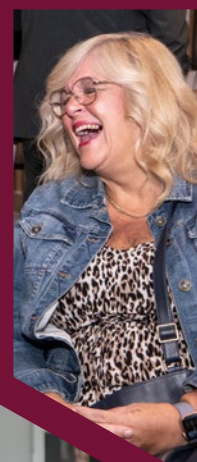




Our Soha 2023-2024



Inside:

P3 "I'm influencing Soha"

P5 "There's always someone to have a laugh with!"

P11 Where the money goes

P16 "The home I always wanted"

P17 New builds tackle fuel costs

...and more, in residents' own words



Annual Report to residents and partners

Welcome!

I'm Ann-Marie, Chair of Members' Forum, and – even if you've said no to receiving Soha's other publications, such as *Hometaalk*, before – I'm really pleased you've opened this Annual Report!

It's important that residents get the opportunity to see what Soha is doing with our money and have the chance to ask questions. Trust and accountability between residents and Soha lead to better services for our communities.

Members' Forum is a representative body voted for by all residents – tenants, shared owners and leaseholders alike. We voice your concerns, preferences, and suggestions to Soha's management and Board. We make sure that residents' interests are considered

when policy is discussed and we have direct links into Soha's local teams so that anything planned at local level can be sure to work well for residents too.

We have helped define service standards for maintenance, repairs, and other resident services and also encourage the Scrutiny Group to do a review of any of them if we think it is necessary.

We have looked at the information going into this report to ensure it's going to answer questions that residents might have but we may well have missed something that's vital to you. If that's the case, how about joining me and Soha's Directors on an 'Ask Us Anything' drop-in by Zoom on Tuesday 15 October between 6 and 7pm? Keep an eye on Soha's social media for the invitation going out or call the Communications

team at Soha, who are setting it up, to get the link: they're on 0800 014 15 45 (Freephone) or communications@soha.co.uk.

Forum members always welcome observers at meetings so maybe I'll meet you at one of those, if not online in a few weeks' time. The Forum meets six times a year on a Thursday evening at Soha's Didcot office. Just let the Resident Engagement team know if you'd like to come – you can get in touch on ri@soha.co.uk or by calling them on the Freephone number above.

With best wishes,
Ann-Marie



You can contact the Members' Forum Chair via the Resident Engagement team at Soha who will ask her to call or email you – whichever you prefer.

Members' Forum 2023–26



Ann-Marie O'Sullivan
Swindon (Chair)



Brian Foley
Henley



Debbie Evans
Whitchurch-on-Thames (coopted)



Kay Sentance
Thame



Peter Haynes
Abingdon



Trish Langford
Kingston Bagpuize



Aurora Acone
Binfield Heath



Clive Jepson
East Hagbourne



Elizabeth Welsh
Thame



Margaret Buckell
Didcot



Robert Stark
Great Milton



Val Kir
Didcot



Amanda Browning
Henley



Bertie Doy
Didcot



Deb Longney
Abingdon



Gerald Prior
Tetsworth



Richard Rule
Warborough (coopted)



Sarah Simmonds
Great Haseley



Vic Breach
South Stoke (Vice-Chair)

Acholi

Timber ikube ki wan ii housing@soha.co.uk
onyo icim 0800 014 15 45 (Cim ma pe iculu)
ka obi konyi me bedo ki gilok ma ki loko ki
bot Soha.

Arabic

يرجى الاتصال بنا على البريد الإلكتروني
housing@soha.co.uk أو على هاتف رقم
0800 014 15 45 (هاتف مجاني) إذا كنت في حاجة
إلى مساعدتك في الحصول على ترجمة لمراسلات
Soha

Dari

لطفاً بما به آدرس housing@soha.co.uk یا به
شماره 0800 014 15 45 (تلفن رایگان) تماس بگیرید
اگر ترجمه ارتباطات سوها به شما کمک می کند.

Hungarian

Ha úgy érzi, hogy segítségére válna a
Sohától kapott információkat fordításban
megkapni, lépjen velünk kapcsolatba a
housing@soha.co.uk e-mail-címen vagy a
0800 014 15 45 (ingyenesen hívható)
telefonszámon.

Italian

Non esitare a contattarci all'indirizzo di posta elettronica housing@soha.co.uk o tramite chiamata al numero verde **0800 014 15 45** se sei interessato a una nostra traduzione.

Nepali

यदि यसले तपाईंलाई सोहा कम्युनिकेसन्सको अनुवाद प्राप्त गर्नमा मद्दत गर्न सक्छ भने कृपया हामीलाई housing@soha.co.uk वा **0800 014 15 45** (फ्रिफोन) मा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्

Pashto

مهرباني وکړئ له موږ سره په housing@soha.co.uk یا په **0800 014 15 45** (ورپا تلیفون) اړیکه ونیسئ که دا ستاسو سره د سوها د اړیکو په ژباړه کې مرسته کوي

Polish

Skontaktuj się z nami korzystając z adresu e-mail housing@soha.co.uk lub darmowego numeru telefonu **0800 014 15 45**, jeśli potrzebujesz tłumaczeń dot. Soha communications.

Portuguese

Queira entrar em contacto conosco através do email housing@soha.co.uk ou do número de telefone **0800 014 15 45** (linha grátis), se achar que seria útil ter a tradução das comunicações da Soha.

Romanian

Vă rugăm să luați legătura cu noi la adresa de e-mail housing@soha.co.uk sau la numărul de telefon **0800 014 15 45** (apel gratuit) dacă vă este de ajutor să obțineți o traducere pentru Soha communications.

Russian

Пожалуйста, свяжитесь с нами по адресу housing@soha.co.uk или позвоните по бесплатному номеру телефона **0800 014 15 45**, если это поможет вам получить перевод сообщений от Soha.

Tagalog

Mangyaring makipag-ugnayan sa housing@soha.co.uk o sa **0800 014 15 45** (Freephone) kung makakatulong ito sa iyo na magkaroon ng pagsasaling-wika ng Soha communications.

Thai

โปรดติดต่อเราที่ housing@soha.co.uk หรือโทรศัพท์ **0800 014 15 45** (โทรฟรี) หากท่านต้องการคำแปลสำหรับการสื่อสารจาก Soha

Traditional Chinese (Cantonese)

如果用得上 Soha 通訊的翻譯，請透過 housing@soha.co.uk 或 **0800 014 15 45** (免付費電話) 聯絡我們。

Turkish

Soha tarafından iletilen bilgilerin çevirisiyle ilgili yardım almak için housing@soha.co.uk adresinden e-posta yoluyla veya **0800 014 15 45** (ücretsiz hat) numaralı telefondan bize ulaşabilirsiniz.

Ukrainian

Зверніться до нас за адресою housing@soha.co.uk або телефоном **0800 014 15 45** (безкоштовно), якщо вам допоможе переклад повідомлень від Soha.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو سوہا کمیونیکیشن کا ترجمہ حاصل کرنے میں ہم سے رابطہ کرنے سے مدد ملتی ہے، تو براہ کرم ہم سے **0800 014 15 45** پر یا housing@soha.co.uk (فری فون) پر رابطہ کریں۔

Emma

I told Soha's Resident Engagement team I was interested in working on Soha's priorities for the next five years.

Some background: Soha has been asking residents for several months what they think. They asked 'what does Soha do well and should do more of; what should it do less of, and what part could Soha play in providing for the needs of your community?'. All these questions were asked in a variety of ways. There were workshops out and about, on doorknocks, social media posts and a blackboard in Reception for visitors to scribble on.

I was one of 45 residents who spent a day in Benson Parish Hall with members of Soha's Board and senior staff working through all these thoughts. We started the process of producing something that



could eventually be a timed and costed action plan.

There were five topics discussed and everyone did two of them. I chose to work on 'who do we house?' and 'what should Soha do beyond housing?'. By the time you're reading this, we'll have progressed our work a bit further with online meetings.

It's clear that residents are influencing Soha's next five years in a big way.

You can get involved with this kind of activity, too! Just email ri@soha.co.uk or call **0800 014 15 45 (Freephone) and ask to speak to the Resident Engagement team.**

Jennifer

I was born in this house and raised my family here. I had no insulation but I feel like I've now got like a thick blanket around my house. It's lovely letting myself in the house through the new front door – it's not draughty, and it looks so good from the outside too – really smartened up and quite different from all the other houses in the street. I'm expecting that not only will we all be more comfortable in the winters now but that our energy bills will be much smaller.



Soha has identified 650 homes which are Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) D or below. We received £1.7m from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (which Soha matched) to bring 200 homes up to EPC C in two years, starting during 2023. We're spending the money on measures such as loft insulation, external wall insulation, or double-glazed windows and doors. In 2023-24 Soha installed 44 different types of work across 33 homes.

Amanda



I waited a long time before actually becoming a Soha Member and if I knew then how truly committed to resident engagement Soha are, I would have done it sooner.

When I became a Member, I wasn't aware of the doors it would open for me. After attending a residents' AGM I was asked if I wanted to stand for election to the Members' Forum, which I did. You can see more about what the Forum does on page 2.

I'm someone who likes getting stuff done – I'd never join anything that was just a 'talking shop'. Forum makes big decisions. I want to give

back to my community and doing this means I can help other Soha residents in a small way by representing their interests. I've even given up other volunteering to focus on being on the Forum. I've been pleasantly surprised how welcoming and inclusive Soha is and how keen everyone is to work collaboratively with residents. My health issues mean I have difficulty with most daily activities. Soha has been very accommodating, otherwise I wouldn't be able to be a Forum member. I enjoy learning about how Soha operates, and the social housing sector in general. Being on the Forum has made me more aware of the need for affordable homes to many people. I encourage other residents to take advantage

of opportunities to have their voice heard, such as at the drop-ins to meet the local team where I live. I have really enjoyed working with like-minded residents, as well as members of the Soha team to try and make our homes and communities better for us all.

I like to be productive and useful. Representing residents feels to me like a really meaningful contribution.

At the end of 2023-24, Soha had 808 Members from among residents and staff. You can find out more about the benefits of Membership on the website at www.soha.co.uk/membership or by calling the Resident Engagement team on 0800 014 15 45 (Freephone).



Angela

I'm a Green and Clean Champion, a Soha resident who makes sure that where I live is well maintained and a greener place to live. I also watch over how the contractors who provide Soha's grounds maintenance and communal cleaning in the area are working out. I write a short report once a month and receive a shopping voucher as a thank you.

What else do I do? Well, during 2023-24 I was in a group of residents who got together with senior staff at Soha to tell them what residents think Soha should write into its Repairs and Voids (empty homes) standard. What we said went out to a major consultation, by survey, to hundreds more residents across all Soha's local teams, living in all kinds of homes.

I also enjoyed observing Members' Forum when I could in the last year – any resident can, so how about you? Find out more about what the Forum does and if it's something that would interest you on page 2.

The final way I got involved last year was to be part of the Scrutiny Group which is residents monitoring

the performance of Soha's service delivery. We hold Soha accountable for its commitments to residents, including being transparent about the finances and how Soha's services actually work out in real life for residents. We do our investigations and report right up to the Board. Our recommendations are nearly always accepted in full. In 2023-24 we examined the experiences of other housing associations when they changed from employing a repairs contractor to having an in-house team instead. This is exactly what Soha is going to be doing from May 2025! We also started a Scrutiny investigation on how Localities are working out in practice. By the time you read this, we'll have reported our findings to Soha's Board.



Brian

I come over to the Soha allotment twice a day when my wife's out at work; the design with raised beds makes any tasks easier. Everyone who lives in the Extra Care community where I do gets a chance to pick up some of our delicious veg for next to nothing via an honesty box system.



Alan

You don't have to be madly social to live in Soha Extra Care, but there's loads going on if you want it and always someone around to have a laugh with. Even when Soha staff aren't around, the care company are on site 24/7.



Soha opened its fourth Extra Care scheme, Frances Curtis Court in Wallingford, during the year. It's Soha's largest retirement or independent living scheme with 38 apartments for sale and 37 let at social rent. There's welcome reassurance in the presence of a care team being on site 24 hours a day.

Soha:

the inside story

Thank you for making it this far into our Annual Report on Soha's 2023-24 performance! As Ann-Marie O'Sullivan, the Chair of Soha's Members' Forum, says in her introduction on page 2, it's really important that you know what we're doing with your money and can hold us to account.

In 2023-24, we took the unusual decision (compared with just about every other housing association in the country) to increase our rents by less than the government allowed. We could see the impact the cost of living crisis was having on our residents and were able to make this decision because we're financially strong. I hope the accounts graphics which follow assure you that we remain strong.

We may have had lower income from rents but that didn't stop us building – we were the ninth largest provider of new homes (relative to our size) in the whole country in 2023-24 and delivered 259 new homes. We did some of this via working with Community Land Trusts. These are an increasingly

common way of tapping into communities' aspirations. You can see more about that on page 17. We're also busy improving existing homes and are on track to improve all our homes to at least EPC C energy efficiency rating by 2027. Jennifer's story on page 4 gives you a flavour of that.

In the last year our Localities service got properly under way – read more about that on page 15. Over the last year, I have seen lots of examples of the teams moving fast and with local knowledge to help residents with their housing challenges and communities to get projects off the ground. As a whole, we have also been listening to the priorities of a wide range of residents who are currently helping us set out our corporate plan for the next five years. Among other things you've been telling us the kind of housing we should provide and the role you want Soha to play in your area as our communities change and grow.

There's a lot of information in this report and I'd love to talk to you more about it! I'm grateful to the Members'

Forum for their input and to Forum Chair, Ann-Marie, who will host an 'Ask Us Anything' online drop-in in a few weeks' time. You may have seen her mention it in her introduction. This is your platform to delve deeper into anything in this report you'd like to know more about or to ask any other questions you may have about what Soha does. Soha's Director of Housing and Communities, Matt Archer, will be on the call, too.

It would be lovely to meet you on Tuesday 15 October at 6pm – contact our Communications team to get the link.

Kate Wareing
Chief Executive



A new law came into force during the last business year and it's highly likely that you have been key in helping Soha comply with it!

If you've taken a phone call from Soha's research agency, Acuity, in the last year, you will have told them about how satisfied you are across a broad range of services. We have now been compiling the 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' (TSMs) for a full year and you can see what they look like on the right. Each TSM feeds in to one of the Consumer Standards for all housing associations which were brought in with the new law, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

Every three months, we compare our results with a number of other landlords across the country. Except in two measures where we are nearer a mid-point, you, our residents, think we're doing as well as – or better than – other housing associations. That's something to be proud of but, most importantly, the TSMs point out the areas where you tell us we need to improve. One of the ways we'll be working towards this in the coming year is to have our own in-house repairs contractor by May 2025. This will be a big investment in people and skills and the economy across our Soha communities.

Aside from talking to the research company, there are lots of other ways you can have a voice with Soha – from the informal and 'one-off' opportunities right up to becoming a Board member. Five of my colleagues on the Board

are residents. Their values and insights ensure that we never lose sight of what matters to you.

Another way to make sure your views can be put forward is to become a shareholding Member of Soha. You can see what that means for one, Amanda, on page 4. At the September 2024 AGM Members approved a proposal to lift the ceiling we set ourselves on the amount of money we can borrow to build new homes.

Members also approved a new Board member who will take over from me as Soha's next Chair. Mark Goldring, a local resident, is Chief Executive of Asylum Welcome, a refugee charity in Oxford, and before that was Chief Executive of Oxfam GB. Mark is keen to meet residents, so do take him up on the standing invitation to attend any of our residents' events or to come along to a Board meeting.

You can find out what's on and when, by visiting Soha's website (www.soha.co.uk/events), our social media or in *Hometalk*. It would be great to meet you!

Jenny Ekelund
Chair of
Soha Board



The Regulator of Social Housing brought in the Consumer Standards as a response to the Grenfell disaster. It says: "More than four million households in England live in social housing, and tens of thousands are waiting for a social housing home. We regulate so that social landlords deliver more and better homes. We drive improvements in social landlords by setting standards that they must deliver against, assessing how well they do this, and when necessary, taking action so that where there are problems, landlords put them right."

Soha will be given a rating on how well we comply with the Consumer Standards. We will publish the rating as soon as we receive it. We don't yet know when we are likely to be inspected. You can see the Regulator's assessment of any housing association anywhere in the country on the government website at www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-judgements-and-regulatory-notice-a-to-z-list

How you said we did in 2023-24

All housing associations like Soha are monitored by the Regulator of Social Housing, a government body. The Regulator asks us to collect information about your satisfaction with our services. We collect it through our survey company, Acuity, which rings between 300 and 400 residents (both tenants and shared owners and picked at random) every three months. They ask each household the same questions so we get a representative view on how residents think we're doing. Put together these make up the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

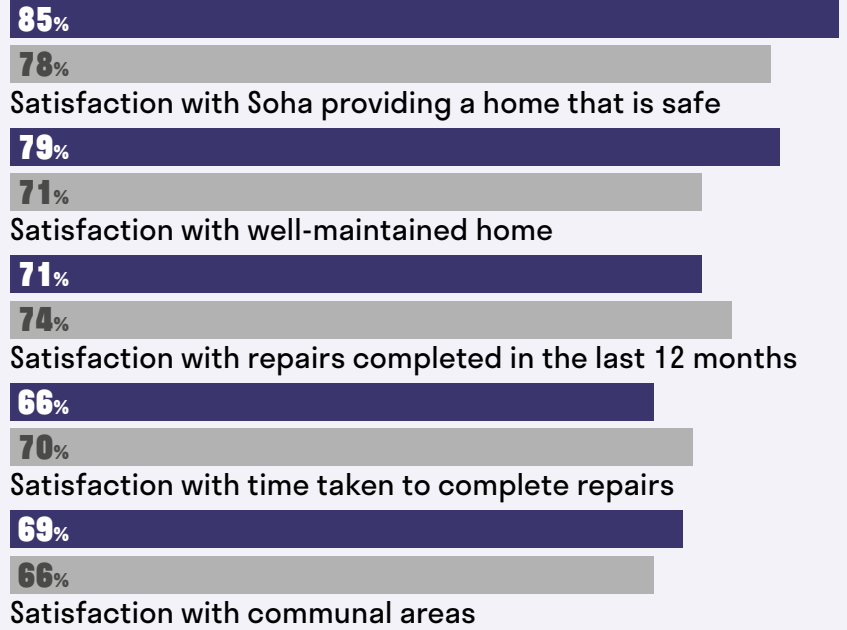
We welcome TSMs because not only do they help you assess how well we're performing – but they also tell us where we need to improve our services.

We report our TSM data to the Regulator who then decides how we comply with the four Consumer Standards, which are shown on this page. Although these only came into force on 1 April 2024, we have been aligning our work to the Standards since 2023.

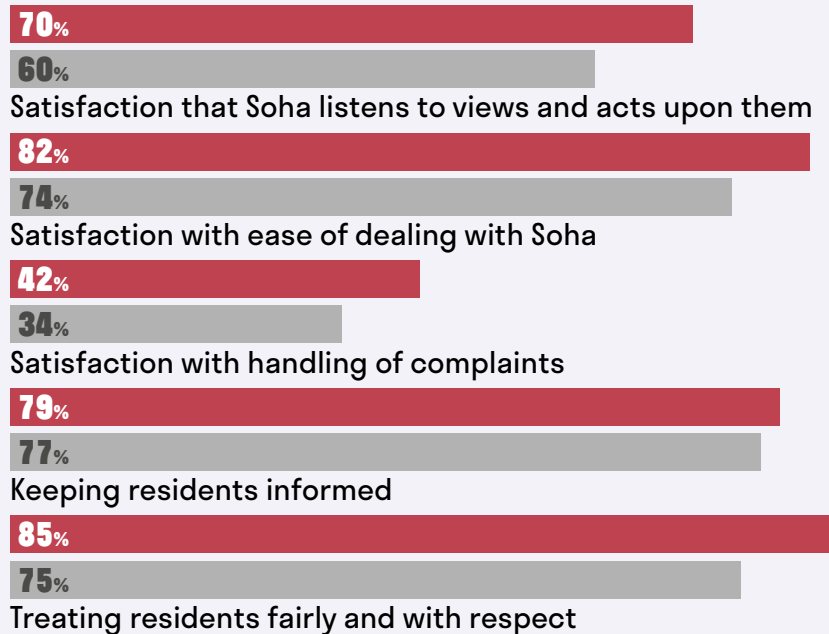
This is how you said we performed in 2023-24. We check how we're doing against around 295 other landlords. You can also see what their residents thought of them so you can make a comparison.

The information here is from tenants; shared owners receive fewer services from us and so have less to give us feedback on. They reported their general satisfaction with us at 65% against a median of 50% from the housing associations we benchmarked against.

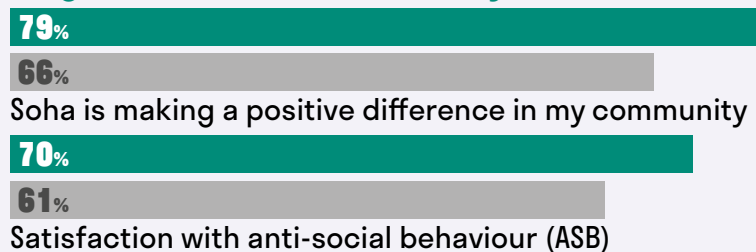
Safety and Quality Homes Standard



Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard



Neighbourhood and Community Standard



Tenancy Standard

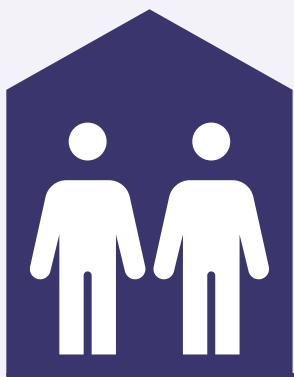


Key

- Tenants rated Soha
- The mid-point of other landlords' tenants rating of them

Our residents

At the end of the business year 2023-24



We managed

305

cases of anti-social behaviour last financial year. These resulted in six court actions and three injunctions. The remaining were managed using non-legal interventions. We also referred six cases for mediation/resolution coaching.



We had

7,923 homes

17,322 residents

6,479 homes were general needs homes

917 were shared ownership

360 were leasehold properties

140 were supported housing homes

27 were for intermediate rent

We also received nine disrepair claims, settled six and four were withdrawn – one was outstanding from 2022-23. These cost Soha £70,250 out of the repairs budget. Around half of this went on expert fees as the average settlement to the affected resident was £5,616.67. If you're unhappy about the repair state of your home, a faster resolution to the problem usually comes by contacting the Complaints team complaints@soha.co.uk or via www.soha.co.uk/complaints

You can get more detailed information from our audited accounts which are published at www.soha.co.uk/publications. If you'd prefer a hard copy, please get in touch using the contact details on the back page.



Did you know?

There are a variety of formats to receive Soha publications: as hard copies they're available in A4 (normal magazine size) or large print and in colour or in black and white. If you'd prefer it digitally, we can send you that instead. It's also available as an audio track on a USB stick. Just call Soha's Communications team on 0800 014 15 45 (Freephone) or email communications@soha.co.uk to let us know what you'd like. (You can also tell us you don't want anything other than the Annual Report, which we have to send you. We'd be sad to see you go, but let the team know if that's your choice.)

We have a read-aloud and translation service on Soha's website. Click the red 'person' icon on the bottom right of any page and a black toolbar will appear at the top of the page. The fourth icon in from the left gives you the option to translate the page into a language of your choice, whereas the first icon on that bar allows you to have it read out loud to you – in English or another language you have selected.



Your home

in 2023-24



We installed

164

replacement kitchens

508

replacement windows/doors

12

air source heating systems

160

gas heating replacements

50

replacement bathrooms

46

replacement roofs

134 major & **156**

minor disability adaptations

We had a **23** day target to relet homes where only minor works were necessary. In fact it took us **22** days on average.



We carried out

5,516

gas services

1,238

external redecorations

26,855

day-to-day repairs

work on **397**

homes to bring them up to lettable standard so that they could be relet.

The Chief Executive was paid

£156,965 pa

Directors were paid within the range

£105,000 to £135,000 full-time.

Soha's Chair was paid £14,099 pa (Vice-Chair £8,151) and Board Members were paid £5,465. Chairs of Board Committees were paid £8,878.

We achieved

84.6%

repairs fixed at the first visit

Target: **85%**

99.9%

compliance with the government's Decent Homes Plus standard

1,668

stock condition surveys. (As a landlord we need to know the condition of the homes we manage, so we can effectively plan any work needed to keep our homes in a good state of repair. At Soha we aim to visit all our homes at least once every five years to record data about the key components within the home such as kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, heating systems and so on. We call this a stock condition survey.)



Staff training

In 2023-24 we spent £70,000 on broad learning and development with a further £20,000 on vocational training. That's things like professional qualifications and conferences.

How each £ of your rent was spent 2023-24



Depreciation is an accounting term. It means how much of an asset's value has been used up over its useful life expectancy. For example, a kitchen which cost £8,000 and has a life expectancy of 20 years would cost Soha £400 each year for 20 years.

Management is the cost of running all our services. This is made up mostly by the housing management service, which includes our Lettings team, Neighbourhood team and, Rental Income team. Management also includes the costs of running the business, such as Finance and IT.

Surplus in this context means money reinvested to provide new homes.

Bad debts are rent arrears which we have been unable to recover. Reasons for this may include debt relief orders (where debts are written off by the court), insolvency, or a tenant has died and there's no money left in their estate to pay owed rent.

Where the money goes

Most of Soha's income is from rent. Soha's income (excluding property sales) was

£52.7m.

17 households bought a larger share of their home and **84** new shared ownership homes were sold. Property sales brought in a surplus of

£4.2m.

With the income...

...we spent

£29.5m

of maintenance and improvements to tenants homes.

We also spent

£6.5m

on other costs, including staff.

After interest payments of

£14.6m

our surplus was

£6.3m.

We used this along with loan finance...

...to provide new homes for people who needs them at a cost of

£44.1m.

We developed

251 new homes during the year.

We care about your privacy

Subject Access Requests (SAR)

We received 19 SARs in the last business year, an increase from nine the previous year. This is much the same as others across the housing association sector are experiencing. In a number of these cases residents have ongoing issues or a complaint already raised with us.

We are committed to being transparent and open about how we work and to keeping your data secure. If you have a problem with our service, or want to know more about how we manage your data please let us know. You can see the cost of disrepair claims to Soha's budget on page 9.

Data Breaches

We had 22 data breaches, an increase from 15 in 2022-23. 19 of these breaches were a result of disclosure of information to the wrong recipient and, in each case, we contacted them to ask them to delete the information which they confirmed they had. If the data is about a resident we have let them know that we made an error and put it right. In the other three cases we have emphasised to staff the need to: encrypt sensitive emails, verify the personal records we hold before sharing with external suppliers and ensure that we have an appropriate data sharing agreement in place with third-party organisations.

Equality data and what we do with it

Up to the end of the last business year in March 2024 we had gathered data from 86% of our residents about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). As an example, 78% of residents had responded about whether they considered themselves disabled and 84% had told us about their sexuality (or that they didn't want to tell us).

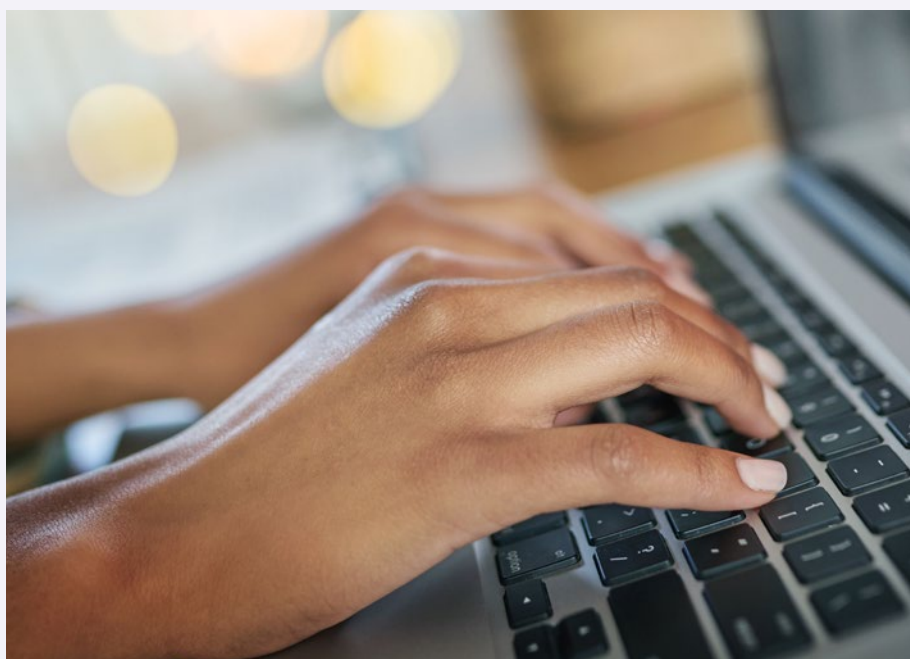
Thank you for answering what might seem like intrusive questions! For Soha it's all about knowing our residents so we can provide a better service. When this is used to break down our Tenant Satisfaction Measures information (see page 8), we can see which groups feel less satisfied than others. One example is the difference between women and men on repairs satisfaction.

We've started holding in-depth conversations with tenants dissatisfied with aspects

of our services. When we contacted residents who were not happy with our repairs service, we found that 26% thought that their gender was a factor in how they had been treated.

They told us things like they thought they might be being fobbed off by contractors because they're a woman, or that "they think we don't know what we're talking about because we are girls". Some even wondered if "a man would have been dealt with sooner".

We've talked with our contractors to make sure that all women are treated with respect. The good news is that satisfaction with repairs between women and men now seems to be more even. There is still work to do but it's very encouraging to see the increase in satisfaction among women.



When things go wrong

We try to give a good service but sometimes we don't get it right.

We take and action complaints and feedback by phone, email, letter, direct message on social media or in person when we visit you or you come to our offices in Didcot.

In 2023-24 we opened 826 complaints from residents of all tenures (that's tenants as well as shared owners), an increase of over 300 on the previous year. The vast majority (750) were dealt with as 'rapid resolutions'. The remainder were dealt with as formal complaints. The repairs service was the issue most frequently at the heart of both rapid resolution and formal complaints. That was much the same as the previous year.

55 of the formal complaints were upheld straight away when we investigated. We have learnt that your dissatisfaction was mainly with communication by our staff or contractors, the time taken to do adaptations under a Disabled Facilities Grant or work to rectify damp and mould. This is a topic which we addressed head-on by inviting residents to contact

a dedicated email address – damp@soha.co.uk – if damp or mould were suspected. You can see on page 11 how much we have invested in damp and mould investigations generally in 2023-24.

An additional 20 formal complaints went to Stage 2, when the complaint was examined by a Board member/ senior leadership team member. That was ten times the number of Stage 2s in 2023-24. We believe that it was in part due to residents being aware of our complaint process and being able to escalate to a Stage 2 review easily. We had two Stage 2 reviews concerning the housing service charges, where the panel (and subsequent legal advice) confirmed that our Stage 1 response was part of the tenancy agreement the residents had signed with us. In five Stage 2 reviews, compensation was awarded

We have a Complaints Working Group (made up of residents, two Board members, senior managers and staff from across the organisation) who make sure that 'lessons learned' get fed back to the Board, senior leadership and Members' Forum. Find out more at www.soha.co.uk/complaints

or the levels increased, or remedies were offered to the resident not previously offered. Most Stage 1 responses were upheld by the Stage 2 review panel, with us being able to show that we had followed policies and procedures.

You can see a full breakdown of complaints in 2023-24 on the complaints part of our website www.soha.co.uk/complaints. If you have questions, why not join our 'Ask Us Anything' live question and answer session online on 15 October.

New from 1 April 2024: the complaints procedure, that all Housing Associations like Soha have to abide by, has changed, and there is no longer a 'rapid resolution' option. All complaints are now treated as Stage 1s.



How Soha is run

You saw on page 2 who the residents are who make up the Members' Forum. Now to take a look at the people (five of them residents) who make up Soha's Board.

Soha doesn't make a profit. It's a mutual organisation with shareholding Membership open to tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and employees. Members are not the type of shareholders who receive a financial reward but they have a large impact. They make the most important decisions at Soha, including approving new Board members (see the 2023-24 Board below and note we will have a new Chair from September 2024) and how we invest in resident and community involvement.

Soha is managed through a system of co-regulation. This means that we actively encourage and support residents to engage with us both in setting policy and holding us to account for delivery. The responsibility for strategy and direction lies with the Board while Directors lead staff in carrying that out day to day. New Board members are nominated by a panel which

includes residents and existing Board members. They are then appointed through a vote of Members at Soha's AGM in September. It is Soha Members who hold the Board to account and monitor our performance.

The Board is made up of 12 people.

- Five are Soha residents with relevant experience and skills.
- Five are local people with professional experience and business skills.
- One may be a co-opted member (i.e. someone who's invited by other members to join the Board) Currently this role is filled by an independent person with relevant experience and skills.
- One is an executive officer of Soha; this is our Chief Executive.

If you're a resident and would like to have a say about how we're run and what our priorities should be, we'd love to hear from you! Call our Co-Regulation Coordinator on 0800 014 15 45 (Freephone) or send us an email to ri@soha.co.uk

Soha's Board up to September 2024

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| ■ Naomi Barrand (appointed 2021) | ■ Jennifer Ekelund (2018) Chair of Board | ■ David Mody (2017) |
| ■ Janet Crooks (2023) | ■ Dave Lakin (appointed 2018) Chair of Audit and Risk Committee* | ■ Peter Nkum (2021) |
| ■ Victoria Dingle (2018) Vice-Chair and Chair of Personnel and Remuneration Committee | ■ Emma Luddington (2022) | ■ Peter Sloman (2022) |
| | | ■ Hayley Smith (2018) |
| | | ■ Martin Thorne (2023) |
| | | ■ Kate Wareing (2018) Chief Executive |

*Soha's Board has ultimate responsibility for risk management and delegates detailed scrutiny and evaluation of risk to the Audit and Risk Committee which is made up of mainly Board members with relevant skills or an interest in the area. It exercises independent scrutiny and challenge and provides the Board with the understanding it needs to manage or mitigate principal and emerging risks. It additionally provides the Board with assurance that Soha is a financially strong organisation with a robust system of internal controls.



Brittani

Brittani moved into a Soha new build from a much smaller house with her four children. She says: "This is the first brand new home I've ever lived in and it's really well-designed with lots of space for my girls and me. We can be quiet in our rooms without getting in each other's way. There's loads of storage and a secure garden. The Occupational Therapist and Soha are working together really well on adaptations for our family and I feel like I can properly relax now, especially with a peaceful wildflower area to look out on. There aren't many people on this development yet but it already feels like we're part of a proper community with some lovely, welcoming neighbours."

It took on average

22 days

to re-let homes that became available when previous tenants moved out. Soha also took on the management of 33 properties on behalf of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils to accommodate people from Afghanistan.

We welcomed

683 new

households in 2023-24.

227 of these were into new builds; 59 were through mutual exchange; 397 were re-lets because the home had been vacated by a former resident.



Chris

As I think back over the last year, my message to Soha residents has got to be 'let Soha know what would make life easier and, the chances are, they can come up with a solution'. I found fluorescent strip lights in my home far too harsh so LED were fitted and they've made so much difference. I've also experimented with different ways of getting Soha publications – including on a USB stick for an audio version and electronically so that I can use my screen-reader to read them. I'm now after getting some help with my garden because I can't tend it as I'd like to and don't feel safe to enjoy it when it becomes overgrown.

Mike

I'd been thinking about a Community Garden for Berinsfield, where I live, for four years. I'd talked about it to Soha, who owned an abandoned allotment with man-high weeds, but things weren't progressing.

It wasn't really until 2023 that it got moving again. Soha started being out in communities with teams of Housing Officers who work only in one local area. They call them Localities. I started talking to my local team and things started happening, including getting an unsafe water manhole cover replaced. Between us we designed the garden which Soha's grounds maintenance contractors, John O'Conner, made reality. It felt like it made all the difference to have a single point of contact with a team that knew my home village inside out.

John O'Conner has sown the lawn with 24 species of wildflowers to bring colour nine months of the year, attracting insects, bees and birds. It won't be many seasons before hedgehogs will join them and the garden will be a haven for wildlife, along with the birds who nest in



the boundary hedges. There's also seating and raised beds for vegetable growing. The primary school are already holding lessons there!

The Localities service was fully staffed by August 2023. In the rest of the business year, we carried out

14 walkabouts
and nine doorknocks
(meeting around 130 of our residents). We also held 4 Community Connection events.

Local villagers have started to use the planters and people of all ages are just going in to sit down and relax and enjoy the peacefulness of nature. It's been an amazing transformation since work was completed and brightens up the village perfectly.

Where Mike lives is in Wallingford Locality. There are five Locality teams in total covering all of Soha's homes. Each team has a Community Neighbourhood Officer, a Lettings specialist, a Rental Income Officer, someone from the Home Ownership and Independent Living teams, a Technical Officer dealing with Repairs and an Estates expert. Soha collects stories of how Locality working has made a difference to residents and publishes them once a year. It's called the Impact Report and you can find it on the publications page of the Soha website.



Sue

Sue is a community development worker for a charity. She says: "I became a Soha shared owner of a two-bedroom house in April 2023. I had been a homeowner a number of years ago, then 'life got in the way', as they say, and I was even homeless briefly during this time. Most recently I was living in a one-bedroomed flat, without a garden in council accommodation in a challenging location. As soon as I had saved enough, I set out to find somewhere affordable I could retire to and when I moved into this Soha shared ownership property, the rent element of this part-rent, part-buy home was comparable to the rent of my current flat.

"The process of getting a shared ownership property was quite straightforward. I saw the home on Rightmove over the weekend and completed an enquiry form,

by the following Friday I had paid a £250 holding fee. The legal side takes a few weeks but there were no unforeseen hiccups along the way. I had been collecting pieces for several years for 'one day' when I would own a home again and it was so exciting to finally realise this dream and order furniture and bits of decor for my own place!

"I like being able to entertain my extended family, including two grandchildren. Where I was before was OK for them to come round, but it wasn't an area where I'd have wanted to let youngsters outside to play on their own. Here I back onto fields. They can be carefree, and as a result I am too. The house is lovely, the location is pretty and I'm finally getting to know people in the community. The one down side is the lack of public transport which means I have to drive to work or to see friends and family.

In 2023-24 we sold 84 new shared ownership homes. 17 households bought a larger share of their home, known as staircasing. 14 of these staircased to 100%, so buying their home outright.

"I need to keep earning because, as a shared owner, all the maintenance is down to me. I did a huge amount on the house when I moved in and have re-modelled the garden too, so it should be okay for a few years. However, as ongoing maintenance is my responsibility I am concerned about how I will afford this when I am retired. I also need to keep in mind that the rent element isn't static and increases annually, just as for any social housing resident. but I never had to worry about the additional costs of maintenance previously.

I've been on different journeys with my housing over the years. I've lived places and, in some, been able to make them feel homely for my family – almost against the odds – but this one represents the home I always wanted."

New in 2023-24 was a resale service where we market the home of a Soha shared owner who wants to move on. You can find out more at www.soha.co.uk/resales. If you or someone you know would like to buy a Soha shared ownership home, you'll see all the current properties on www.sohahomeownership.co.uk.

Peter

I'm a tenant who's interested in the development side of what Soha does. I also happen to be on Soha's Board - but that's not how I came to take part in the annual Development Tour last year. You could, too!

The Development team took us round in a bus to several sites where they are building new homes for new or existing Soha residents. Many of these are on estates where Soha is working with a builder who is also building similar homes on the same development but these will be for sale to private individuals. They typically use tried and trusted techniques to make homes as energy-efficient as possible to run within the standard specification.

Other Soha schemes are on land that is available for it to start from scratch. It's these projects where it can take control and tackle fuel poverty even more effectively; Soha can design in elements which make homes even more energy-efficient to run. One is at Cullum House in Wheatley which is a regeneration project. That means, Soha



Sheep wool forms the insulation between two flats in Hook Norton

has knocked down an out of date bedsit block and is rebuilding a net zero carbon development on the same land. The other is at Hook Norton, where Soha worked with a local group, the Hook Norton Community Land Trust, to build to absolute net zero standards. These homes are so energy-efficient that you can heat the house with no more power than is needed by a hairdryer!

In Wheatley, Soha's builders are making sure that no more greenhouse gases are added to the atmosphere than are taken away when the building is in use. In Hook Norton, the aim is that the homes, once in use, actually contribute energy back into the atmosphere! Soha will be comparing both types of construction to see which has the most impact on residents' energy bills.

Soha built

251 new homes

in 2023-24 and is managing a further eight in Oxford for Oxford Community Land Trust. This was Soha's first Community Land Trust partner. The Development team is currently working with a further two in Oxfordshire to provide new homes. Soha was the ninth largest housing association provider of new homes in the UK, relative to its size, in the last business year.



Solar panels go on to Cullum House

Photos

Left to right, top to bottom across both covers as a wraparound:

1. The Directors, the Chair and Vice-Chair before the January 2024 Board meeting
2. A retrofit home enjoyed by three generations, June 2024
3. Staff and resident at the company AGM in Cholsey, 2023
4. The Estates team
5. Tree planting at Millstream, Benson – contractors and residents, January 2023
6. The start of demolition work at Cullum House, Wheatley – contractors and Soha Development Manager, September 2023
7. Fish and Chip day at Windmill Place, Thame, June 2024
8. Residents' AGM, Didcot, April 2023
9. Vale Community Impact pop-up café, Petypher House, March 2024
10. Frances Curtis Court official opening, September 2023
11. Seniors' Christmas Party, Didcot, December 2023
12. Staff Conference, April 2024
13. The Customer Services team
14. Staff Conference, April 2024
15. Art activity, Frances Curtis Court, June 2024
16. A newbuild new home – not just for humans!
17. Resident Engagement team planning
18. Oxfordshire Play Association Playday, Didcot, June 2024
19. Retrofit in progress – contractors and staff, December 2023
20. Retrofit information day for residents, August 2023



Our Soha 2023-2024

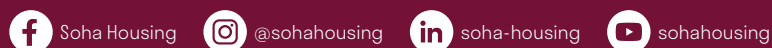


We send out a paper version of the report even if you have told us you prefer not to receive our publications at all. This is because it is part of our commitment to make sure that all residents are kept up to date with how Soha Housing is governed and managed and what happens to your money.

If you would like to sign up for an occasional newsletter, the electronic version of our *Hometalk* magazine or to receive alternative versions of our publications, such as large print, audio, or in other languages, please contact Soha's Communications team on communications@soha.co.uk or call us on 0800 014 15 45 (Freephone).

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www.soha.co.uk

