

SHAL's Community Chat 2023-03

The year in numbers

Lee Barrett and Simon White led the chat reviewing the year in numbers and how you can go about making alterations to your home.

SHAL has a total of 22 members of staff, 77% of which are frontline staff in housing and maintenance. We're really pleased to have a good in-house maintenance team who completed 1,118 repairs in 497 homes. We work closely with a small number of contractors and they completed 793 repairs in 427 homes. We've completed over 1,000 safety checks. In turn we've received, checked and paid 5,893 invoices.

We've let 17 new homes, re-let 25 existing homes and sold 1 new home for shared ownership. 91% of tenants said they were happy with their new home.

There was good feedback about both the in-house team and the contractors we use and how it was reassuring that tenants can recognise familiar faces. That builds trust, relationships and accountability. It was also good to hear the team and contractors say positive things about SHAL while working in tenants' homes. We're proud of the fact that 96% of tenants said they were happy with their most recent repair based on a 43% response rate.

We know we're not perfect and we welcome complaints. We received a total of 38 complaints. In addition we've received 27 reports of anti-social behaviour in our communities.

Sadly, we've evicted 3 tenants because of serious anti-social behaviour and drug dealing. This action has kept our communities safe. We've not evicted anyone for rent arrears since 2016.

We talked about the ongoing impact the pandemic has had on rent arrears for some tenants, especially those who were forced to claim Universal Credit between March 2020 and March 2022. These tenants owe £457 on average (4.5% of the annual rent), compared to £338 on average (1.6% of the annual rent) for those who don't claim Universal Credit. We've worked with tenants to help them claim an additional £31,166 to help them reduce their debts.

We've had a total of 11 Community Chats since April 2022 and we look forward to even more. We want to encourage as many people as possible to join and we want to keep them fresh, relevant and interesting. Please get in touch if you have any feedback or ideas.

Making alterations to your home

Simon White gave an overview of the what's involved if tenants want to alter their homes. Although we own the house, it's your home and we encourage people to make it their own. However, if you want to make substantial alterations (including externally) you need to speak to us and get permission before you start work. You'll also need to:

- **Contact your Local Authority to confirm if you need planning permission**
 - They'll need to confirm if you *don't* need permission
- **Consult your neighbours**
- **Employ a competent person/contractor to complete the work safely**
 - Provide SHAL with the name of the person(s)/contractor before the work starts
- **Employ our approved electric and gas contractors if any electrical or gas work is involved**
- **Inform SHAL immediately of any changes to your plans before you proceed**
- **Notify SHAL when you have completed the work, send photos of the completed work and arrange a date and time for SHAL to inspect the work.**

All work is to be completed to the standard acceptable to SHAL. You will be responsible for all future maintenance of the alteration for the remainder of your tenancy. If the standard is not acceptable, or deemed unsafe when inspected, SHAL will request you return the property to its original state. If you leave the property, we may ask you to return the property in its original state at your own expense and make good any damage caused

Work cannot start until we've received signed confirmation and the supporting evidence/confirmation requested.

Any damage to the property caused by you, or the person(s) chosen to complete this work on your behalf, will be rectified by SHAL. You will pay the full cost of the work needed to do this to SHAL. These guidelines have been issued to ensure a fair and consistent process is followed. SHAL can't give permission for alterations that impact our ability to access the property, including erecting scaffolding to access and repair the roof (e.g. lean to).

If you have any further questions about alterations you've made (or would like to make) please get in touch with your Housing Officer.

