



Inquilab Housing Association

ANNUAL REVIEW FOR RESIDENTS

2022 - 2023



www.inquilabha.org

MESSAGE FROM ADNAN BUTT

CHAIR OF RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL

I am now in my third year as Chair of Inquilab's Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP), a role I am deeply passionate about.



To me, nothing is more important than family and having a safe and comfortable home to live in. Not just a place or a building, but a real home – somewhere to feel proud of, to enjoy life, to make friends and memories – good memories – and to feel part of a community that supports one another, and where we are welcomed, valued, and respected.



It has been a tough year for everyone, with a high consumer price index, interest rate rises, energy price increases, and skills shortages.

We are very aware that the cost-of-living crisis has adversely affected residents of housing associations more than other parts of society. We want to support residents during this period by proactively providing advice, including budgeting, claiming the right level of benefits, and accessing Inquilab's hardship fund.

It was also a year where an investigation into the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, concluded that his housing provider, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, had not addressed mould in his home. This contributed to his death.

The priority of the RSP is to support fellow Inquilab residents and we are absolutely determined to ensure that our residents are safe and cared for in their homes.

The RSP works closely with the Customer Committee and the staff team to focus on key resident issues, and to influence decision-making so that, together, we can improve the services that Inquilab offers. This includes reviewing how we allocate and let new homes, how the Association handles complaints and anti-social behaviour, provides repairs and maintenance services, and how it manages its rent collection processes.

After listening to you, our fellow residents, we identified three key areas where we wanted Inquilab to focus its attentions.

- **Complaints Handling**
- **Resident Communication**
- **Repairs and Maintenance**



Success, at its most simple level, is gauged by resident satisfaction. So it is disappointing that, even considering the challenges of last year and the on-going economic uncertainty, Inquilab's resident satisfaction dropped during 2022. This is not something the RSP takes lightly. Yet despite the low satisfaction rate, we began to see some improvement by year-end (31 March 2023).

The following are some of the ways we have worked to improve this:

- **Supporting Inquilab's restructuring programme which, by early 2023, saw a new, more stabilised team in the front-line service areas and property maintenance and assets teams. This has led to much higher levels of calls being answered and dealt with. There are now more housing officers managing our residents' issues and, finally, after the Covid years, there is a return to more on-site visits and estate days.**
- **In Spring 2022, we supported Inquilab in the launch of its new resident's app 'My Inquilab'. By the end of March 2023, 61% of residents had downloaded the app using it to report issues, raise repairs, and receive communication from the association.**
- **We also helped Inquilab with a major review of its complaint handling process, leading to a more streamlined and effective system for raising and responding to complaints. The result is that complaints are being responded to much quicker, and in a way that ensures regular communications throughout the process and enables faster resolution outcomes.**

I also take this opportunity to give a personal highlight of the year for me.

I was delighted to be invited by Inquilab to speak at its Employee Conference in December 2022. It was the first time since Covid that the Association got all its people together to discuss the issues that matter to its residents, and to look at the values of the organisation and how it can achieve better outcomes for its residents. I had the opportunity to address its employees about our concerns as residents, our expectations as an Inquilab resident, and how, together, we can provide better homes and experiences for everyone. I came away energised with my belief that Inquilab is a caring, supportive, and forward-thinking housing association reignited!

Finally, I thank my colleagues on the RSP who continue to work so hard to ensure we challenge, monitor and help shape the services for the benefit of other residents. We will continue to work with the board, executives and team at Inquilab to ensure we use your valuable insight to meet your needs and the needs of our communities.

Adnan Butt
CHAIR RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL



IMPROVING SERVICES FOR OUR RESIDENTS



Service is at the heart of what we do and what we're about. As well as aiming to provide new homes, we aim to provide reliable and consistent services, and implement improvements based on your feedback

Our focus is to provide a good service to all our residents. We use your views and opinions to help us decide what products and services we deliver to you, and how we do it best.

We realise that post-Covid we have a lot to do to improve resident satisfaction. This includes improving the way we deliver our repairs and how we manage our complaints.

We have increased our front-line staff to help and support our residents, ensuring we respond more quickly to your needs.

We still have work to do but we are committed to getting it right, and we will continue to listen to your views.

We're also committed to delivering a great service for all our residents and to listen to what you tell us. This helps us to improve and shape how we deliver our services.

We are working with our residents through our resident engagement programme, the work of our Resident Scrutiny Panel, and through the feedback that we gather every day. The insight we gather is helping us deliver a safer, more sustainable, community-focused, value-for-money service.

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

The ways in which we engage with you includes involvement in surveys, focus groups, telephone interviews and local events.

We make sure that we speak to as many residents as possible using your preference of communication, be it telephone, online, face-to-face, or post.

RESIDENTS SCRUTINY PANEL

The purpose of the Panel is to scrutinise our performance and make recommendations about how services might be improved.

This year the Panel decided to focus on reviewing how we manage customer engagement and communication, and repairs.

Following the reviews, the Panel made recommendations and agreed action plans with Inquilab management. These plans have been approved by the Board and delivery of them is monitored by the Resident Scrutiny Panel.

At the same time, our 'Customer Committee', which is made up of Residents and Non-Executive Directors, ensures we continue to use your valuable insight to meet your needs and the needs of your community.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

MISSION

To meet housing need and to support sustainable communities.

VISION

To deliver reliable services that customers value and trust.



OUR VALUES

SERVICE: Delivering services residents value and we are proud of

TRUST: Being open, honest and showing integrity

ACCOUNTABILITY: Taking ownership and responsibility

RESPECT: Showing care, commitment and fairness

STRENGTH: Building on the strength of people, legacy and resources



CONSUMER REGULATION UPDATE



The Social Housing Regulation Act (which became effective in July 2023) introduces the most fundamental reform of the sector's regulation and oversight in over ten years.

Strengthened consumer regulation will bring much greater focus on quality of homes and services, customer voice, and resident engagement. It will bring proactive regulatory inspection of what we do. It promotes professionalisation of the sector through a requirement for those in many manager roles to hold a housing qualification.

The Government has also commenced consultation on a fundamental, and welcomed, review of the Decent Homes Standard.

The Better Social Housing Review (BSHR) was commissioned last summer by the National Housing Federation (NHF) and the Chartered Institute for Housing (CIH) in response to the challenges facing the sector, including those that came to great prominence following the death of Awaab Ishak.

The Review, which was published in December 2022, made seven recommendations for the sector, as well as highlighting a cross-cutting theme - structural inequalities - particularly in respect of race and disability.

We recognise many of these things as consistent with those our residents and our colleagues tell us.

In the current environment, what we do is as important as ever; like all housing associations we have a vital role to play in supporting residents and communities.



We have regular contact with all residents to understand where support is needed. We're prioritising treating all homes effected by damp, mould or condensation. You can help by reading our one page guide on damp, mould and condensation which is available at www.inquilabha.org.



22-23

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



The economic environment and the cost-of-living crisis are significantly affecting residents, colleagues, and organisations, including Inquilab

Stressed supply chains, skilled labour shortages, rising energy prices, and wider cost inflation have all put additional pressure on the housing sector. The uncertain political and economic policy environment caused shocks in the housing market, as well as to consumer confidence, and these challenges come at exactly the time when the sector is under most scrutiny - from politicians, the media, regulators and, of course, our residents.

Despite this, we continue to invest in services, homes, our people, and our organisation. We will keep building new homes to help meet housing need (including overcrowding); and we will keep ensuring your homes are safe, warm, affordable to heat, and decent.

As your housing provider, we are committed to bringing our homes up to EPC-C or higher by 2030, and in making further progress towards net zero carbon.

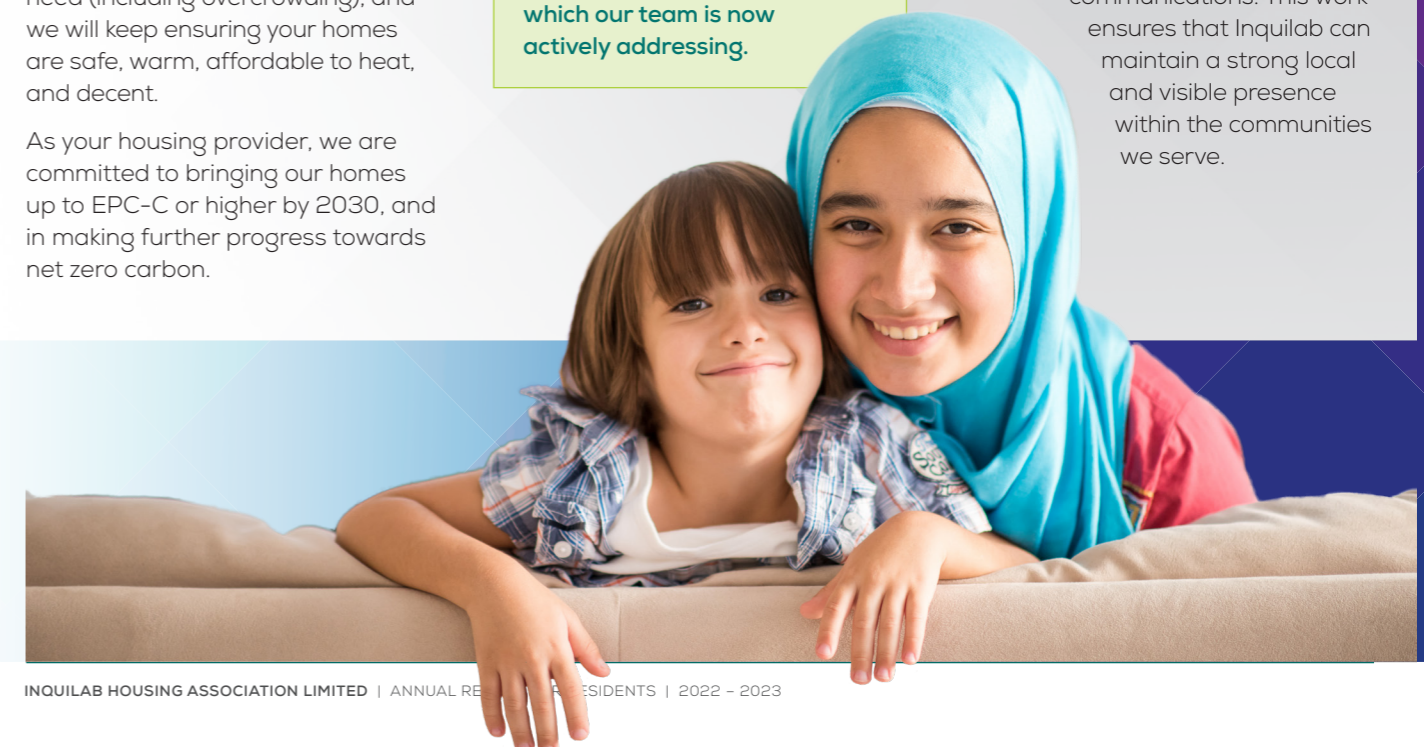
Throughout the winter of 2022 and early 2023, we experienced a surge in customer enquiries related to damp and mould issues. Consequently, we made the decision to prioritise addressing these cases alongside emergency repairs. This decision aligned with our commitment to doing what is right, but it also presented challenges given the current economic climate, a shortage of skilled labour, and Inquilab's finite capacity. As a result, we encountered a backlog of routine repairs, which our team is now actively addressing.

Inquilab's programme of improvement is geared towards ensuring the quality and, most importantly, the safety of your homes, and in improving the services we provide to you.

We are also committed to investing in our existing properties.

Last year, our organisation allocated more funds than ever before to enhance and maintain our properties.

Over the past year, we have undertaken major customer engagement initiatives, focusing on improving complaint resolution, listening, and resident communications. This work ensures that Inquilab can maintain a strong local and visible presence within the communities we serve.



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022-23

In 2022-23, we committed to:

- Improving the way we communicate and engage with our residents
- Improving our service delivery response including complaints handling
- Developing our people and teams to deliver on the promises we make to our residents
- Ensuring financial stability to secure investments in our properties, resident services, and in our employees

AGAINST THESE COMMITMENTS, WE ACHIEVED:




The launch of a new resident's app: 'My Inquilab', was rolled-out in the Spring of 2022. 'My Inquilab' app now gives residents instant, easy, access to tenancy accounts, raise and track repairs, view charges and payments, and to give feedback on repairs and other services. Offering an instant, more efficient, way for you to get in touch with Inquilab, we are now able to respond quicker to residents' enquiries, repair requests, and messages.




Review and refresh of complaints reporting: An updated complaints reporting system now makes it easier for you to raise a complaint; and a more robust module built into Inquilab's CRM system is making significant improvements to how we deal with complaints consistently and in a timely manner. This programme of improvements included refreshed complaints handling training for all our customer service teams too.



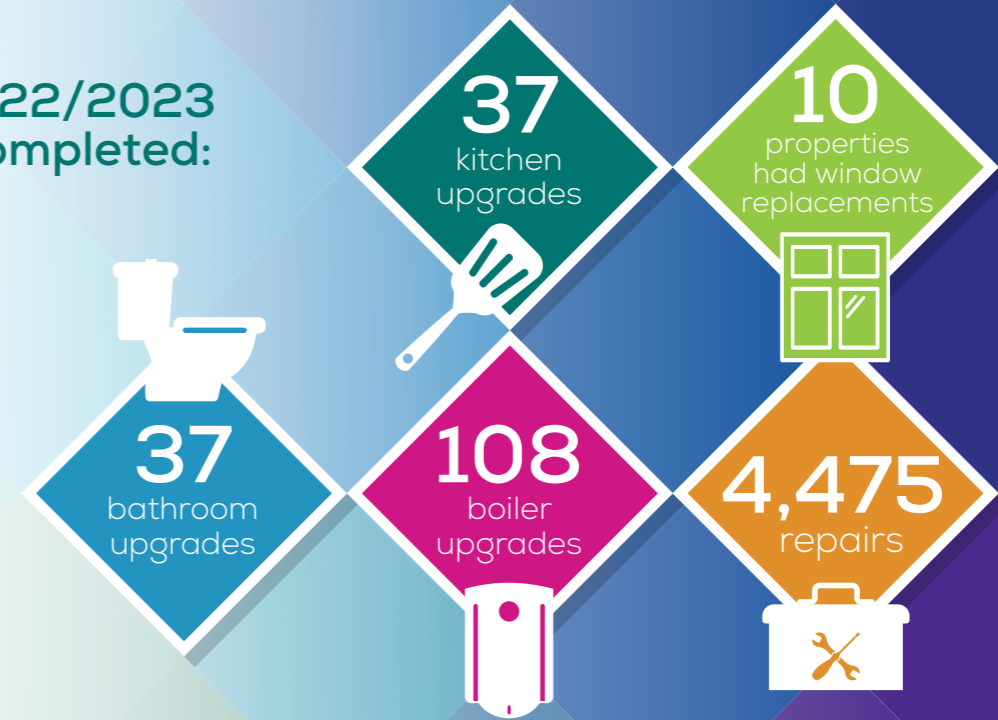
Restructure and upskilling our team: A review of the organisation structure and skills mapping brought a greater focus on customer services and delivery which has included recruiting new staff to support our residents, and to ensure our buildings comply with the latest fire and safety regulations. In addition, an investment in training and development to ensure Inquilab employees have the right professional skills and breadth of understanding to deliver and manage our services – from developing new homes through to service and repair – is now resulting in significantly improved customer service and response times.



Loan covenant financing: Inquilab undertook a loan re-financing exercise to enhance its covenant headroom to enable the Association to continue to support its development programme for more, much needed, new homes, and provide resources to reinvest in existing homes.



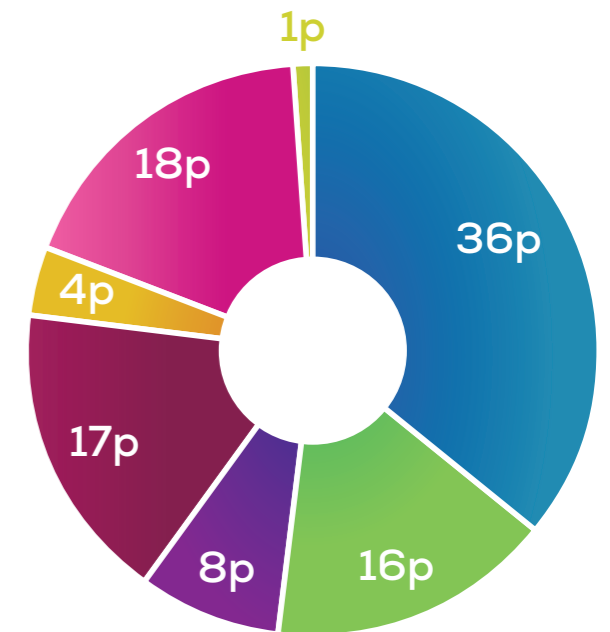
In 2022/2023 we completed:



HOW WE SPEND YOUR MONEY

Rental income is used to pay for the management and maintenance of our homes and estates, investing in existing homes, and developing new homes for the future.

- Maintaining our properties
- Managing our properties
- Cost of services e.g cleaning, ground maintenance
- Depreciation of our properties
- Other charges paid relating to our properties
- Bank interest paid on borrowing to buy housing
- Retained for future investment



SUPPORTING OUR RESIDENTS

Last year we helped residents claim additional income in benefits. Our income team helps with advice on benefits and budgeting - we treat contacts confidentially and deal appropriately with sensitive information.

COST-OF-LIVING

The cost-of-living crisis has adversely effected residents of housing associations more than other parts of society. To meet this challenge, we have improved the support we provide on budgeting and benefits, and significantly increased hardship awards. Our regional teams will continue work with local government and other providers of support to ensure we do all we can to help.

Costs have gone up for most things and this includes the costs of the

services we deliver to you. Where we use contractors to deliver services, their prices have typically increased by inflation and in some cases have increased by more than inflation. To limit the impact for our residents we have increased our hardship awards for food, fuel and furniture. Our teams continue work with support agencies to ensure that resident needs are met.

Please see the Cost-of-Living pages on our website for more information.

THE FEEDBACK YOU GIVE US ON OUR SERVICES

We send surveys to our residents to ask how you feel about the services we provide.

Every three months, we survey a representative sample of our residents through an independent, authorised, company to get feedback as to how we are performing as your housing provider and to determine resident satisfaction levels.

The results of these surveys, along with the feedback we receive from you via our various communication channels, tells us what we're doing well, and where we need to improve.

Your feedback is important to us and, as a result, we recognise that our services have not always been to the standard that you rightly expect. Regrettably, in some instances this has led to us letting our residents down, particularly in the areas of communication and repairs.

ASKING YOUR VIEWS

We ask a sample of residents for feedback every time we deliver a service. We survey residents in two ways:

- Transactional Surveys**
 We send surveys to our residents every time we deliver a service to them. The feedback helps us identify any specific issues which we aim to resolve quickly and follow up with the resident to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome.
- Perception Surveys**
 Our independent survey provider calls a sample of residents to ask them about their overall satisfaction with us as a landlord. This includes specific services such as building maintenance, repairs, communal cleaning, and grounds maintenance, as well as gathering views on their rent and service charges.

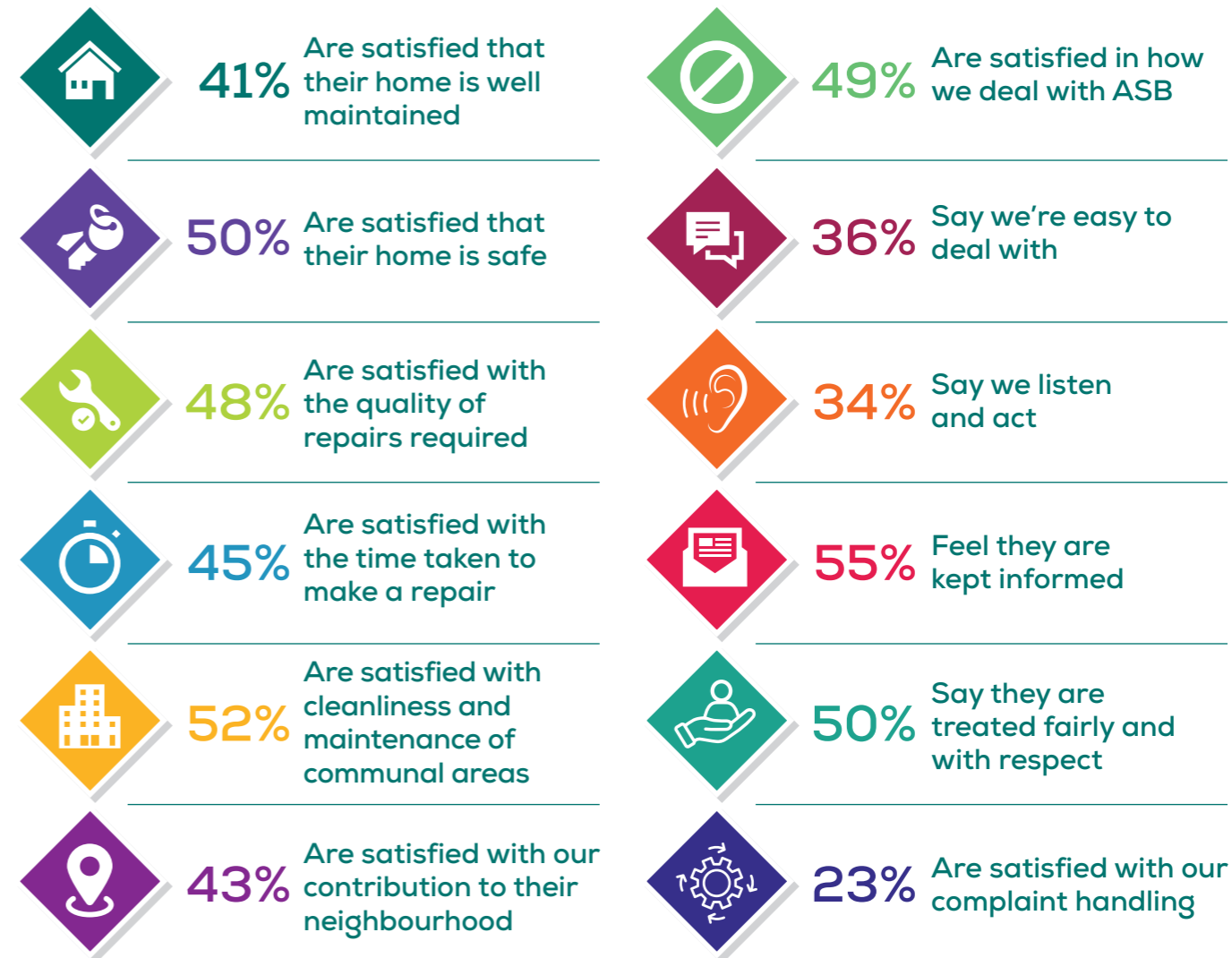
TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures are designed to see how well landlords are doing at keeping properties in good repair, maintaining building safety, respectful and helpful engagement, effective handling of complaints, and responsible neighbourhood management.

Our end-of-year survey results (to 31 March 2023) showed us how we performed across our full twelve-month period, during which over 440 residents gave their views and feedback. This, together with general feedback that we gather through our resident's app, on email, and through our website, gives us a clear picture of what we need to do to get better.

In summary, whilst there are some good levels of satisfaction in individual areas, our overall annual satisfaction rate for 2022/23 is 39%. However, there has been a steady increase in satisfaction each quarter, rising from the start of the year at 35% to 44% by the end of March. This begins to reflect the work that we have been doing in the last year to improve our services, our resources, and our processes.

But we know that this is not good enough and that we still have a lot of work to do to improve our performance. The following is a summary of the headline survey results for the year ending March 2023.



WHAT ARE WE DOING

One major change we have made is to recruit more people into our team so that we can better manage and resource your housing needs.

We have strengthened our management team with the appointment of Gary Clark as Director of Customers and Communities, and Andrew Godwin as Director of Development and Asset Management. And, in January, we welcomed Jane Mellard as our new Head of Housing Services.

Under a new operations structure, we also now have more, professionally skilled people – including a strong customer liaison team, three full-time housing officers, and more surveyors.

This means we have the resources to be much more responsive and efficient when dealing with your enquiries, repairs, and the ongoing maintenance of your home.

We are also well on our way to completing 100% of our stock condition programme by next year.

The aim of these surveys is to plan for future maintenance and building improvements work, such as new kitchens, windows, and bathrooms. At the same time, we are also carrying out energy performance surveys as part of our commitment to improving energy efficiency.

We also regularly review the performance of our contractors, (such as our repairs and maintenance

services and cleaning companies) as we look to improve these services for a better, more responsive, experience, whilst at the same time ensuring we deliver value-for-money.

And we also continue to invest in new communications channels, such as the 'My Inquilab' app and our website to keep you better informed. We are reviewing and refreshing how we engage with our residents; not just in terms of communications channels, but how you can get involved with us to help shape our services and hold us to account!

Please see page 15 where we include opportunities for residents to get involved in our Residents Scrutiny Panel, Editorial Panel and Focus Groups.

INTERVIEW WITH GARY CLARK

DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES



Gary joined Inquilab in October 2022 as Director of Customers and Communities. He sits on the Executive Management Team (EMT), where he is responsible, alongside other EMT members, for leading the organisation and ensuring it delivers on its strategic objectives.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO WORK WITH INQUILAB?

I grew up in social housing and it wasn't until I was older that I was able to reflect on how important affordable housing was to myself and my family in terms of having a secure, safe, home that fundamentally supported us in our lives. Social housing is a valuable and scarce commodity now, so my motivation is to protect what we have and ensure it has the same beneficial impact for others as it did for my family and me.

I was, and am, really impressed with Inquilab's purpose and genuine passion for its people and communities. It has strong roots and as a small housing association it can really make a difference to the residents its supports.

WHAT WAS YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE HOUSING SECTOR?

I have been fortunate to dedicate the last 24 years of my working life in social housing. This includes working in senior operational positions for six housing associations across London and the Southeast. I also currently help another small London based provider in East London as a board member.

ON JOINING, WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS?

Like many service-based organisations, Inquilab was greatly affected by the pandemic. As a result, there had to be a period of recovery from the pause we all encountered in our daily lives. I was expecting there to be a lot of work to do during this recovery, but the first thing that struck

me was that Inquilab has a really positive, determined, team who really wants to support residents and help the organisation provide the homes and support its residents need and deserve. That was a good starting point!

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN FOCUS IN YOUR ROLE?

Our priorities are around service, engagement, getting our repairs service right, and ensuring our homes are safe.

So, a big focus has been on strengthening our team so that we are able to respond better to our residents. We need to ensure that our service offer is clear about what we do as a housing provider.

I want to make sure we are easy to deal with and take some of the friction out of simple service transactions by introducing more ways for our residents to self-serve so that we have more time to support those in need who might need more of our time.

We are also putting in processes to better deal with cases where residents choose not to pay their rent, cause antisocial behaviour, sublet, or wilfully damage our properties, so that we can prioritise giving our support and providing homes for those who need it most and who respect their home and community.

The first thing that struck me was that Inquilab has a really positive, determined, team who really wants to support residents and help the organisation provide the homes and support its residents need and deserve. That was a good starting point!

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSE TIMES TO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE?

We are aware of the issues that have been caused by delays in undertaking repairs, as well as our approach in how we update people on the progress of reported repairs. This is a key area for us, and we are already implementing improvements with our contractors to increase certainty and speed to our repairs service. I believe our residents will be seeing and benefiting from this positive change very soon. We are also keen to work with residents in shaping our services for the future with a focus on the repairs service, so this is a really good time to contact us to get involved.

WILL YOUR PEOPLE BE MORE VISIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO RESIDENTS?

Yes, that's really important if we are to build a long-term trust with our residents and to better understand their needs. I want our team to spend more time out visiting our properties and estates and meeting our residents.

To help do this, we have invested in new mobile technology which will enable our front-line teams to work in an agile way which makes it easier to be visible and available. We will be coming out and engaging on an individual household basis over the next two years and we'll also be publishing a plan of property and estate inspections too.

HOW CAN RESIDENTS HELP TO MAKE INQUILAB'S SERVICES BETTER?

We're always better when we work together. Something as simple as completing feedback or satisfaction surveys really helps to make a difference. Letting us know what we need to do better, as well as ideas and volunteering support, all goes a very long way to ensuring our residents' voices are heard and that we deliver the right, quality, services.

There are also opportunities to become part of a focus group, a residents panel, communications group, or to join a virtual feedback session.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

The cost-of-living increases are a huge challenge for our residents, and impact the amount of investment we can make into our homes beyond the critical work of ensuring our buildings are safe.

But for us to be able to invest the money required to improve our homes and services, we must ensure that we have sufficient funds. As a not-for-profit organisation, we rely on rent being paid on time, homes being looked after, and people making a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.

As a long-standing landlord with strong values we are determined to make sure that we can prioritise our efforts by providing extra support where we can, as well as being an organisation that is easy and effective to engage with.



LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the challenges of 2022 and into 2023, we have achieved a lot, and we are proud of the way we have continued to support most of our residents whilst maintaining a high-quality service.



However, we know there is always more we can do, and we are committed to ongoing improvement by building on the things we do well and developing the areas which you tell us you want and need.

As part of our continuous investment in your home and services improvement, throughout 2023 and 2024 our priorities for the coming year are to:

- Ensure residents are safe in their home, including addressing anti-social behaviour
- To continue to be transparent in our performance, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how we spend our money
- Ensure complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman
- Treat all residents with utmost respect, and that we support a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants
- Provide the platforms and opportunities to have residents' voices heard
- Ensure we provide good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in, and keep our homes in good repair
- Fully support the Government in ensuring social housing can support people to take their first step to ownership
- Ensure we deliver value-for-money in everything we do for our residents and the communities we serve



In addressing these priorities, we will:

- Get closer to all our residents and identify their differing needs and how the economic and wellbeing environments are impacting you
- Collaborate and work with other partnerships and organisations to help deliver quality services and support for our residents, as well as drive scale of economy for greater value-for-money
- Continue to invest in technology and efficiency measures
- Maintain a strong business where risks are robustly managed
- Invest in our staff, and our organisation structure to ensure we have the right skills and are equipped to deliver on the promises we make our residents

AND FINALLY... HOW YOU CAN HELP US TO HELP YOU

We use resident feedback and surveys to gather your views and to measure levels of satisfaction, so that we can identify areas for improvement.

Our Customer Engagement Strategy sets out how, and about what, we engage with our residents, and how we measure and report our progress.

In delivering this strategy, we're looking for residents to help. If you have a few hours spare during the course of a year, and are keen to help us on our journey of continuous improvement, we're looking for residents to:

- Join and support our Resident Scrutiny Panel. The panel holds us to account and reviews our service performance, survey feedback, and our programme of continuous improvement
- Join our Virtual Panel. Members meet when needed and help us with policy development, procurement of service contracts, resident communications, and proposed service models
- Take part in Focus Groups where residents who are interested in the same topic can help us shape our services
- Review and help with editorial content for publication on our website, in resident newsletters and also future Resident Annual Reviews

Volunteering is both personally and professionally rewarding. For all of those listed, you decide when you want to get involved and how much time you have to give on the things that interest you. It's an opportunity to make a real difference.

If you are interested, please email us at customersandcommunities@inquilabha.org





INQUILAB

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