving, going to the gym, swimming, and travelling around his local area.

"I feel safe here as we have security cameras and staff look after me."

When Stephen goes out on the bus, he always makes sure he gets back early and carries his mobile.

"I've gone to the Ruislip Lido on my own."

He also enjoys listening to jazz bands and watching action films.

Finance Facts & Figures:

£1,364
Average spend on responsive repairs to each home. (previous year £1094)

£535
Average spend on planned maintenance to each home. (previous year £998)

£1,860
Spent on each home to manage the property. (previous year £2,824)

£10.6m
Turnover at year end. (previous year £10.8m)

£10.3m
Housing related costs. (previous year £10.3m)

£0.3m
Operating surplus. (previous year £0.4m)

£5.2m
Gross income for Care & Support. (previous year £5.3m)



Peter Gardiner (Director of Resources and Deputy CEO)

Ability

the story of the year

- We started 2018-19 with a challenging set of targets, aiming to achieve a stronger margin in Housing, and a small margin in Care & Support. These were not easy targets, as rents were still dropping by 1% per year, and the local authorities who commission care and support services were facing a hard year financially.
- We had a long hard look at the offices that we owned, and decided to sell our office building in Reading, as we could still deliver our services without it, and the cash could be re-invested in the services provided.
- The office at Southern Court was sold by March 2019, with staff moving into our facility at Loddon Court in Wokingham.
- By the middle of the year we had managed to negotiate small increases with most of our Care & Support commissioners which, with careful management of resources and efficiency savings enabled us to generate a margin for reinvestment into the business by the end of 2018-19.
- We continued to invest heavily in all of our properties this year, ensuring that we had all of the safety certificates that we needed, and that repairs were addressed in the shortest possible time.
- We have replaced all the doors and windows in Balfour Drive, a significant investment in our properties and the comfort and wellbeing of the residents.
- The new structure described last year for our housing team has worked well, with the Housing Support Officers covering an average of 110 properties each, thereby enabling a more personal service to be delivered to our tenants.
- We have ended 2018-19 with an operating surplus of £449k, an improvement on 2017-18 and ahead of our budget for the year.
- We managed to achieve our targets from the start of the year, and for 2019-20 have set slightly more ambitious goals, thereby continuing to deliver year-on-year improvements.

Budget for 2019-20:

£11.41m
Budget turnover. (a 6.6% increase overall on last year)

£0.15m
Further investment in IT systems.

£1.44m
Investing in your homes.

1%
Saving year-on-year on the cost of housing delivery.

2.3%
Saving year-on-year on the overall cost of service delivery.

Board Members

[As at 30th September 2019]

Jane Harrison (Chair)
Jim MacIntyre
Gina Small
Maureen Osborne
Nicola Philp
Sally Reay
Dominic Wallace
Vince Mewett (until 13 March 2019)
Karen Hillhouse (until 13 March 2019)
Ian Lines (until 13 March 2019)

Executive Directors

Jeff Skipp, CEO
Peter Gardiner, Director of Resources & Deputy CEO
Rita Asamoah, Director of Care & Support
Jackie Davis, Director of Assets and Housing

Auditors, solicitors & bankers

Auditors: Beever and Struthers
Solicitors: Devonshires
Bankers: Barclays Bank PLC

Registrations

Company number: 01261380
Charity number: 271547
Registered with The Regulator for Social Housing for England & Wales,
Number LH2174

Company registered office

Ability Housing Association, The Coach House,
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