



Keniston



Annual report to residents 2020-21

www.kenistonha.co.uk

A message from our Chair and Chief Executive

Jonathan Card, *Chief Executive* and Emma Keegan, *Board Chair*

This has been a year that none of us will forget. It began in April 2020, in the early stages of the full Covid lockdown, and no-one anticipated that a year later Covid would still be dominating our lives.

Keniston rose to the many challenges this brought, as we continued to provide services to all our residents, while keeping the organisation healthy. We also kept our development projects on track at Robert Whyte House and Darrick Wood (see page 8) and successfully replaced the heating system at Southwood Close (see page 7).

How we now work

During the year, our staff developed a new working agility. We focused on protecting and adapting services as public health guidance changed, maintaining our homes to a high standard, and keeping staff and residents safe. We kept in regular contact with residents needing additional support.

We have had to keep the office closed to visitors. However, when restrictions allow, our staff now split their time between office, site and home working. A new telephone system has allowed us to offer the same service, wherever they are located.

In turn, remote working brought a new focus on supporting the wellbeing of our staff.

Some of the changes will stay after Covid. Many staff will spend part of their working week at home, but only where we can maintain service levels.

Since the first lockdown, we have found ways to continue with planned improvements – installing new kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and windows. Just as before, we have given residents a choice of colours and finishes. We are pleased this has been well received.

We have seen our best-ever satisfaction feedback.



Your feedback

We believe Keniston is a high-performing social landlord. Our resident satisfaction is high and we keep costs contained, thanks to hard work by our staff. However, we are not complacent.

Later in 2021, we will carry out our three-yearly major survey, to learn what we get right and where we can improve.

Finally...

We would like to end by saying that we are pleased and proud at the way our staff and residents responded to the challenges of lockdown and accepted the changes in our service delivery with resilience and understanding.

Keniston Housing Association at 50

2020 was Keniston's 50th year as a housing association.

Originally based in a small office on the Silver Court Estate in Islington, Keniston later moved to the Darrick Wood Estate in Farnborough, where we have been ever since.

Our plans to celebrate 50 years had to be cancelled when the pandemic hit, but staff were still keen to mark the year by raising money for the Samaritans.

In the autumn, they raised several hundred pounds with a socially



distanced cake sale and a table sale, which were well supported by residents.

Early in the year, residents and staff donated 50 items a month for Bromley Foodbank, which is an important source of support for local people.



1 About Keniston

We are a not-for-profit housing association, providing low-cost social housing for people in need of a home.

We provide homes in the London boroughs of Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Bromley, Bexley and Croydon, and also in Crawley.

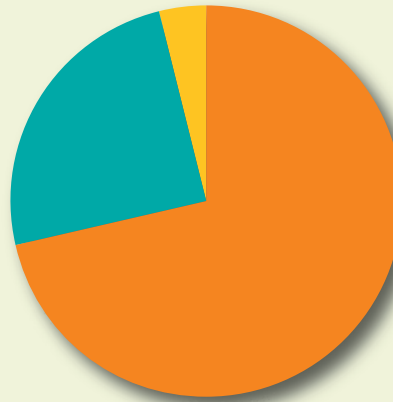
We have refreshed our Strategic Plan (2021-23), which has been informed by resident views from a range of feedback opportunities.

The new plan is underpinned by our values of respect, openness, accountability, honesty and excellence. It has four themes:

- **Homes and neighbourhoods** – Keep our homes safe and well maintained, and neighbourhoods healthy, now and into the future
- **Services** – Deliver quality, cost-effective services and always put our residents at the heart of what we do
- **Growth** – Invest in our existing stock and provide more homes in the areas where we work
- **People** – Achieve excellent standards of governance, and value, support and develop our staff



Types of housing



- General needs (629)
- Sheltered (219)
- Leasehold (33)

Resident feedback

Over recent weeks we have seen some real horror stories on the news regarding council and housing association accommodation...

I feel that we are very fortunate to be Keniston tenants as, over the years, you have maintained my property whenever it has been needed.

I have been fortunate enough to have had two new kitchens, a combi boiler, new radiators and a new bathroom, all of which have been fitted to a high standard.

The staff are always friendly and helpful whenever I have felt the need to contact the office. The whole service I receive shows me that Keniston puts their tenants first.

Keep up the good work!

2 Adapting to Covid

Lockdown meant adapting quickly, which came with challenges for a small organisation.

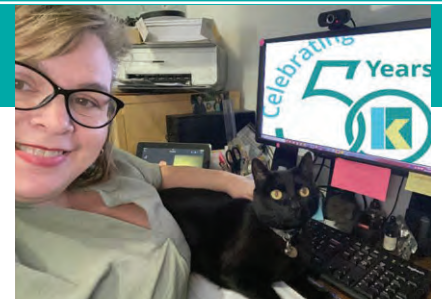
Our staff did not have the IT equipment they needed to work from home easily. So, we brought in upgrades.

We adapted well and began new ways of working – with virtual meetings via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and an online human resources system to book annual

leave and report staff sickness. We installed a new phone system, so that we could speak to residents, wherever we were working.

We brought in more paper-saving systems, as our processes changed to digital. Our Board meetings also become virtual and these are now a normal part of working life.

When lockdown eased, we found safe ways to work at the office – including restricting the number



of people on site at any particular time.

Our office remains closed to residents. When it re-opens, it will be for appointments only. We consulted residents on this and 99% said they were happy with this approach.

3 Lettings

Covid safe and on target

We introduced a COVID-safe lettings process after the first lockdown in March 2020. We published a COVID lettings leaflet and began virtual viewings.

Applicants now receive the viewing by email and many have been happy to accept our offers without making a personal visit first.

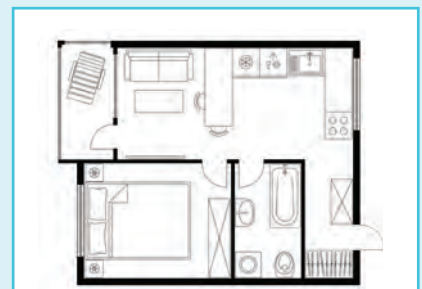
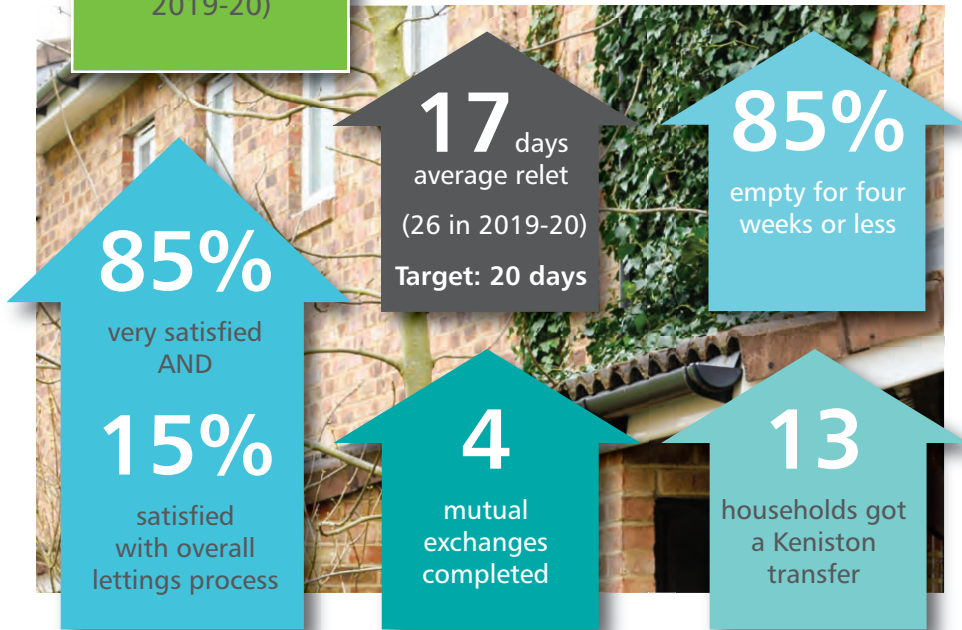
Despite the pandemic, we beat our relettings target.



Resident feedback

All Keniston staff have been very polite and helpful, and have been quick to respond to queries and repairs. I feel very safe in my first home and the neighbours seem very friendly.

The service has been exceptional – all the staff have been helpful and polite. When I report repairs, this is dealt with promptly. I am very happy with my new home and the service I get.



You said we did

A resident told us they would have found a floor plan for their new home useful, as they were downsizing. We now include a floorplan as part of the virtual viewing, so you can see the layout of the home more clearly.

Lettings performance	Keniston 2019-20	Small HAs 2020-21	Keniston 2020-21	Keniston target 2020-21
Average relet time for general needs (days)	25	16	21	20
Average relet time for sheltered housing (days)	27	17	15	20

4 Estate services

We carried out improvements to estates using our Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods Fund.

These improvements included:

- filling in a communal pond
- CCTV equipment
- estate planters
- a compost bin for use by gardeners
- new bin store gates, and
- improvements to a car park.



Estate satisfaction surveys



We got good satisfaction scores in our latest estate satisfaction surveys. But where scores were lower, residents often said we needed better cleaning.

The pandemic meant fewer inspections, but we are now back to monitoring regularly to check on standards. Cleaning is added to your service charge, so we would need to consult residents before upgrading this service.

Some residents suggested other improvements. For example, adding CCTV at door entries and more lighting at estates.

We are upgrading to more energy-efficient LED lighting over the next two years.

Resident feedback

The lift does not feel as clean as it could.

Better deeper systematic cleaning would help morale and show value for money.

Under very difficult circumstances, you do a very good job.

Anti-social behaviour

Most of the anti-social behaviour reports we received were about inconsiderate neighbours causing low-level noise nuisance

However, we took legal action in one case involving threats and intimidation. We went on to gain an injunction and an exclusion order. As a result, the perpetrator is not allowed to return to the local area.

We work with the police, social services and other agencies, such as mediation services, to help resolve anti-social behaviour.

29
reports of anti-social behaviour
2019-20: 42

Complaints

We get very few complaints, but we take them seriously.

Our involved residents worked with staff this year to update our complaints policy.

The update brought the policy into line with the new Complaints Handling Code introduced by the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in September 2020.

2
complaints received
2019-20: 6

5 Repairs and maintenance



2,258

repairs carried out
in total

1,869

day-to-day repairs



389

repairs to empty
homes, as well as
servicing and planned
maintenance



88%

satisfied with
their repair
(2019-20: 91%)
Target: 95%



97%

repairs completed
on time (2019-20: 97%)
Target: 97%
*National small HAs,
2019-20: 97%*



99.7%

gas safety
certificates issued
on time



We were disappointed not to meet our target. You can help us improve by giving more information when you reply to our texts and paper surveys.

We missed this target because contractors were coping with Covid challenges and because there were nationwide parts supply problems.

87%

repairs fixed first time
(2019-20: 96%)
Target: 90%
*National small HAs,
2019-20: 94%*



5.7

average days to
complete all repairs
(2019-20: 7.6 days)
Target: 6.5 days
*National small HAs,
2019-20: 7.1 days*



£776

Average spend per property on day-to-day repairs and empty homes

(2019-20: £814)

National small HAs, 2019-20: £664

£1,203

Average spend per property on planned work

(2019-20: £1,391)

National small HAs, 2019-20: £883

Almost
100%
satisfaction with planned works



Reinvesting in homes

We spent much more on empty homes – £229,000 – than in 2019-20 (£160,000). We had 13 more empty homes to fix and some were in a poor condition.

We also spent £686,000 on planned work.

This included:

- 45 new kitchens
- boundary fence renewal for 28 homes in Darrick Wood
- new windows for 10 homes in Darrick Wood
- new gas boilers for 38 homes at Southwood Close
- adapting 30 homes for people with disabilities, and
- redecorations at Byers Court (pictured opposite).

Resident feedback

The workers were polite and left everything clean and tidy each day. Any odd bits that needed sorting were done quickly and efficiently. Really pleased with the end result.
(New kitchen)

The new layout makes the kitchen feel bigger and more open. Overall finish is really well done. Work completed in really good time. I am genuinely really, really happy. I never expected it would look this good – thank you so much! (New kitchen)

Very, very, very satisfied.
(New windows)

The heating system is much better. Warms up nicely and is very easy to use.
(New boiler)

Thanks you for all the works you have carried out in my home over the last few years, I really appreciate it.

Very satisfied, great improvement, no complaints.
(Redecorations)



Southwood Close heating

When we took over the Bickley estate in 2019, we inherited a biomass heating system for the Southwood Close flats. Despite our efforts to get this working properly, we realised that we needed to replace the whole system for all the flats. This work was completed during the year, and has been well received by residents.

6 New developments

We continued with our plan to close our sheltered scheme at Robert Whyte House in Bickley, which had failed to meet modern fire safety standards.

We safely rehoused the residents by Easter 2021. While not everyone was happy about moving, we provided everyone with a suitable – often better – new home.

Dot Dot Dot property guardians will look after the building until

we are ready to start work. Our architects are working on options that will allow us to build high-quality new homes to be let at affordable rents.

Despite lockdown delays, we also moved forward on our plan to build 26 new homes at Darrick Wood.

We expect to apply for planning permission for Darrick Wood in the summer of 2021. We are fully



aware that our proposals are not welcome to all those living nearby. But we are confident that the estate can absorb this number of well-designed, well-built and much-needed new homes.

7 Resident involvement

Wellbeing calls

Thanks to our wellbeing calls, we:

- referred residents who were lonely to the Age UK befriender service
- put residents in touch with their local authority and other agencies for help with getting food shop deliveries and medical supplies
- issued foodbank vouchers and dropped off two foodbank Christmas hampers.

Over the whole year, we assisted around 1,400 residents.



Resident Panel feedback

We asked the Panel about our resident communications during lockdown.

I understood everything that was sent to me. I also appreciated the phone calls to make sure that I was alright.

Text messaging I find especially useful, as the info is accessible while I am on the go.

It's been flawless.

It worked fine when I needed to report a repair.

You said we did

We invited feedback on our proposals for the new phone system. The panel all agreed they wanted to continue getting calls answered by our Customer Service team, who try to answer all queries straight away.

15

pandemic postal and phone surveys carried out

226

residents responded

75

residents responded to lockdown survey

96%

satisfied with our lockdown communications

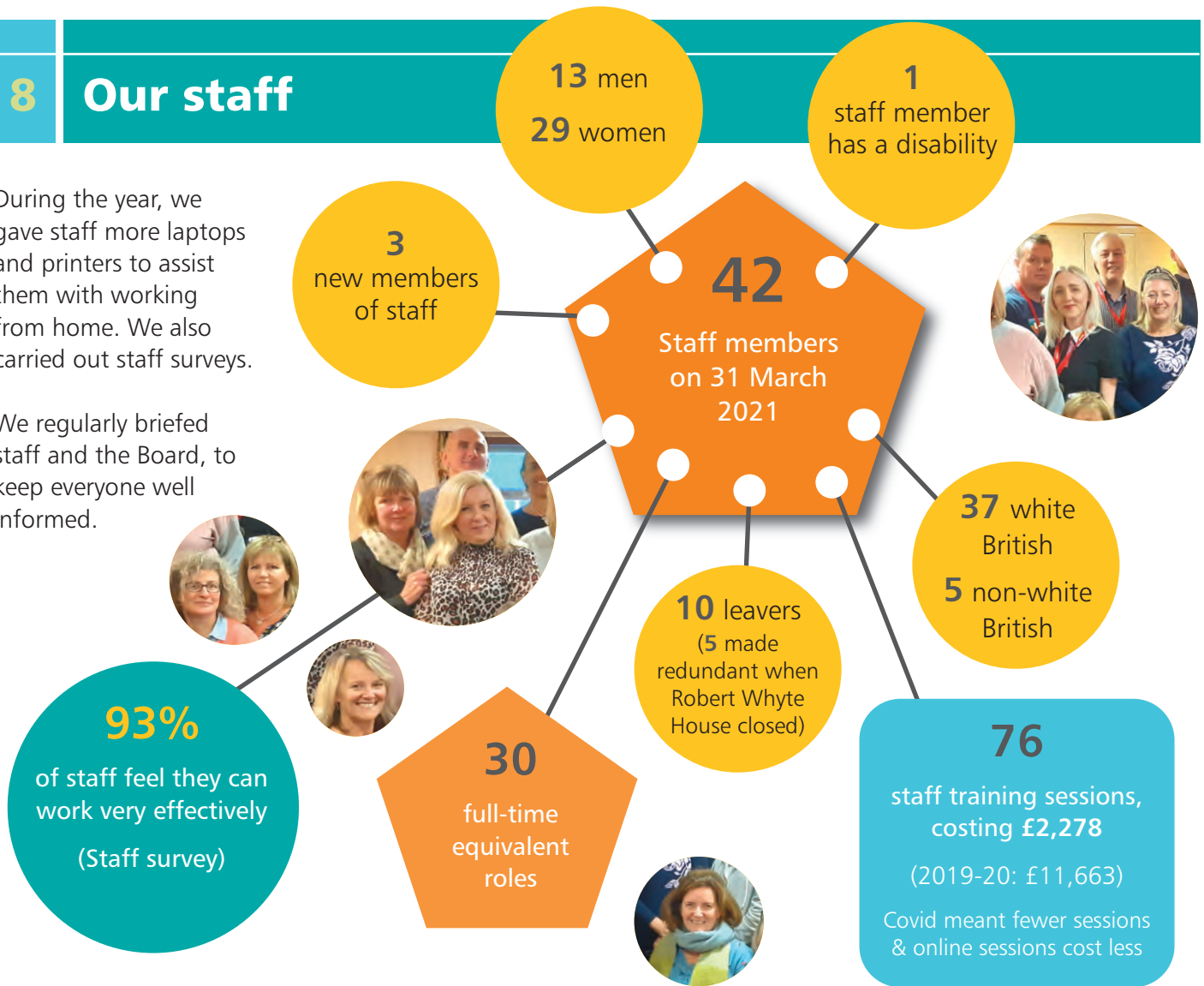
You said we did

The survey identified 13 more residents who wanted wellbeing calls. Some residents were also anxious about when they would receive their vaccine. We sent out a message and added details to our website, confirming NHS plans.

8 Our staff

During the year, we gave staff more laptops and printers to assist them with working from home. We also carried out staff surveys.

We regularly briefed staff and the Board, to keep everyone well informed.



9 Our Board

- **Emma Keegan** Chair
- **Shehla Husain** Co-Vice Chair
- **Peter Voisey** Co-Vice Chair
- **Barry Luhmann** Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
- **Sally Rice** Chair of Development and Growth Committee
- **Simone Bailey**
- **Seema Jassi**
- **Sheila Sackey**
- **Lucy Worrell**

Our Board members met online this year. They bring a rich mix of professional skills and knowledge to our organisation, which benefits from their strategic, legal, financial, asset management, development and housing experience.



10 Keeping rent arrears low

2.6%

**Rent arrears at
31 March 2021**

(2020: 3.5%)

Target 3.5%

Our low rent arrears were an amazing achievement in the current climate.

As a small housing association, we benefit from knowing our residents well.

Over the year, our Rent Income Officers contacted people early to assist them to maximise their income and reduce their debts. They helped with benefit applications, discretionary housing payments, grants and loans.

We also signposted residents to other agencies, such as:

- Help on Your Doorstep in Islington (which is linked to 150 partners)
- Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind
- Age UK, and
- local debt advice services.

Resident feedback

You helped me to get my rent account in a much better state. Not perfect, but getting there. But mostly because of an underpayment from Universal Credit. They had been underpaying me for many, many months.

If it wasn't for the letter you [wrote] to provide this information, I never would have WON my appeal. She's a credit to your team and Keniston Housing.

11 Value for money



We have to demonstrate that we are offering good value for money in providing services.

We analyse our costs and performance across all range of activities, comparing trends over time and with our two peer groups: the BM320 group and the SPBM group.

For 2020-21, our results compared favourably in a number of areas. Our running cost per unit at £4,462 (2019-20: £4,967) and our housing management cost per home at £277 (2019-20: £299) are both lower than average.

Our cost for repairs and management of empty homes, at £776 (2019-20: £814), are close to regional averages.

Our short-term staff sickness levels were 3.5 days on average, but with the most common length of sickness being 9.7 days – unsurprising during the pandemic.

We have two members of staff on long-term sick leave with chronic conditions, however they are not currently on the payroll.

SPBM
140 small housing
associations in England

BM320
15 small HAs
in London

12 Our financial performance

Surplus

We generated a surplus of £865,900 on a turnover of £5.846m. This was a stronger financial performance than in 2019-20 (turnover: £5.836m; surplus: £560,800), but it reflected spending changes during the pandemic:

- We had to move part of our planned maintenance programme to the next financial period.
- We had to restrict responsive repairs to emergency, urgent, and health and safety works during the lockdown period.

Income

We improved our income management, with a 101.2% collection rate (target: 100%)



Income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
Turnover	5,846,842	5,836,268
Operating expenditure	(4,712,003)	(4,948,880)
Operating surplus	1,134,839	887,388
Interest receivable and finance income	5,461	14,632
Interest payable	(243,694)	(292,507)
Other finance costs	(30,620)	(48,620)
Surplus for the year	865,986	560,893

Balance sheet at 31 March 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
Fixed assets		
Housing properties	46,257,532	46,998,157
Other fixed assets	365,520	398,861
	46,623,052	47,397,018
Current assets		
Debtors	285,756	226,062
Cash and cash equivalents	2,649,791	2,007,481
	2,935,547	2,233,543
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,467,826)	(1,531,864)
Net current assets	1,467,721	701,679
Total assets less current liabilities	48,090,773	48,098,679
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	28,790,959	29,526,869
Provision for liabilities	866,000	423,000
Capital and reserves		
Non-equity share capital	9	9
Revenue reserves	18,433,805	18,148,819
	48,090,773	48,098,679

And finally, we would like to say thank you to our residents, staff, Board members and stakeholders for your support during an extraordinary year.

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