



Welcome to our annual report. The last 12 months have seen some significant changes for the housing sector, with the introduction of new legislation and regulation to ensure all housing associations are well run, transparent and held accountable for their actions.

Part of this new regulation is a refreshed set of consumer standards, which will be rigorously inspected by the Regulator of Social Housing and the introduction of new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, known as TSMs for short.

We welcome these changes, which we believe will make improvements across social housing and improve the services that tenants, like yourselves, receive. Annual reports like this help us to be more transparent about what we do, giving you a true picture of how we have performed; the good and the not-so-good.

We provide many ways for tenants to have a say about how we work, and we believe we're working more collaboratively with our customers than ever before. We work closely with our Customer Services Committee, which we launched in January 2023. This joint committee of board members and tenants look at our performance and policies and ensures that our customers have a genuine voice in our strategic decision making.

To ensure we hear the voice of every tenant, we launched 'Knowing our Customers' last year. Our aim is to visit every tenant over the next 18 months, finding out if you have any issues or concerns whilst we gather more information about your household and how we can support you. The information we gain from these visits is already starting to influence the way we deliver our services to you, and we are looking forward to completing more of these over the next 12 months.

Over the last year, we have seen a substantial increase in complaints, which is reflected across all housing associations across the country. We know how important it is that we listen to your complaints and change what we do when we know we haven't got it right.

These are not just words. We embrace complaints and use them so that we can be a better housing provider. In this report, we let you know how we have learnt from your complaints, and we will be publicising more of these learnings throughout the coming year.

Looking ahead, we have changes at board level as our current chair, David Jepson, steps down after serving nine years on our board. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank David, who has been instrumental in driving our five-year corporate plan and navigating us through some challenging times over the last few years. We welcome Paul Diggory as the new chair of the board from September 2024. Paul has been on our Board for the past six years and has over 40 years' experience in social housing. His wealth of experience and knowledge will continue to be an asset to SLH as he becomes the chair.

This coming year is a special year for us as we celebrate our 25th birthday on 4 October 2024. We want to commemorate this milestone with the people who live in our homes and community and have begun by collecting a trove of memories from customers, colleagues and stakeholders. We are also hosting a pebble hunt which the whole community can get involved in. You can read more about this here.

We hope that you enjoy reading this annual report and if there is anything you would like to chat to us about, please get in touch.

Anna Bishop, Chief Executive of South Liverpool Homes



### A bit more about the report

This report lets you know how we have performed from 1 April 2023 through to 31 March 2024, giving you an honest account of where we are doing well, as well as where we need to do better.

The report lets you know how we have performed against the yearly targets we set ourselves and how we compare with other local housing associations.

The information is taken from operational performance reports and surveys we carry out throughout the year, including independent monthly tenant satisfaction surveys that IFF Research undertakes.

# How we performed against our targets (we set ourselves yearly targets in key operational areas) Target achieved Target missed

How we compare with other housing associations (we benchmark ourselves against other registered social landlords)	
Better	<b>w</b>
The same	••
Worse	·:

#### **Tenant Satisfaction Measures**

In April 2023 the Regulator of Social Housing, the organisation that oversees all housing associations, introduced 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to standardise how satisfaction is measured across housing associations throughout the country.

The TSMs are divided into two areas:

#### Questions we ask you, our customers

There are 12 of these TSMs which are known as 'tenant perception measures'.

We use independent research organisation, IFF Research, to collect your feedback on 12 of these measures throughout the year through telephone surveys. They aim to carry out 600 surveys every year.

#### Information that we measure

The other 10 questions are measured by us, from information we collect throughout the year. These are things like number of complaints, number of anti-social behaviour reports, and how long we take to complete repairs.

We let you know our annual results from the 22 TSMs on our website in June 2024.

This includes how we compare with other housing associations too. It is pleasing to know that we're performing better than most housing associations in 11 out of 12 of the TSMs we asked you about.

The only area where we don't perform better than most housing associations is 'time taken to complete repair'. We're working on ways to improve the quality and efficiency of our repairs service, and you can read more about this on page 8.

### 2023/2024: Your takeaways from the year

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79% of customers are satisfied with the overall services we provide. We know that there is still work to be done to improve satisfaction.

We received the highest V1 and G1 ratings from the regulator, which means we are a well-governed and financially viable organisation.

We achieved Investors in People Gold status, which means that our colleagues feel valued and supported.

We received 289 complaints, 85% were about repairs and maintenance to homes.

£1.9m additional income was secured for tenants thanks to our Benefits and Energy Advice team.

We spent over £8.5m repairing and making improvements to homes.

**Key facts** 

- We manage 3,781 homes, 118 are homes for older people in our Independent Living schemes.
- 8,917 people living in an SLH home.
- 123 homes let to tenants in 2023/24.
- 1,927 customers on our waiting list. This includes 285 SLH tenants who want to transfer their home.
- 800 new customers applied for a home with SLH.
- £22.6m turnover





### Getting to know our tenants and understanding their needs is really important to us.

In November 2023 we launched 'Knowing our Customers', where we aim to visit every tenant over the next 18 months to two years, so that we can get a deeper understanding of your individual needs.

At these visits, we chat to you about any issues you may be having with your home or the area where you live. We also use this opportunity to check if any repairs need doing and ensure we have up-to-date information about you, your household and your circumstances. We are gathering a lot of useful data from these visits which we will use to make sure our services are meeting your needs.

### Getting out and about in our communities

Over the past 12 months we have organised several community days and neighbourhood inspections where we address environmental issues and chat to you about any areas of concern in the neighbourhood you live.

We are often joined by local partners such as Liverpool City Council, Merseyside Police and The Dogs Trust because we know a coordinated approach helps you, and us, get the best out of these events.

We will continue to do these regularly over the next 12 months so please pop along and chat with us. We advertise these on our website and social media pages.





We want tenants to feel like they are being listened to, valued and their views are being acted upon. We have lots of different ways that you can get involved, such as surveys, focus groups, structured meetings and informal events, and we use insight from these to improve the services we deliver to you.

Over the last 12 months, the Scrutiny Panel, a group of tenants who scrutinise our services, carried out three in-depth reviews of our services. From these reviews, tenants made 27 recommendations which we discuss together in more detail. This has resulted in 25 actions that we have taken forward to form part of our operational action plans. The progress of these actions is monitored by the Customer Services Committee. We have strengthened our damp and mould processes, improved our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and strengthened our complaints process following the recommendations.

We also run engaging activities at The Market Place Social, which 82 customers attended last year. Whilst these activities can help improve wellbeing and have a positive impact on mental health, they are also a great way of engaging with tenants to find out what their concerns are and how we can improve as a landlord.

Looking ahead, we are looking to create a new Customer Voice Framework, working closely with tenants to help us achieve this. We hope this framework will enable us to reach a more diverse range of tenants, ensuring we hear your ideas and concerns, and your views are considered when making decisions about how we deliver our services.



- 68% satisfied that we listen to tenants' views and act upon them.
- 79% satisfied that they have been kept informed about things that matter to you. 👍 😀
- 85% satisfied that we treat you fairly and with respect. •
- Three service reviews carried out by the Scrutiny Panel. These focused on damp and mould, anti-social behaviour and complaints.



## Providing great homes for new customers

A computer-generated image of our redevelopment scheme at Western Avenue, Speke.

We have done better than our target for the number of days it takes to get a home ready for a new tenant. This helps us reduce our waiting times for a home, as we are letting the homes more quickly whilst not compromising on the quality of the home when the tenant moves in.

The number of homes we have rented out to new tenants has reduced from 198 homes last year to 123 homes this year. Although this is a good sign that tenants feel settled in their homes as they are choosing to stay, it unfortunately means there will be longer waiting times for people who are on our waiting list. This is why it's so important that we build new homes, so that we can meet increasing local demand.

We now publish the <u>average waiting times</u> for different home types on our website to give greater transparency to customers about how long they can expect to wait for a home from us.



- 123 homes were let to tenants.
- 74 new homes being built at The Old Baths development in Garston.
- Four planning applications submitted two sites in Speke, two sites in Garston.
- 89% satisfied with the quality of new homes. 👎
- 23 average days to relet our homes. he Relet timescales are from the day a tenant moves out of a home to the day a new tenant moves in.



### New apartments in Garston

We started construction work on the 'The Old Baths' development in Garston in August 2023. Built on the historic Garston Public Baths site, in the heart of Garston Village, the development consists of 74 apartments - 27 apartments for social rent, 12 apartments specifically for people 55 and over, and 35 apartments for rent to buy.

There will also be six retail units available to rent, perfect for small local businesses. The development is part of SLH's wider plans to build 280 new homes across Speke and Garston by 2027, with plans being developed for 92 homes on South Parade in Speke, 24 homes on Window Lane and Church Road in Garston and eight homes and a retail unit on Western Avenue, Speke.



During 2023-24 we spent £8.8m improving your homes. This includes £4.3m on investment works such as new kitchens and bathrooms, external painting and roofing and £4.5m on day-to-day repairs. Day-to-day repairs are often repairs that are requested by the tenant.

### Top investment spends

- Kitchens £2m
- New boilers £550k
- Level-access showers £383k
- Windows £377k
- Energy efficiency programme £277k
- Bathrooms £144k
- High performance doors £100k

- 90% responsive repairs completed in target. 👎
- 15,884 day-to-day repairs carried out. The average number of repairs per home is 4.2.
- 100% of homes with annual gas safety check completed. 👍 😀
- 23 average number of days it took to relet homes to new tenants.
- 80% satisfied with repairs and maintenance service.
- 78% satisfied that SLH provides a home that is well-maintained. •
- 74% satisfied with time taken to complete the most recent repair. 👎 😐
- 76% satisfied that their communal areas are clean and well maintained. •

### Feedback from happy customers

"Just had to say a massive thank you to Avela Home Service on the outstanding work they carried out in re-laying and repairing our pathways and entry.

The work is absolutely first class, the guys were friendly, polite and cleaned everywhere after they finished the job."

"My mum recently had new windows fitted and the process was really quick - from arranging it with yourselves to the lead-up to getting the windows fitted. The operatives were brilliant.

"My mum's not well and is bedbound, so I really appreciated it when they put the blinds back up on each window, which they didn't have to do. I couldn't thank them enough. 10 out of 10, really lovely guys."



### Every year, there is work we are required to do by law, which helps to keep both you and your home safe.

Our top score in our Tenant Satisfaction Measure results is for 'home is safe' with 86% of customers saying they feel safe in their homes. This is great news, however, we still have work to do to hit our own target of 90%.

We continue to make tackling damp and mould in your homes a priority. We have a well-established process for tackling damp and mould which includes inspecting homes within seven days of it being reported and carrying out follow-up inspections over the winter periods to ensure the problem has been fully resolved.



- 86% satisfied that SLH provide a home that is safe.
- 100% of homes have had an annual gas safety check.
- 801 electrical inspections carried out. 99.95% in target.
- 484 water hygiene inspections carried out. 100% in target.
- 168 asbestos inspections carried out. 91% of homes have had an asbestos survey. 100% compliant.
- 102 Fire risk assessments carried out in our communal areas. 100% in target.
- 3,626 homes' smoke detectors tested. 100% in target.
- 440 home lift equipment inspections carried out. 98.63% in target.
- 40 passenger lifts inspection in communal areas carried out. 100% in target.



### Our aim is to provide a reliable and timely repairs service where we aim to complete jobs on the first visit, wherever we can.

But we know that things don't always go smoothly, so here are some of things we have done over the last 12 months to improve the service to you:

- We've increased the number of repair operatives who carry out responsive repairs to your home.
- We've improved how repair jobs are scheduled, to make the best use of time, meaning we can get to your jobs quicker and more efficiently.
- We've organised focus groups with tenants who have had recent repairs to talk about what works and what doesn't – with the aim of ironing out the bumps in our repairs service.
- We text you the day before the appointment and on the morning of your appointment to remind you that it's happening. In this text we also let you know who will be carrying out the repair and give you the chance to rearrange it if the time is no longer convenient.
- Our repair operatives will also try to call you enroute to let you know 'we're on our way'. Our aim is to do this with 100% of repair appointments.
- We're working with Avela Home Service to improve how we communicate with customers about when planned improvement work, such as kitchen or bathroom replacement, is due.



The safety of our tenants is our main priority and over the past 12 months our Community Safety team has dealt with 280 reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) across Speke and Garston.

The top three reports are harassment, noise and drug-related complaints. The number of reports is higher than other housing associations, but we hope this indicates that our customers feel comfortable reporting anti-social behaviour to us.

We work closely with Merseyside Police to tackle all types of crime in our communities. Legal action is always our last resort, and we will always try to resolve any low-level ASB with non-legal interventions. However, in some cases, we do have to take legal action. In 2023-24, seven cases have involved legal action including securing civil injunctions, breaches of injunctions, and successfully taking possession of two homes.

We have recently introduced an ASB app which makes it easier for customers to gather evidence during a case, as well as reducing the time it takes for us to deal with the case, as everything is held in one place.

We are also introducing a new Neighbourhood Management Policy which will improve the effectiveness of how we deal with noise complaints, as well as using mediation more to resolve complicated neighbour disputes.

If you want to report ASB, no matter how big or small, you can do this <u>online</u> or give us a call.



- 280 cases of anti-social behaviour cases reported to us. This is a decrease from last year.
- 80% satisfied with SLH's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.
- 80% satisfied that we make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.



### Tenant secures over £600 a month extra benefit entitlement

• 4,200 volunteer hours dedicated to The

community garden, Grow Speke.

Market Place, The Market Place Social and our

One role of our Tenancy Sustainability team is to get in touch with tenants who we have not heard from for a long while. One of these tenants was 80-year old Mr H who was recently bereaved and was finding life particularly tough. Our officer, Paul, visited Mr H in his home to see how we could support him.

He was struggling financially and didn't know which way to turn. It quickly became clear to Paul that Mr H wasn't getting all the benefits he was entitled to. Paul worked alongside him to apply for the additional benefits, which included Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit and he now gets an extra £148 per week.

Paul also identified that the tenant has been overpaying his energy company and he has since received over £1,000 in credit from them. Mr H was over the moon with the support.

"Paul was very focused, and I am forever grateful for his support. I now feel these additional benefits will help keep my head above water."

Sustaining a tenancy isn't always easy, and that is why we have dedicated teams and services in place to help support tenants when they need it. These services can help tenants save money, improve their health and wellbeing, as well as preventing homelessness.

In 2023/24 we helped secure £1.9m additional income for tenants through our Benefits and Energy Advice Service. We do this by looking to see if there are additional benefits and grants that people can access, as well as finding ways to reduce household energy bills. We have worked with an increasing number of older tenants this year, securing over 30 claims for Attendance Allowance.

Our community shop is still providing a lifeline for many tenants, with an average of 75 visits to the The Market Place each week. Over 1,000 customers have received employment and training support through our employability hub Reach, with 20% going onto paid employment.

We are proud of the positive impact these services have made, and as a community-based landlord, we will continue to support our customers with initiatives like these to help build stronger communities.



We strive for feedback from our customers, both positive and negative, as it helps us to make improvements to the services we provide. We know we don't always get it right, and that's why we have a clear complaints process so that we can deal with your dissatisfaction in the right way.

We're continuing to see an increase in complaints, which is a pattern that housing associations across the country are seeing. The housing regulator sees this as a sign of an easy-to-access complaints process.

However, we know we need to do much better in the way we handle your complaints – just 55% are satisfied. We have recently asked our tenant Scrutiny Panel to review our complaints process and have started to implement their recommendations.

Although 55% may seem low, this result is in the top 25% for housing associations we are compared with.

We have more stage one complaints and less stage two complaints compared to other housing associations. This suggests we are good at resolving complaints at stage one, without customers having to go to stage two. No maladministration was found of the three cases that went to the Housing Ombudsman.

This means that they have not found failure in our actions when dealing with the complaint. However last year, we received the outcome of three complaints that went to the Housing Ombudsman in 2022-2023, in these cases maladministration was found in two areas:

- How we dealt with repairs and complaint handling.
- How we handled a tenancy related issue that was concerned with a tenancy succession.

Since then, we have made the following changes:

- Members of SLH's Senior Leadership Team have reviewed our complex case process around repairs and a stronger, proactive approach is now in place.
- Colleague training has been completed to ensure that all colleagues are aware of the customer feedback process.
- We have reviewed and revised our tenancy succession policy and procedure, with checks in place to ensure they are being followed. We have also reviewed our succession letters and information to ensure the language we use is easily understood.



- 55% tenants satisfied with the way we handle complaints. 👎 😃
- 289 complaints received. An increase of 38% compared to the previous year.
- 11 complaints escalated to stage two.
- Three complaints progressed to the Housing Ombudsman.



Feedback from customers has resulted in a number of changes to how we do things.

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You said	We are doing
A tenant was unhappy with the length of time it took to get her new doors ordered after an operative had been around to measure them. They had to follow up on several occasions.	We have changed the process around ordering doors. The operative who measures the doors will now order directly with the manufacturer, and keep the customer informed of this along the way.  Previously, this job was carried out by a different person.
We received a couple of complaints from tenants about the tone of some of the standard letters we send out. They felt they could be clearer and more caring.	We have carried out a comprehensive review of all standard letters we send out to customers. They are now written in clearer language and the tone of the letters reflect our values.
A customer was unhappy that they received conflicting communications about whether they were on the yearly improvement programme or not. This includes improvements such as new kitchens, bathrooms, windows and boilers.	All customer services colleagues have full access to our improvements programme which means tenants will receive more accurate information when they enquire.
A tenant wasn't happy with the quality of service provided when she had a leak in her home over the Christmas period. This wasn't the first time she had reported a leak in her home. She was unhappy with the length of time it took to resolve the problem.	We have changed our process for leak repairs to ensure we are proactively contacting customers to check the leak has been rectified. Customers will be contacted after 24 hours and 48 hours to check the issue has been resolved.



The high cost of living continues to impact our customers and if we can help reduce this impact, we will. We're committed to improving the energy efficiency of our homes which will help reduce costs for tenants, as well as helping to meet the country's net zero target by decarbonising our existing homes.

As part of our ambitions to make our homes greener, warmer and more efficient for tenants, we have embarked on a retrofitting programme which assesses the effectiveness of a range of environmentally-friendly measures before they are rolled out across all our homes in the years and decades to come.

Our aim over the next year is to invest in all our homes that have an energy EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating below a 'C' band.

Reducing our carbon footprint extends to how we go about our day-to-day business too. We are looking at more environmental-friendly measures to deliver our services and our neighbourhood management team conducts regular inspections and works closely with the environmental team to improve the areas where we live and work in.



- 62 tonnes of carbon emissions avoided.
- 88% PV panels in operation. \( \bigg\rightarrow\)
- 1.887m KWH (kilowatt hours) of electricity generated by solar PV (photovoltaic) panels.
- £250K spent on installing external wall installation to homes to make them more energy efficient.



### Avela Home Service introduces electric vans to its repair fleet

Over the summer, our repairs contractor, Avela Home Service, introduced electric vehicles to help lower the environmental impact of our repairs and maintenance service. Avela operatives rack up over 300,000 miles a year driving to and from their base in Speke to customers' homes, and the environmental impact of these short journeys is why we've taken the decision to go electric.

The move is just one part of our Planet Strategy, which examines every aspect of our operations, impacting everything from retrofitting homes with lower carbon heating systems, solar panels and improved insulation to ensuring we our delivering our services in a greener and more sustainable way.



### Improving the energy efficiency of homes in Garston

With the help of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, we started a retrofit programme to 22 homes on Chesterton Street and Lincoln Street in Garston, installing external wall installation to make them more efficient.

We chose these homes because they all had low energy efficiency ratings, were close to each other and already benefitted from solar PV panels – this meant that they would be cost effective in terms of time and resources. The energy efficiency rating for each home has improved from an EPC D rating to EPC B and it is anticipated that the yearly CO2 emissions for each home will reduce by 40%; helping to significantly reduce the energy costs for tenants who live there.

It's still early days however, one resident has said that they can already feel the benefit of the insulation works. They said they haven't had the heating on as much and have been able to open their windows without worrying about losing too much heat out of their home. The ventilation in the homes has also been improved, reducing the risk of damp, mould and condensation and keeping the home cooler in the summer.





### The numbers

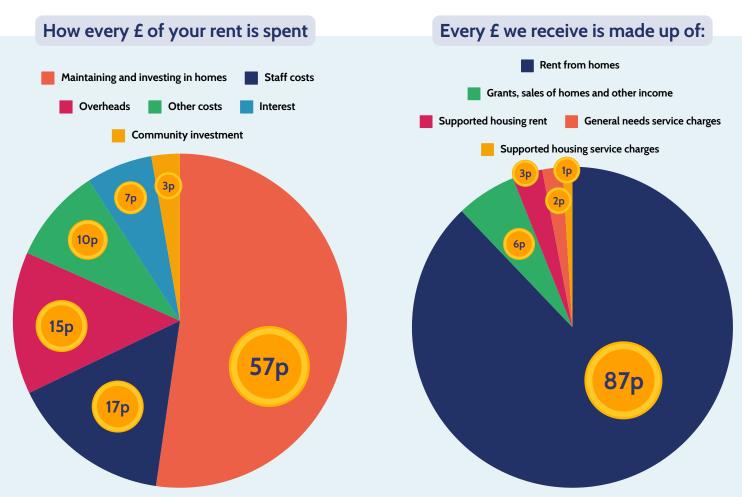
- £1.1m total arrears owed by current and former tenants. This includes rent, service charges, chargeable repairs and court costs.
- £150k efficiency savings. This is the reduction in the amount of money or time needed to complete a task or project.
- 82% of tenants think their rent is value for money.
- 75% of tenants think their service charge is value for money.
- Nine homes sold through Right to Buy and two sold through Right to Acquire.
- £22.6m group turnover.

Last year we made £250,000 savings. This came from an in-depth review of our budget throughout the year; working closely with colleagues from across the organisation to seek out opportunities where we can do more, or do the same, for less cost.

We have changed our main bank, which has enabled us to have a more streamlined process as well as saving us money. The way we look after cash balances has improved and we have achieved much better interest returns on our savings, £80k more than the previous financial year.

We also reviewed our procurement process, looking at how we buy goods and services to ensure we obtain the best possible value. This review has contributed significantly to our savings throughout the year.

Overall, financially, we are in a good place. This enables us to continue to make improvements to your homes, offer services to help you stay in your homes and continue with our new build programme to build 280 new homes by 2027.





To provide our customers with an excellent service, it is important that our colleagues work in an environment where they feel supported and can be themselves.

We are pleased that we achieved Investors in People (IiP) Gold status earlier in the year - a sought-after standard which demonstrates that colleagues feel valued and proud to work for us. Only 26% of organisations who hold this status achieve Gold, so we are very proud of this.

It means that we have got all the right policies and practices in place to ensure that our colleagues can achieve their true potential and continue to deliver the best possible services to customers. But more than that, it means everyone – from the CEO to apprentice takes ownership for making the policies come to life.

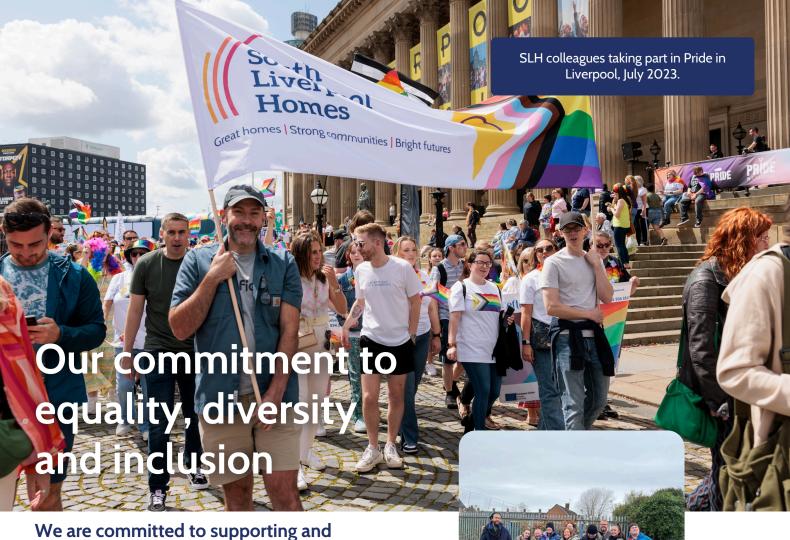
### **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®**

We invest in people Gold



- 105 people are employed at South Liverpool Homes.
- 20 hours average of learning hours per colleague.
- 11 professional qualifications undertaken.
- 5 apprenticeships secured





We are committed to supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) where we work and in our communities. We believe in building an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, where diversity is valued, and where everyone can reach their full potential.

Our EDI Strategy and action plan ensures that we maximise the positive impact of our work. Some of our main achievements over the past year include:

- Carried out equality, diversity and inclusion focus groups, focussing on those who have a disability and those from a racial minority.
- Supported national campaigns to give a voice to misrepresented and under-represented groups.
- Worked in partnership with Autism Adventures to help create a safe environment for young people.
- Promote wellbeing champions across the organisation and held EDI-focused training programmes including transgender and hate crime awareness training, unconscious bias training and suicide first aid.
- Improving the accessibility of our tenant communications, including our website and written communication.
- We provide all interview questions to job applicants in advance to support applicants who are neurodiverse.
- Our <u>Gender Pay Gap Statement</u> helps to inform our EDI agenda and highlights where we could be more inclusive and diverse.

### Case study: An inclusive space for young people with autism

Last year we gifted a piece of unused land to help Autism Adventures, a social enterprise in South Liverpool, to create an inclusive outdoor space for young people with neurodiverse conditions. The green space on the corner of Critchley Road and East Millwood Road in Speke will be used to deliver training and activities, plus wellbeing support and advice and guidance to young people and families living with autism.

The site will be used for their EPIC (Enterprise, Progression, Independence and Confidence) programme - a three-day social provision programme that offers learning, volunteering and social enterprise opportunities for 19-25 year olds.

Founder of Autism Adventures Julie Simpson said:

"It's primarily going to be a space where our young people can connect with nature to grow flowers and plant vegetables, whilst developing invaluable skills. We also want it to be a safe place that our young people can use during the summer holidays, somewhere they can get together and bond over a common interest."



### Get in touch



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### **Get social**









