



**RESIDENTS'
ANNUAL REPORT
2020-21**

RUTH'S FOREWORD

“I think ISHA is
in a better
position than
it has been
for years”

Resident

What a year 2020 was. In a very short period, everyone had to adjust to lockdowns, fear of illness and fear for jobs and livelihoods. It also meant new ways of working, and at ISHA, we were not always able to deliver the service you should expect or to support you as we would have liked. This meant some of you experienced delays and disruptions, especially to our communications and repairs service. For this I am sorry, and we worked very hard to improve these areas.

However, looking back at the challenges we have faced in the last year, I cannot help but be proud and hopeful about what we were still able to achieve. By working with you, our residents and customers, and new contractors, we have succeeded in improving our service across many areas.

Our resident scrutiny panel has done an amazing job throughout, working with us remotely when meeting in person was not possible, holding us to account for our Covid response, and reporting back to us on our progress. When one of them said to me, ‘I think ISHA is in a better position than it has been for years’, I knew that we were on the right track.

In the first year of our five-year strategic plan we have set the foundations for further improvements. We know repairs remain the key driver of satisfaction for our residents so it has been a core focus for us this year. We are engaging with new smaller contractors who align with our values and deliver a much better service. Importantly, they are assessed by our dedicated resident

repairs panel before we make the decision to work with them and throughout their contracts – making sure co-creation of services is embedded and you are receiving the service you expect and deserve.

We have also taken action where things have gone wrong. We have worked hard to reduce our call waiting times. We have assessed ourselves against the Housing Ombudsman’s Code of Conduct and introduced a new complaints procedure as well as expanding our complaints and resolution team.

We have acknowledged a number of complaints about poor communication. So to deliver a better service – and to communicate better with residents – this year we restructured some of our teams and invested in training. I hope you’ll start to see the benefits of these changes.

We have also been working hard to respond to the national crisis

in building and fire safety. Safety is our priority and it angers me that ISHA and you, our residents, have been left to deal with years of shoddy practice and regulation. I have said so publicly, holding the Government to account over regulatory failures. ISHA is also holding developers to account, where needed, and is immensely grateful to the minority who have taken responsibility and acted to remedy their mistakes. We are pleased that ISHA residents in 17 buildings now have forms that allow them to sell if they wish (the EWS1 form) and await, as many of you do, emerging Government guidance. In the meantime we have not charged residents where mitigations have been needed.

We are also allowing those who desperately want to move to sublet their properties when they cannot sell. It is just one example of where we are seeking to live our values and drive up our service to you.



ABOUT ISHA

Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA) aims to deliver a brilliant service to residents and be grounded in the communities it exists to serve in North London, primarily in Islington, Hackney, and Waltham Forest. We exist to provide and maintain quality affordable housing and manage 2351 social and affordable homes.



“This new flat is a massive step up. Where I’ve got my daughter and we were in a one bedroom, it’s a massive change in quality of life”
Resident

WHAT THIS REPORT IS ABOUT

Our Residents’ Annual Report is about our service to you from April 2020 to March 2021. As well as the areas we are required to report to you on, we want to let you know how we responded to the Covid challenges, how we were able to bring positive changes to our repairs service, what we have been doing to keep you safe in your homes and how we have involved you in developing new services.

We also asked your views of our performance during the period. We have the results of the survey, including what you and other residents told us about our service and how we have responded to your feedback.



OUR VISION AND STRATEGY

Our vision at ISHA is to **co-create homes and communities where everyone can flourish.**

In April 2020, we launched our new vision and five-year strategy to help us achieve this vision. We listened to what you have been telling us through surveys, resident forums and the Scrutiny Panel and our strategy sets out our response.

Completed
20
New Homes
all of them
affordable



THE FIRST YEAR OF OUR STRATEGY

We want to always provide excellent services because we believe that everyone is entitled to a quality, affordable and safe home. We want to make sure our customer service is right every time and that when we get it wrong, we fix it. In this first year of our strategy we have begun the groundwork, building on what we are already doing and making changes where we have seen room for improvement.

Our vision builds on ISHA's organisational values:



**Pride in
team ISHA**



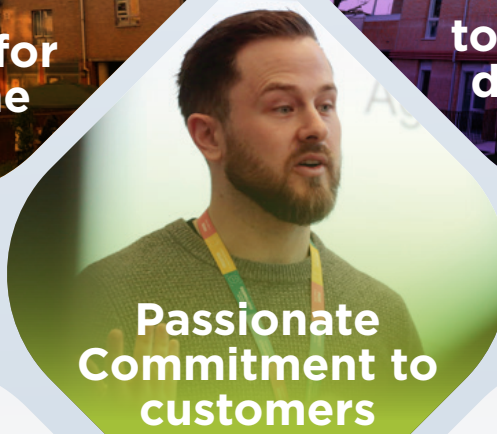
**Respect for
everyone**



**Trusted
to make the
difference**

“I just wanted to say what I've said on the residents' WhatsApp, that my personal experience with you and ISHA is nothing but positive”

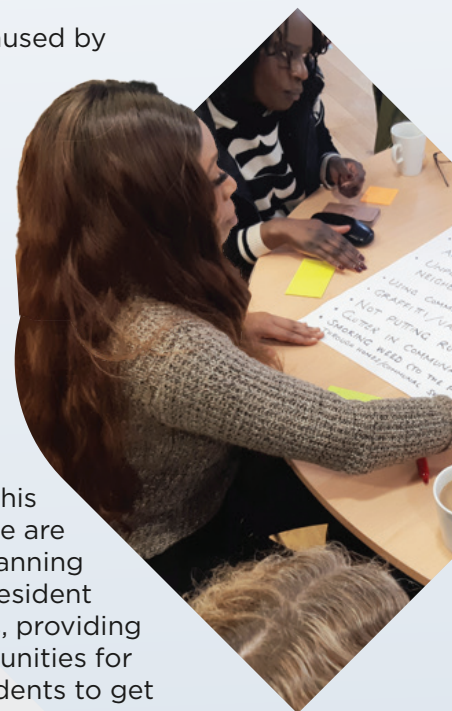
Resident



**Passionate
Commitment to
customers**

THE 8 PILLARS OF ISHA'S STRATEGY

- **Safety first** – ensuring our homes are safe
- **Service and satisfaction** – being a consistent and quality landlord, building service delivery that drives satisfaction in partnership with residents
- **Security and growth** – setting residents off on a secure footing and helping create the conditions for people to flourish in their homes
- **Somewhere** – anchoring ourselves in North London, especially Islington, Hackney and Waltham Forest
- **Supply** – building quality homes for social, London Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership
- **Sustainability**
 - Building green and actively seeking to reduce the environmental harm caused by our stock, our building and business practices
 - Stewarding ISHA's assets and finances and taking the long view
- **Staff** – engaging with inspired, high performing staff
- **Systems** – maintaining robust IT and business systems that support the business and its ambitions



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

We strive to build affordable homes, to keep our communities mixed and thriving, maintain those homes and deliver a first-rate repairs service. And we know that how we do those things can always be improved.

That's why, where possible, we're asking for your involvement and suggestions to help us deliver a better service for everyone. For example, at one resident action day a contributor said: 'I know you're not a huge business. I don't need you to answer the phone in three rings, but I'd like the option to request a call back.' Based on this, we successfully introduced a call-back system where calls are returned within the day, meaning average wait times have been greatly reduced.

We have a proud history of resident engagement, and we're delighted to have had three

residents on our ISHA Board this year, ensuring residents continue to have voice in how ISHA is run. We continue to innovate and build on our successful resident engagement approach. During the year we have:

- expanded our existing Resident Scrutiny Panel
- set up a Resident Repairs Panel, which will appoint and scrutinise contractors
- launched a building safety engagement programme
- run focus groups with residents on car parking, and living in ISHA homes
- trialled new community development activities
- held a Resident Action Forum on our response to Covid.

In the coming year we will recruit to our Resident Complaints Panel and expand our community development programme. After a successful

virtual event this year, we are also planning more resident forums, providing opportunities for all residents to get involved. We will continue to partner with you to improve our services and your satisfaction with them.

Our pilot community development project held resident events at four estates, ran employability workshops resulting in residents finding employment, and supported hyperlocal resident groups to make improvements. It has been a fantastic way to get local people involved in our communities and we will continue to work with contractors, local authorities, local businesses and education institutions on further projects.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Delivering excellent customer services is what motivates everyone at ISHA and we ensure all new staff are aligned with and embrace our values wholeheartedly.

2020-21 was the first year of our five-year strategy, which is dedicated to delivering excellent customer service. We:

- created a new leasehold team, allowing us to deliver an expert service to residents who own or part-own their ISHA home
- brought our customer service team staff safely back into the office after residents reported difficulties getting through when staff were working remotely
- held a remote resident forum to look at our response to Covid and updated our Business Continuity Plan as a result
- ensured all staff received Institute of Customer Service training and implemented some of their service improvement plans - more will follow
- reviewed our complaints process against the Housing Ombudsman's new Code of Conduct, and as a result completely rewrote our process and employed a full-time Complaints and Resolution Officer to manage it

We reduced our contact wait times significantly in 2020-21, and we want to do more

- undertook a big recruitment drive as well as restructuring our team so we have permanent staff members in place and no longer rely on temporary staff
- had the repairs contractors we work with assessed by our new Resident Repairs Panel so we can make sure they provide the service you want
- Updated our communications - using text and WhatsApp where residents have indicated

Average time to answer voicemails

64 Hours (2020)
down to
24 Hours (2021)

Average wait for call to be answered

2 minutes 15 seconds (2020)
down to
29 seconds (2021)

Longest wait

20 Minutes (2020)
down to
5 Minutes (2021)

Abandoned calls

17% (2020)
down to:
5% (2021)

a preference, sending texts to advise of communal issues and resolutions and translating information into multiple languages.

THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

We have plans to update our website as we want to make it easier to use, relevant to you and reflective of the organisation we are. We have a new Digital Communications Officer leading this project.

We are recruiting for our new Resident Complaints Panel, which will ensure residents have oversight of complaints, and that we can report on the lessons we are learning.

We are tendering for new contractors to work with us to provide repairs services. The new contractors are those who believe in, and work according to, our vision and values.

We are also updating our records system so we can measure how satisfied you are with repairs services as these repairs take place.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We understand your home is important and we have a duty to help you maintain it. We know that you, and we, were unhappy with the performance of our previous repairs contractor, and we have parted company from them.

Following a local tender, four small and medium contractors have been providing repairs services for us during the year and we have mostly had very positive feedback on their performance. Where residents have reported issues, we've fed those back in review

meetings and seen real improvements. These contractors will support us during our long-term tender process and will also be invited to tender themselves. We are due to complete this selection of new, local repairs contractors in late 2021.

Residents are involved in selecting our new repairs contractors – if this is something you are interested, please let us know by emailing involvement@isha.co.uk.

35 Bathrooms
48 Kitchens
42 New Boilers

99%
of our low-cost properties meet the Decent Homes Standard*

*residents of the outstanding properties refused upgraded kitchen or bathrooms

WHAT WE DID

Repairs services were affected by the Covid lockdown – at the start of the period we provided emergency repairs only, and some residents were understandably fearful of allowing contractors into their homes. Planned repairs and maintenance was put on hold for much of the period too.

During 2020-21, we spent £5.8m on routine maintenance (this is day to day repairs) and £1.4m on

planned maintenance, which is work we carry out in a planned way to ensure our homes are of a good standard. This is compared with our 2019-20 spend of £4m on routine maintenance and £1.6 on planned maintenance.

Ten of our schemes underwent cyclical decorations and repairs this year, with a further 12 planned for 2021-22. In the future, we will also look at double glazing during the cyclical works as part of our strategy to reduce the carbon footprint of our buildings.

“It’s really noticeable how well-salted and ice-free the communal path is at Kinver House. I assume this was done and/or organised by you, so thanks!”

Resident

SAFETY

Safety is our number one priority – this includes the routine safety checks we must carry out as a responsible landlord, as well as the additional safety testing of some of our buildings following the Grenfell Tower disaster and resulting updates to the building safety regulations.

Our resident engagement strategy for building safety provides residents with better information, we listen to their concerns and take action to

ensure 'safety first' is always achieved.

As promised, during the year we established the Building Safety team. Together with the Compliance team, they ensure our homes are safe for our residents to live in while our Health & Safety Forum assesses all health and safety reports.

100%

of buildings have a current Fire Risk Assessment

The asbestos register is up to date with

294

 domestic and

156

 communal surveys

TALL BUILDINGS

All our homes over 18 meters and seven of those below 18 meters have been opened up to establish what cladding is on them and whether the wall systems are built as they should have been.

Where we have found issues, we have put interim measures in place, at no cost to leaseholders, and have carried out or planned remedial actions.

We have obtained EWS1 certificates for eight ISHA owned buildings and have them for a further nine where there

are ISHA residents, allowing leaseholders to be able to sell their homes without hindrance, if they wish to. We have removed the ACM cladding from Burbage House and Lyme Grove House.

The cost of interim safety measures to ISHA last year was £1 million.

We watch with interest the action of lenders following announcements from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, and his expert panel in July

2021. Early comments from the new Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing, Michael Gove, seem positive, but we await guidance.

We have engaged with our residents and will continue to keep you informed about the progress and outcomes of the ongoing inspections. At our tall buildings, we have held monthly Zoom meetings for all residents, and have seen our leaseholders satisfaction that their building is safe and secure improve to 56%, from 30% in the previous year.

REGULAR SAFETY CHECKS

Our target is to ensure all landlord gas safety certificates are issued promptly and fire safety actions are dealt with without any delay. However, at the end of the year, three gas safety certificates were pending, due to some reticence about providing access during Covid-19. While it is understandable that people are anxious, gas safety checks are vital for your safety and that of others, and access is legally required and enforceable. In addition, 14 fire safety actions

were also overdue at the end of the year. Due to the high demand across the country for fire doors, and exacerbated by the Covid-19 lockdown, we were unable to acquire fire doors within the prescribed timeframe.

We are committed to ensuring that building safety information is up-to-date and accessible and as part of our website audit, will ensure that residents can find the latest information about their building, including when an inspection of their cladding system may happen.



DEVELOPING NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES

An important part of our mission is to develop more quality, affordable housing for people in North and East London, and to build more homes in Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest. We lead the North River Alliance (NRA), which is a development consortium of North and East London community-based small and medium sized housing associations, with whom we've developed 3,500 homes in 15 years.

With the NRA, we are currently working with North London

Muslim Housing Association to develop homes in Enfield and Hackney, as well as other sites for Shian Housing Association and Christian Action Housing Association.

Covid had a significant impact on our ability to progress our development programme. However, despite this, during 2020-21 we still:

- handed over 20 new homes
- sold five new affordable shared ownership homes
- secured a site at Barrett's

Grove in Stoke Newington to develop more affordable homes.

In May, residents moved into 16 new homes for rent at a site at Hoe Street in Waltham Forest. Naseberry Court, also in Waltham Forest, also completed in May. This has provided 17 new rental homes for local residents in addition to 21 shared ownership homes.

FUTURE PROJECTS

We have another site at Hoe Street due to be completed in the Autumn, which will provide 34 homes for shared ownership, four for rent and a commercial property.

This year we will also complete building at a site at Parkhurst Road, which will deliver 18 shared ownership homes and 41 for social rent, and we hope to begin work at the Barrett's Grove site, which will deliver 25 new homes.



34
homes
for shared
ownership in
Hoe Street,
Waltham Forest



17
new rental
homes and
21 shared
ownership
homes
in Naseberry Court,
Waltham
Forest

18
shared
ownership homes
41
for social rent
at Parkhurst
Road

25
new homes
at Barrett's
Grove



**"Firstly
thanks Garry
for coming round and
doing such a great job.
You are an
absolute star"**
Resident

WHAT YOU THINK OF ISHA 2020-21?

MEASURING RESIDENT SATISFACTION

Knowing what you think of the service we provide is vital if we are to improve our service, and to understand where things are going right or wrong.

Last year we reported on the results of our STAR survey. This was a one-off, snapshot survey asking you what you think about our services. But to maintain improvements, we need to find out what you

think more regularly – and to have confidence in how your satisfaction is reported.

In 2020-21, we partnered with the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) to carry out resident surveys for us. They are an independent organisation with an excellent reputation, and both you and we can now be confident that your satisfaction is independently measured and

reported. We also moved to surveying a group of residents each month, so during the course of the year, every resident will have the opportunity to give their view. This gives us a better opportunity to put things right as issues arise and to see which blocks have issues. These are reported to ISHA's Leadership Team and Board.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

You have told us that ISHA has done slightly better this year since the previous 2019-20 STAR survey, despite significant challenges including Covid lockdowns and a resulting interruption to our customer service system, a move to new repairs contractors, a national building safety crisis and car parking delays.

YOU TOLD US:

Residents found ISHA was less easy to deal with – only 54% of you were satisfied and resolution of your issue at the first point of contact went down from 86% in 2019-20 to 82% this year. We are very sorry you experienced problems, particularly at the start of lockdown in 2020, and we have worked hard to address these issues. We ran a resident forum on our response to Covid, which further highlighted problems residents had getting in touch with us, and we have subsequently made changes and updated our Business Continuity Plan in response.

We know we have more to do to improve satisfaction further, and we will do so. However, we are pleased that overall satisfaction improved this year.

61%
of you are satisfied
with the overall
service provided
by ISHA
(60% 2019/20)

57%
of you are satisfied
with our repairs and
maintenance service
(50% 2019/20)

72%
of you are satisfied
with the overall
quality of
your home
(NO COMPARABLE
FIGURE 2019/20)

56%
of you believe ISHA's
services are good
value for money
(NO COMPARABLE
FIGURE 2019/20)

68%
of you are satisfied
your home is safe
and secure
(57% 2019/20)

WHAT WE ARE DOING TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE

“Kelleher workmen were really polite and friendly”
Resident

The results received over the 2020-21 period have given us real insight into customer satisfaction and the Institute of Customer Service has provided three detailed recommendations, which we have started implementing.

1 Ensure staff training provides ISHA employees with the knowledge/tools to get tenant problems ‘right first time’ whenever possible.

- We are developing further FAQs to assist our customer services team to answer right first time.
- Our customer satisfaction strategy is well underway and is being developed with resident and staff feedback.

2 Identify ways of making it easier for customers to deal with ISHA

- Our Customer Service Team recruitment has stabilised, and a full training programme means has equipped them to answer more queries straight away.
- We have overcome technical problems which meant it was difficult to contact us during the first Covid lockdown and our reception has reopened.
- We are contactable via social media routes
- We now send out a digital newsletter every month and are working to update our website with relevant information.

3 Work with estate services and local authorities to clear rubbish and litter backlogs

- We held a Resident Forum on cleaning and gardening services, and have taken actions at specific estates
- Our neighbourhoods teams are working closely with local authorities
- Residents are already thanking us for improvements: *‘Just an update on the bin situation. The additional bin seems to have done the trick! I notice that the cleaners are also cleaning around the bin area. Please pass on my thanks’*

If you tell us where we need to improve, we will try our best to do so.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We will continue to work with the Institute of Customer Service this year, conducting monthly surveys with a selection of residents by email, text or phone call. We ensure we have enough resident responses each month so we can have confidence that the results accurately reflect how you’re feeling about our services.

In 2021, we will also ask you how satisfied you are with your repairs as soon as they have been completed. We are trialling a new system where residents will be contacted after a repair

and asked a short series of questions about how the repair was carried out. Please update your details to ensure we can reach you by contacting us at isha@isha.co.uk.

We value your responses and use what you tell us to help address any issues identified. It is important that you have an opportunity to give feedback, both good and bad. If you would like to help our research team, please get in touch by calling the contact centre, or emailing: involvement@isha.co.uk.



BOARD AND GOVERNANCE

ISHA's Board is responsible for upholding our values, vision and mission and meeting our strategic objectives, while at the same time protecting our social housing assets and ensuring that ISHA remains financially sustainable. To maintain high standards of governance and accountability to residents and other stakeholders, the Board has adopted the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance (2020). The Board assesses its performance against its Code of Governance annually.

ISHA is fortunate to have a diverse board in terms of skills, gender and ethnicity. Profiles of

Board members can be found on the 'About' section of our website.

During 2020-21, ISHA recruited three new board members, including two residents. Ruth Davison, Chief Executive, was appointed to the Board in March 2021 to further build on an already positive relationship between the Board and the executive team. As of the end of March 2021, ISHA had 12 board members including three residents, seven women, and four members identifying as black and minority ethnic.



Lien Viet merged with ISHA in 2019. We continue to provide culturally sensitive services and celebrate its history and achievements.