

Customer  
Annual  
Review  
**2017-**  
**2018**

**settle.**





Our customer Scarlett

# What this report is about

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This review highlights our achievements and how we helped our customers in 2017/2018.

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# Foreword from our Chief Executive, Gavin Cansfield

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In the last twelve months we have made a number of changes and perhaps the most obvious is our name. It seemed really clear to us that the time had come for this to happen. We no longer only provide housing in North Hertfordshire, we work across the county, South Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. Plus, we don't provide homes, we provide housing. It is you, our customers who can make them a home; we can help to ensure that people have somewhere to live, that they are comfortable and can settle.

We have continued our focus on building affordable housing. You will see that we achieved our target of 80, this year that number will be 120 but we know that we need to do more. Given the scale of the housing crisis the Board and I are completely focused on how we drive that number up to ensure we are doing all we can to make our contribution to solving the problem.

During the past year, we have been working to improve the efficiency of our repairs service and looking at how we can resolve queries for customers on first contact. We have also been looking at what happens when things go wrong – are we resolving the real issue and resolving it promptly.

We want to build a simple to use and easy to access service that you can trust. The two measures we focus on are trust and effort – we think it is really important that you can trust settle to provide you with a safe place to live that is well maintained. Equally we know that when we want to access services it needs to be easy to do and easy to resolve. None of us want to waste time waiting dealing with simple issues or having to deal with them a number of times because it didn't go right the first time. I know that we have more to do on this and I am confident that I will be able to report progress in next year's annual report.

One of the areas I want to see settle doing more work on is how we listen. We have been busy looking at how we can use data to help us improve the services we provide. We need to ensure that we do this and speak to people about how they feel about us as their landlord. There are plenty of ways we can do this, and I look forward to seeing how this progresses in the next 12 months.



Gavin Cansfield  
Chief Executive

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## We are settle

Our purpose at settle is to help people who are struggling to find a place to live. We want to help our customers to stay in their homes comfortably, so that they can live the life they choose.

# Highlights from 2017/18

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We solved **83,000** problems  
over the phone

We built **81** homes for  
people struggling to find  
somewhere to live

We spent **£2.7 million**  
improving customers' homes

We provided **£100k** to other  
organisations who help  
our customers

**3,500** of our customers use  
our services on line

**2,700** of our customers  
gave us their feedback

Our regulators rated us best  
in class



# Delivering our plan - 'Building a better tomorrow'

Our three-year plan, 'Building a better tomorrow', lets you know what we'll deliver by 2020, including providing good services for existing and future customers.

Here's a summary of our plan and progress we made last year:

## Delivering homes

We want to build more than 480 homes by 2020. Last year we delivered 81 homes. We're on track to build 120 homes this year.

## Providing good services

We know that our customers want to be able to access our services easily and quickly. During the last year we have worked on improving the efficiency of our repairs service and changing our processes so that we can resolve more queries the first time a customer contacts us, with our customer contact centre meeting their target of resolving 80% of contacts at the first point of contact. There is more we can do to improve customer satisfaction and you can read more about how we plan to do this on page 7.

## Creating capacity

By carefully managing our income, we can deliver on our promise of building new homes and investing in maintaining existing homes. We achieved the amounts we had budgeted for last year, which meant we were able to invest £2.7 million in maintaining our existing customers' homes alongside the new homes we delivered.

## Solid foundations

We're working to establish a strong business that is run efficiently and effectively. As a sign that we are on-track with this, last year we retained the highest possible V1G1 rating for viability and governance following an in-depth assessment by our regulator.



Homes we built last year in Chaucer Way, Hitchin, and Choristers Court, St Albans

# Your home

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Our priority is keeping our customers' homes safe.

As a landlord, we fulfil all of our statutory landlord responsibilities, for example the annual gas safety check, and in many areas, as a reflection of how important it is to keep our customers' homes safe, we do more than we are legally required to do.

We continue to have up to date fire risk assessments in place for all our blocks, and to conduct regular planned checks to make sure we understand the buildings we own and manage and how they would act in case of a fire. We also work in partnership with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue who are always happy to answer questions any of our customers might have about fire safety.

## Repairs

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We know that having a convenient and reliable repairs service is one of the things that matters most of all.

During the past year we have been working to improve the efficiency of our repairs service. On the next page you can see that we have reduced the waiting time for repair appointments. For two years running the average time to complete a repair has increased. Last year it was 19 days, up from 13 days the previous year and 10 days before that. We don't think this is acceptable. Last year we completed 96.7% of repairs on the first visit. This means that it took more than one visit to complete nearly 4% of repairs which is inconvenient for customers. We want to make sure our services are easy to use and as part of this to reduce the average time it takes to complete all repairs. We'll get better at this during the year ahead.

During the year ahead, we will also develop an online self-service platform which will allow customers to choose the date and time of their repair and the type of engineer they'd like to attend. Over time it's also our aim that customers will be able to use this platform to provide reviews on the service they have received for the benefit of future customers.

Last year we carried out ongoing work to have:

**100%** annual gas safety certificates in place for all properties by August 2018

**100%** electrical safety checks, which are needed every 5 years, in place for all properties by March 2019.

**4793** stock condition surveys were completed to help us understand where we need to continue making planned investments in our properties. This brings us to a total of 6593 surveys carried out during the last two years – nearly 75% of all our properties.

Last year we completed 16,159 repairs

Repairs completed at the first visit – 96.7%

The average number of days to re-let a home was 28 days. This excludes the time to re-let properties to specialist clients such as our care service properties.

It took an average of 19 days to complete a repair. This was higher than the 13 days we reported for this last year.

Last year, we explained our commitment to making sure we're clear and consistent about letting you know what we can and can't do. We made this information available to all customers this summer. We are calling this our customer offer. It sets out our commitment to our customers and what we ask in return. You can [find our customer offer on our website](#).

# Customer satisfaction

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In our customer annual review last year, we identified three areas that we could see from initial customer feedback we needed to improve, and we committed to getting better at them.

## • **Waiting times for repair appointments**

We reached our target for this in June 2018. During the past year we have improved our ways of working to make sure we can provide repair appointments more quickly. We now provide them within our target of 28 days of a customer first contacting us to request the repair.

## • **Response times to email enquiries**

We have improved the time we take to answer email enquiries. We used to reply within four working days, but we now reply to the majority of emails in one working day.

## • **Our handling of complaints**

We realise that we haven't always got it right when we respond to complaints. When customers contact us with a complaint, we know we need to respond more quickly and show how we're taking learning from complaints back into our business, to improve the experience for all our customers. During the past year we have put in place training and new processes and we will make sure this results in us getting better at how we respond to complaints during the year ahead.

## **Improving our services**

We're committed to making improvements based on feedback and data about what customers ask us to do and how they feel about how we do it.

One of the main ways we do this is following the feedback customers give us through our customer satisfaction surveys, which customers can complete online or over the phone.

## **Contacting customers**

This year we have asked all of our customers how they would prefer to communicate with us and are aiming to always contact customers by their preferred channel.

To update the ways you'd like us to communicate with you, please call us on 0330 343 0016.

# Our social purpose

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Our social purpose drives everything we do at settle. We want to help our customers to stay in their homes comfortably so that they can live the life they choose. For some customers this means that we provide targeted extra help where it's needed most to secure employment, manage their finances and tackle loneliness. We take the time to understand the individual needs of our customers, so we can provide help in the best way. Colleagues across settle work in partnership to help our customers, with our tenancy support team able to provide focussed, specialist support.

We do all of this because we know that having somewhere to settle, even for a short while, has the power to transform people's lives.

Last year we committed £100,000 to social partnerships to help our customers, including:

- An in-house financial inclusion officer from Citizens Advice, who is able to provide specialist financial advice for our customers.
- Our 'Foundations 4 Work' partnership, through which we provide dedicated mentoring to help customers find and maintain employment.
- Ongoing 'Safe and Well' visits through a partnership with the local fire service to reduce the number of elderly people living in isolation.

Last year we also spent £220,000 to enable customers with disabilities to keep living as independently as possible.

**We will continue to deliver social value throughout the following key areas:**

## Finances

Support our customers to manage their money more effectively

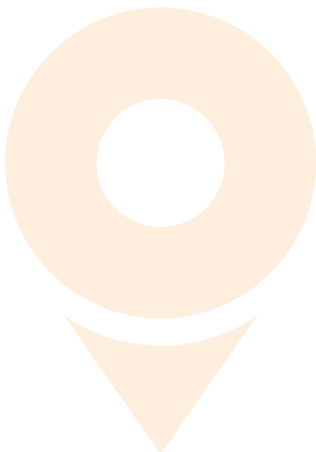
## Employment

Helping customers to find and maintain employment

## Loneliness

Reducing the number of older people living in isolation

As part of delivering our social purpose, colleagues across settle also volunteer to support local community projects. Colleagues spent over 100 days volunteering last year.





# Contact us

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Call us on **0330 343 0016** (Monday-Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Tweet us on **@settle\_foryou**

Email us on **customer.service@settlegroup.org.uk**

Visit **www.settlegroup.org.uk**

## Protecting your data

New data protection laws started in May. If you'd like more information about how we use and protect your data, you can read our privacy policy at **[settlegroup.org.uk/privacy-policy](https://www.settlegroup.org.uk/privacy-policy)**