

Bolton at Home **Value for money** **summary**

April 2018 to March 2019



Bolton
at Home

Introduction



What do we mean by value for money

When we talk about providing value for money (VFM) for our tenants and communities we mean being as economical, efficient and effective as possible in everything we do.

As a community benefit society we're about people, not profit. We want the income we receive through rent payments, bank loans, government funding and grants to be spent wisely.

Why do we report on it?

As a registered housing provider and a responsible landlord, we have a duty to ensure you get value for money from our service and understand where your money goes.

We also want to make sure that the way we spend money matches our goals, to:

- meet the housing needs of current and future customers;
- support our customers to be more independent;
- help local communities to flourish;
- be a well-run, responsible and financially secure organisation.

What is in this summary document?

It contains details of our performance against different measures. Examples include the standard of your home, reinvestment in our housing stock, new homes built, the number of customers we've supported into employment, and customer satisfaction levels.

How do we use this information to improve?

This information helps us see where we're performing well and the areas where we'd like to do better. It informs decisions we make when we're setting our performance goals and making spending decisions.

Above all, it helps us maintain transparency and trust by being clear about how we reinvest the money we receive to benefit you and your communities.

Improving your home

Reinvesting in our properties

Our goal

We aim to reinvest as much income as possible to maintain and improve our existing homes effectively and efficiently.

How we performed

In 2018/19 we spent £22.5m on making improvements to existing properties.

4,260

homes benefited from upgrades, which represents around one quarter of our total properties. Some homes received more than one type of improvement.



Overall, these improvements break down as follows:

138

on environmental work, including new fencing.



97

homes received new bathrooms (a further 15 bathrooms had disabled adaptations);



1,563

homes received heating system upgrades;



698

homes got structural improvements;



1,584

homes received new windows and doors;



457

homes benefitted from external works, improving appearance and making wind and water tight.



Some of these improvement figures are updated from what we reported in our Annual Report for April 2018 to March 2019 following a period of verification.

Areas for improvement and next steps

We'll continue to gather and monitor data about our housing stock through a rolling programme of condition surveys carried out over a two-year period. This will allow us to develop better home improvement plans that meet the needs of our tenants and complement our new build development programme.

Repairs and maintenance

Our goal

For many of you, the repair and maintenance of your home is the most important service we provide so it's essential we get it right.

We want to give you a repairs service where jobs are completed quickly with minimum of fuss and to your satisfaction. To make sure our repairs service is the best it can be, we listen to your feedback to review what we do and find ways to improve.

How we performed

By reinvesting in our homes and carrying out better maintenance, we're reducing the number of repairs required. We carried out a total of **57,770** repairs in 2018/19, down from 58,402 in 2017/18.

We've trialled different ways of working to complete more repairs on the first visit. These measures include:

- allowing our repairs staff more time for each job where possible;
- increasing the capacity of our vehicles to be able to carry more parts and tools;
- introducing a text messaging service to give tenants more accurate appointment times and reduce missed appointments.

Despite the increase in first visit repairs, the average number of calendar days to complete repairs did increase slightly.

Some key facts and figures:

12.01

average number of calendar days taken to complete repairs (11.07 days in 17/18);



94.6%

overall customer satisfaction with repairs (92.6% in 2017/18);



95.1%

of repair appointments kept to agreed date and time (95.7% in 2017/18);



98.6%

of 'two-hour emergency repairs' responded to in time (98.1% in 2017/18);



95.8%

of '12-hour emergency repairs' were responded to in time (93.2% in 2017/18).



*From 2019/20 emergency repairs will move to a 24-hour target response time. If this was the case for 2018/19 then 99.7% of emergency jobs would have been responded to in target time.

Areas for improvement and next steps

While our performance on repairs and maintenance improved for most measures of success, we're disappointed by the slight increase in the average number of days for repairs to be completed. We're focusing on quicker response times and sending the person with the right specialisms to conduct the initial inspection. This should mean repairs can be better planned and completed quicker.

Another area where we're looking to make improvements is on empty properties, known in the sector as 'voids'. Void properties are those that remain unoccupied after the previous tenant leaves and we need to do repair work to bring the property up to a lettable standard for the new tenant.

The average length of major voids increased from 97 days in 2017/18, to **98** days in 2018/19, while minor voids increased from 25.1 days to **25.7** days.

This was due to us dealing with properties that required more work and which remained empty for longer. A recent change in the law also meant some properties that the tenant would have chosen to live in while work was completed had to remain empty until the work was done.

We're making further resources available to work on our empty properties. We're working towards pre-ordering and stocking more kitchen and bathroom products to ensure work can take place on empty properties more quickly. The void clean and clear service is now delivered by Starts with you, our social enterprise subsidiary, which is improving the quality of the service.

Energy efficiency

Our goal

We want to make your homes as energy efficient as possible, helping you to make energy savings and enabling us to improve our environmental performance.

How we performed

During 2018/19 we saved tenants over **£80,000** in reduced fuel bills through our Keep Warm for Less programme. We deliver this with Starts with you to offer support and advice on your energy use. We provide free home visits, tariff reviews and training.

We also explored new heating solutions to replace expensive-to-run storage heaters in homes without a gas supply. The system uses 'air source heat pumps', which are a low carbon and affordable solution for tenants. At Green Lane in Horwich, we have installed **70** of these systems in tenants' homes in partnership with Greater Manchester Combined Authority. These have typically halved running costs while providing controllable heat and hot water.

We've also procured a new electricity contract for Bolton at Home, which sources **100%** green electricity producing zero harmful greenhouse gases.

Areas for improvement and next steps

We'll be seeking to extend the trial of air source heat pumps and other low carbon technologies to other estates in Bolton.

We'll also review the energy efficiency of our housing stock with targets now being in place for improved Energy Performance Certificate ratings.

We'll continue to review and update the way we heat your home to make sure you're getting value for money. As a responsible organisation, we'll also make sure our heating strategy reflects the need to respond to climate change and the way we use energy in the future.

Providing new homes

Development



Our goal

We aim to build new affordable homes that people in Bolton and other places desperately need, in a way that does good for the whole community.

For new tenants, our development programme provides quality homes that are cheap to run. Our existing tenants also benefit from our new-build homes because they allow us to generate new income, which we'll reinvest in existing homes and other vital services. Building new homes allows us to do more for communities, helping us put money back into projects that help people find employment, or improve their health and wellbeing.

How we performed

In 2018/19 we completed **93** new build homes, **72** that we built ourselves and **21** that we bought from private developers. We had also started work to build another **27** new homes and obtained planning permission for a further **22** homes.

We also built our first shared ownership homes under our Stonecross Homes brand and sold our initial **21** properties. The income we receive from the sale of shared ownership properties will allow us to build more homes for affordable rent and will go back into other services for tenants.

During the reporting period we lost **164** properties through Right to Buy and Right to Acquire schemes.

Customer satisfaction with our new properties remains exceptional and underlines the quality of homes that we're developing. Customer feedback on the specification and design continues to shape future new build homes.

Areas for improvement and next steps

We have plans to create **785** new properties over the next three years through our own developments and by buying homes from private developers.

Our new homes will go some way to meeting local housing demand and offer people more choice than before by building developments for rent and shared ownership, as well as developing extra care schemes to meet the needs of older tenants.

We're also investing in innovative ways of building new homes quicker, including the use of modern modular homes that are constructed in sections off site and later assembled on site.

Our development activity also plays an important role in our social value goals, for example we ask contractors to take on apprentices and offer work experience opportunities for our customers.

We'll use the money we get from the sale of homes to build more affordable rented homes and regenerate communities, and this is what we'll be concentrating on.

Supporting communities



Our goal

As a community benefit society, we're more than a landlord and realise that value for money is so much more than bricks and mortar. It's about helping people and doing good for communities.

To achieve this, we run a range of support services and work in partnership with a variety of local charities, social enterprises and other agencies.

We tackle poverty with debt and money advice. We provide food and clothes initiatives and help tenants keep warm for less. We support tenants and residents into training and employment, and deal with antisocial behaviour. We help people to remain independent in their own homes with a community alarm service and adaptations. And we work with volunteer groups to build sustainable communities.

How we performed

In 2018/19, our employment related programmes helped **317** people into paid work and **244** people into learning or training programmes.

1,080 tenants gained a total of **£5,233,690** with support from our Money Advice Team to maximise income, deal with debts and lower bills.

At any one time, we've provided housing and personal support to over **600** people who are vulnerable and **60** survivors of domestic abuse and violence.

We also supported **83** community groups or tenant and resident associations, and ran a range of projects to develop people's skills, health and confidence.

Contributing more

We're committed to increasing social value and maximising our spend within the local economy.

In delivering our services and to help build community wealth, in 2018/19 we spent over **£25m** in Bolton (around 50% of our total expenditure) and we spent **£4m** within the local voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Also, our employees make a difference in the neighbourhoods we serve by volunteering time and making donations to charitable causes through the year.

Keeping you safe

Our goal

We have a duty to keep tenants safe, but we go above and beyond what is required by law to help you live in safe homes and communities.

How we performed

Some key facts and figures for 2018/19 include:

99.4%

of gas servicing completed, 15,694 of 15,790 properties (with steps in place to legally enforce access to the remaining 96 properties);



100%

of communal areas with asbestos reviewed within timescale;



100%

of communal areas have a Fire Risk Assessment in place and completed within timescale;



100%

of water management tests carried out in higher risk buildings within timescale and have an appropriate management plan in place;



100%

of workplaces and communal areas have a valid electrical condition test certificate;



93%

of solid fuel appliances serviced at least once a year and have a proper working carbon monoxide alarm installed in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance (with steps in place to legally enforce access to the remaining properties).



We also ensure:

- there are proper working smoke alarms at the start of a tenancy;
- properties have a smoke alarm installed on every floor;
- properties have smoke alarm(s) tested annually.

Areas for improvement and next steps

We remain committed to ensuring the health and safety of our tenants and communities. We'll:

- comprehensively review our health and safety processes and procedures in our key operational areas;
- develop a new health and safety policy, which will be available on our website when complete;
- establish a health and safety guide for tenants, which will be available on our website when complete;
- provide tenants with more specific information about relevant health and safety matters.

For more information contact:

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boltonathome.org.uk

If you'd like to get involved

We're always looking for ways to give tenants a greater voice in what we do and how we do it.

If you're interested in getting involved with us, please visit boltonathome.org.uk/be-involved for more details.



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