



Keniston



Annual report to residents 2019-20

www.kenistonha.co.uk

A message from our Chair and Chief Executive

This year has seen several key changes within Keniston – some planned and others unexpected. Not least, we had to respond quickly to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, so as to maintain services while protecting residents and staff.



We started the year preparing to acquire the Bickley estate from Stonewater Housing Association and completed the transfer in May. Since then, the estate has been a major focus of our work, across several projects.

- We've worked with the residents to resolve the biomass heating issues at Southwood Close. While we've made progress, in the longer term we now know that a new heating system is needed, and we are working to achieve this.
- Having discovered defective fire compartmentation in Robert Whyte House, we immediately ensured the safety of residents by introducing a fire warden service. We also brought forward plans to fully modernise the accommodation. This in turn means that all existing residents will need to move out, and we are continuing to ensure that everyone's housing needs are catered for.
- We brought in new gardeners to maintain and improve the grounds.

We have continued to improve how we communicate with Keniston residents. For example, we developed an 'easy read' guide to the tenancy agreement and, during lockdown, produced a range of information leaflets. We have started to use different methods too, including making

our own YouTube videos to show people how to change their 2D lightbulbs.

Our plans for building additional new homes within our Darrick Wood estate are still moving forward, albeit delayed by the pandemic lockdown.

Like every organisation in the country, the Covid-19 pandemic came suddenly to Keniston, and the effects have been far reaching. Since the crisis struck, we have kept all our essential services going, while closing our office and enabling most staff to work from home.

We have reached out to all our vulnerable tenants to make sure they can access vital services. Sadly, both residents and staff have lost loved ones, but the crisis has also shown the strength of communities as people have worked to support each other. We are proud that our staff have shown their true resilience and dedication, together with the agility to adapt to the 'new normal'.

The year has also seen some changes of key personnel. In October, Keniston said farewell to our Chair Julian Miles, who stepped down having come to the end of his nine-year tenure on the Board. An open and competitive recruitment led to Emma Keegan taking over as Chair in November.

In March, Vivienne Astall stepped down as Operations Director after 10 years at Keniston, and we welcomed Sue McDonnell as her replacement.

As set out in this report, we maintained our focus on performance and achieving good satisfaction feedback. We are pleased to see a number of positive comments from residents and aim to continue to deliver the services our residents want, in ways that they want.

Looking forward – writing this while the country is still firmly in the grip of the biggest public health crisis in a century – the future has many unknowns. But we are confident that Keniston can and will weather the storm, maintaining its values of respect, openness, accountability, honesty and excellence.

Jonathan Card, Chief Executive
Emma Keegan, Board Chair



1 About Keniston

We are a non-profit-making housing association, providing low-cost social housing for people in need of a home.

We provide 627 general needs, 219 sheltered housing and 33 leasehold properties of all sizes, on estates across the London boroughs of Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Bromley, Bexley and Croydon, and in Crawley.

In 2019-20, we bought back one of our Bexley leasehold properties to create an additional home for social rent.

Our purpose, vision and goals

We set high standards for the service we deliver and we are happiest when tenants say they are satisfied with what we do.

Our purpose is to:

- Maintain very high resident satisfaction



- Provide more homes for people who need them
- Support communities and enable opportunities for individuals

Our vision is to deliver:

- Better Homes: Keeping homes safe and well-maintained, now and into the future
- Better Services: Delivering good quality, cost-effective services

and putting residents at the heart of what we do, and

- Better Neighbourhoods: Remaining a responsible, caring and personal landlord that creates sustainable neighbourhoods and supports communities.

Among the goals in our strategic plan, we are prioritising investing in our existing homes. We also want to build affordable new homes.

Welcoming Bickley residents to Keniston

Residents from the Bickley estate in Bromley became Keniston tenants in May 2019, after we acquired their homes from Stonewater Housing Association.



The Bickley estate has 120 homes for general needs and sheltered housing, as well as 10 garages.

We are pleased to be offering our new residents their first experience of locally based services and local management.

How happy I am with your service and attitude, since only taking over a few weeks ago. Other residents feel the same.

2 Customer services

The new-look Customer Service Team spent their first year in continuous training to increase their skills.

The aim is to improve our working processes, become more efficient and provide a better customer experience.

We now encourage self-service wherever possible, for example by providing quick and easy ways to pay your rent online and a 'My Tenancy' portal where you can report repairs. This leaves the team with more time to speak to you personally when you need this.



I am very happy. Thanks to all at Keniston Housing Association for all your ongoing professionalism and caring assistance.

I used the new service and it was beautifully done. I had two problems to report and both were dealt with swiftly. I got all my repairs texts and thought the service was excellent.



YouTube

During the year, we set up a YouTube channel and made our first information video. Residents also helped update the content and look of our leaflets.

3 Voids and lettings

We let 33 Keniston homes during the year, compared to 25 homes in 2018-19.

We helped 12 residents to transfer to a new Keniston home and nine others to make a mutual exchange. We assisted two residents to move to a smaller property.

Spending more time with potential new residents pushed our overall average re-let time to 26 days (18 in 2018-19). We need to reduce this figure to minimise rent loss during the current financial year.

You said: New residents wanted sign-up to include more time being shown how things work in the property.

We did: To create more time, we produced an easy read guide to our tenancy agreement, so that residents could read this in advance.

Everyone I have spoken to at Keniston Housing has been really helpful and polite. I am less anxious about my move, so thank you Keniston.

You said: We want you to do more to make sure applicants become good tenants.

We did: We increased our pre-tenancy work to help new residents get their tenancies off to a good start. Our support paid off. While five of last year's new residents did break their tenancy agreements, only one case was not resolved.

Lettings performance	Keniston 2018-19	Small HAS 2018-19 (median)	Keniston 2019-20	Keniston target 2019-20
Average relet time for general needs (days)	19	18.7	25	20
Average relet time for sheltered housing (days)	16	20	27	20

4 Estate services

Improvements

We spent £55k on improvements to estates via our Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods initiative, including on the following:

- a recycling bin, CCTV and garden furniture for older residents at **Sunningdale Court**
- landscaping a disused area and an additional bin for dogs' mess at **Darrick Wood**
- motion sensor lighting at **Perryfield House**
- a camera to help resolve anti-social behaviour and dumping at **Nethewode Court**, and
- improving the rubbish and recycling bins at **Tarling Close**.

We were able to tell residents who raised the issue that we will be upgrading to more energy efficient LED streetlighting over the next three years.

We also agreed to provide a translation service at Crawley tenant meetings.

Darrick Wood residents told us that mobile phone signals are poor at their estate. We hope to solve this in the future by bringing in a communal WiFi system.

You said: Bickley estate residents were not happy with their gardening service.

We did: A resident group helped to choose a new one.

Estate surveys

We survey estates every other year. This year we surveyed nine estates. Overall, 96% were satisfied with their estate services and 92% agreed they got value for money.

Residents dumping rubbish or misusing bin stores are the biggest source of dissatisfaction and our main environmental problem on your estates.

These two very professional and polite gardeners were a breath of fresh air and I am sure very soon this estate will be brought back to life with a little tender care and gardeners' love.



You said: Residents at Merrow Street in Southwark wanted to bring a former play area back to life to benefit the whole community.

We did: We secured the area with new fencing, resurfaced the play area and provided planters for residents to grow plants and vegetables.

Anti-social behaviour

We received 42 reports of anti-social behaviour (52 in 2018-19). Of these, 19 involved residents with support needs, 15 were noise complaints and six involved inconsiderate noisy neighbours, rather than anti-social behaviour.

In most cases, the problem came to an end or the person who made the complaint decided not to take things further. In one case the residents involved took part in mediation. In another, a resident signed an acceptable behaviour agreement.

However, nine complaints involved threats, intimidation and abuse, and there was one case of arson. Four cases needed legal action and we gained two injunctions – one for noise and one for dog nuisance. We served two notices of seeking possession and were able to evict one household for significant anti-social behaviour.

We work with the police and social services to get the best outcomes around anti-social behaviour. During the year, we also bought two more mobile CCTV cameras to use at any scheme.

5 Repairs and maintenance

We carried out 2,831 day-to-day repairs, completing 96.7% on target (96.5% in 2018-19) and spending an average of £473 on each property (£458 in 2018-19).

We completed a further 279 repairs, working on voids (empty homes), servicing and planned maintenance.

Your satisfaction with repairs was 91% against a target of 95%. This was disappointing, but we aren't sure it related directly to work carried out. We are reviewing the way we collect feedback.

We spent much more on voids (£160,328) than in 2018-19 (£112,687). We need to bring this down this year, but we want to keep your satisfaction levels high.

We also spent:

- £446,953 on major repairs to 119 homes
- £154,879 on external redecorations to 60 properties
- £104,584 on improvements at 10 other schemes, and
- adapted 30 homes to make them more suitable for people with disabilities.

We carried out risk assessments at

Repairs and maintenance performance	Keniston 2018-19	Small HAS 2018-19 (median)	Keniston 2019-20	Keniston target 2019-20
Repairs fixed on first visit	97%	92%	96%	90%
Repairs completed on target	97%	97%	97%	97%
Average days to complete day-to-day repairs	6.4	8	7.6	6.2
Cost of day-to-day repairs and void repairs per property	£754	£664	£814	–
Cost of major and cyclical works per property	£1,171	£883	£1,391	–



half of our estates and found no matters of serious concern. We took action on 26 out of 28

medium level risks identified. All our homes had a valid gas safety certificate by the end of the year.



You said: Some residents at Bickley estate aren't happy with their biomass boiler heating system – they told us that it is unreliable and poorly billed.

We did: We sorted out the billing problem and are looking with residents into the possibility of installing individual gas central heating boilers for residents at Southwood Close in future.



Major works

During the year, we carried out work at a large number of homes.

- Kitchen refurbishments to 38 homes at different schemes, including Silver Court
Satisfaction level: 100%

Amazing, such good workmanship. Very people's people – so friendly.

- Boiler upgrades to 24 homes at several schemes
Satisfaction level: 100%
- Hornsey Road redecorations
Satisfaction level: 83%

Poor communication with tenants – not even a text. (We will check this in future)

Redecorations at Lyham Road
Satisfaction level: 80%

Overall satisfaction for all works during the year: 93%

By year's end, 99.9% of our homes met Decent Homes standards.

Since the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Property Services Team have been looking at ways to apply the inquiry recommendations to our work.



Work completed at Darrick Wood estate

Replacement windows, balcony or patio door, front entrance doors to 21 flats
Satisfaction level: 98%

Fence replacement at 29 homes
Satisfaction level: 90%

External redecorations to 172 properties
Satisfaction level: 96%

The few times I saw [the contractors], they were always pleasant.

6 New and refurbished homes

New developments

We are planning to build 26 new homes on land at the Darrick Wood estate.

We consulted members of the public about the design and included the results with our latest round of paperwork to the Council's planning department.

We have received a generally positive response from the Council. However, we will now review our plans and consult residents further on the use of open space on the estate.

Refurbishment

We knew that Robert Whyte House on the Bickley estate needed modernisation. However, when we carried out a full fire risk assessment, we found poor compartmentation, which would increase the risk of any fire spreading.

We decided to speed up our refurbishment plans, which means rehousing our residents.

So far, we have successfully moved seven of the remaining 21 residents – to new homes with Keniston or another housing association.



7 Resident involvement

You said: Crawley residents were unhappy with our interim arrangements, while their Sheltered Scheme Manager was off sick.

We did: Instead of using agency staff, we employed our own member of staff.

Involving residents

The Resident Panel helped us with three projects:

- a new logo for Keniston (currently on hold)
- the new easy guide to the tenancy agreement, and
- celebrations for our 50th anniversary (currently on hold).

The Scrutiny Panel held their first review into the effectiveness of the



Resident Panel and recommended that we find new ways to advertise and target younger people.

We held 20 tenant meetings around our schemes, which were attended by 227 residents.

Events

We held 10 community events and lots more at sheltered schemes. They included:

- a fun day at Darrick Wood organised by the Darrick Wood Community – who also organised a summer coach trip to Hastings and a minibus trip to a local garden centre for sheltered residents
- a fun day at Lyham Road, and
- Christmas parties at the sheltered schemes.



You said: We want to take part in health and wellbeing activities.

We did: We worked with Bromley Adult Education to deliver activities including making healthy meals for smaller households, arts and crafts, and making memory boxes. Bromley Well also ran courses for us on how to live well.

You're the only housing place that offers courses. The Council never did anything like this. You're unique, it's great and it's good to be part of something.



8 Help with your finances

During the year, we:

- held a Credit Union drop-in session at Darrick Wood Community Centre
- worked with Clarion Futures, who provide support, skills and opportunities to social housing residents, and
- partnered with the CAP job club in Orpington, which offers residents practical help as they seek employment.

Our Rent Income Officers worked hard to support residents in difficulties. With their help, we reduced rent arrears to 3.53%.

We assisted more than 40 residents to apply for further benefits, discretionary housing payments, grants and loans. One resident was helped to become debt free by our new debt advice partner

CAP (Christians Against Poverty). Another avoided losing her home because she was helped by the local Credit Union.

We enjoy a good partnership with Orpington foodbank, who helped 11 residents at Christmas with generous food hampers. Our referrals to the Salvation Army toy appeal helped three residents.

We would like to say a special "Thank you" for your very kind effort in resolving the issue of the static debt. We appreciate your kind effort in getting to the truth of the matter to give this stressful matter a long-desired closure. Thanks once again.

9 The Board

During the year, our Board members were as follows.

- **Julian Miles**, housing professional (Chair until November 2019)
- **Emma Keegan** – housing professional (Chair from November 2019)
- **Shehla Husain** – Home Office Deputy Director (Co-Vice Chair)
- **Peter Voisey** – solicitor (Co-Vice Chair)
- **Barry Luhmann** – Head of UK Mortgage Market Intelligence at an international asset management company (Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and Treasurer)
- **Simone Bailey** – asset management professional



- **Seema Jassi** – strategic planning director in the charity sector
- **Sally Rice** – independent housing consultant

- **Sheila Sackey** – Service Delivery Manager, Westminster Council
- **Lucy Worrell** – Research and Public Policy Manager, Peabody.

10 Our staff

We have 49 staff, covering 33 full-time equivalent roles.

- 35 of our staff are women and 14 men
- 42 are white British (83.3%) and seven are not (16.7%), and
- two members of staff have disabilities (4.1%).

Leavers and joiners

During the year, four staff members left and 14 people joined us (10 transferred from Stonewater Housing Association with the Bickley stock).

Our former Operations Director, Vivienne Astall, left and was replaced by Sue McDonnell. Sue has more than 30 years in the housing sector and joins us from Southern Housing Group.

Staff development

We spent £11,663 (£7,029 in

The senior team

I'm really pleased to have been appointed as Operations Director and am looking forward to working with residents, staff and the Board to continue to develop Keniston's vision for the future.
Sue McDonnell



Clockwise from top left: **Jonathan Card**, Chief Executive; **Andrew Shiatis**, Finance & Resources Director; **Tony Coward**, Property Services Director; **Sue McDonnell**, Operations Director.

2018-19) on 118 training sessions for 41 staff.

In October, staff took part in the annual away day, taking the opportunity to think more deeply about developing our organisation.

For the community

Staff enjoy working with our residents to raise money for charity, as you can see from our picture. Together we raised £466 for Macmillan during the year.



11 Value for money

To make sure we are providing good value for money, we monitor our costs and performance across a range of activities.

We also compare our results with two groups of similar landlords: the 16 landlords in the BM320 group of small London-based housing associations and the SPBM group, which includes 140 small housing associations nationally.

These comparisons show the following.

We collected more rent than was owed last year (101.3%). Rent arrears were only slightly higher than our target of 3.5% (3.9% in 2018-19).

Despite taking on a large new estate, our repairs service did well (see page 6).

Our health & safety performance is strong. We have more staff doing this work since we restructured our teams last year.

We get a low number of complaints.

We lost more rent from empty properties – mainly because we are moving people out of Robert Whyte House so that we can refurbish it. We want to improve our re-letting time (26 days), but our peer group average is similar (25.5 days).

Our eviction numbers are smaller than most landlords. However, we evicted more people than usual – partly because we took on some tricky cases on the Bickley estate.

Covid-19 pushed up our average staff sickness rates to 5.9 days – above our target of 4.8 days for short-term sickness.

12 Our financial performance

For the financial year ending on 31 March 2020, Keniston had a surplus of almost £561,000 (£1.37m in 2018-19). The surplus is the amount left over after we had paid our costs for the year.

Our turnover (income for the year) was just over £5.8m (£5.2m in 2018-19).

On 31 March 2020, our total capital and reserves stood at just over £18.1m (£16.9m in 2018-19). This figure includes the value of our properties and other assets, as well as the cash we have in the bank.

How we spent our income in 2019-20



- Service charge, support and community involvement: £975k (16.7%)
- Housing management: £370k (6.3%)
- Routine maintenance: £1.2m (20.6%)
- Planned maintenance: £1m (17.7%)
- Cyclical decorations: £127k (2.2%)
- Back office & administration: £680k (11.7%)
- Bank charges/loan repayments: £326k (5.6%)
- Reserves (set aside to improve Keniston's financial position and to develop new homes): £1.1m (19.1%)

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