



Annual Report for Residents

2010

PLUMLIFE

Welcome

Welcome to our first annual report for Plumlife residents.

It is designed to allow you, our customers, to find out more about how we are performing, and how we are planning to improve the services we offer you.

This report looks at Plumlife's work over four standards. The first is customer involvement and empowerment and this about how we make sure residents have a say in our work.

The second is about the quality of your home and the repairs and maintenance service we provide.

The last two standards are about how we manage the area in which you live and making sure we provide value for money.

Your overall view was that we meet the standards but there are areas where we can get better.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA), a national independent body that supervises our work, has also asked all housing providers to produce an annual report for its customers.

It is only by listening to your ideas and suggestions that Plumlife can continue to improve the services we offer to you.

Stephen Porter Plumlife chief executive



About Plumlife

Plumlife is the leasehold management and shared ownership division of Great Places Housing Group and was set up in 1981 as Central Methodist Housing Association.

We are leaders in the intermediate housing market, providing affordable housing solutions for people in the north west who require help in managing and maintaining a property or who cannot afford a full mortgage.

We own and manage over 2300 properties for leasehold, shared ownership and rent across the north, including Manchester, Cheshire, Oldham, Bury, Bolton, Preston, South Ribble, Blackpool, Fylde and High Peak.

We have our own board to oversee our activities and there are four resident board members.



How we produced the report

- 1 Our starting point was to assess how well we meet each of the TSA standards and to do this a broad template was produced for each area, designed to capture what we do well and not so well.
- 2 Staff completed the self assessment template highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and local issues.
- 3 A first draft of this report was sent to Plumlife board in July who were asked to provide feedback and scrutinise the judgements made by staff.
- 4 Following the board meeting, we consulted residents more widely through our Plumlife e-panel. This is a group of residents who have agreed that they will give us feedback via email. Residents were asked to read our self-assessment and tell us whether they thought we met the standards.
- 5 The report has been reviewed and updated in light of the feedback you have given us.
- 6 We have aligned our current service standards to the TSA standards. These will be reported to Plumlife board and to residents through the newsletter. This means you will know if we are not meeting our promises and can hold us to account.

How we will develop local offers:

- In Plumlife we already tailor the service we offer to your individual schemes and will always consult you about the level and frequency of services you receive as part of our service charge setting.
- As part of our consultation we asked if you would like us to tailor your services to your scheme in any other ways.
- The majority of people we consulted told us that they were already happy with the way services were tailored to their scheme and that they didn't want to see any changes.
- However, if there are other ways that you would like us to tailor the way we provide services to your scheme, contact Plumlife on 0161 447 5158 or email resident.services@plumlife.co.uk.



Performance against the standards

1 Customer involvement and empowerment

The standard applies to all Plumlife residents

1a Customer service, choice and complaints

What we do to meet this standard:

- We have a specialist leasehold management team to offer bespoke advice to Plumlife residents;
- Plumlife has its own dedicated Board of Management which includes four resident board members to oversee and scrutinise our activities.
- Our service standards, which were developed with customers, mean that you know what you can expect from us.
- Newsletters use plain English, are attractive and contain useful information.
- Consultation with residents is undertaken before major work is carried out or contracts entered into. This means that residents are able to make informed choices about the services provided including any related costs.
- Our handbooks provide a comprehensive range of information on how to access our services, rights and responsibilities and how to get involved.
- The average time taken to resolve complaints is 20 days. This has reduced significantly from 39 days at April 2010.

88%

of new residents are satisfied with the overall service provided by Plumlife

How we can get better:

- Complaints take too long to close. Learning from complaints, feedback to customers on the outcome and how these have led to service improvements is limited.
- Not all service standards are monitored and we need to do more to publicise our performance to residents.
- Customers are only able to access our services through limited core hours (9am – 5pm). We need to understand customer demand for extended hours.
- There are lots of ways for customers to contact us but we don't know how consistent the service is. Our review of our customer access arrangements will help us to address this issue, including how we can improve the customer journey from sales to management.



1b Involvement and empowerment

What we do to meet this standard:

- Customers are given the opportunity to get involved at a range of levels including Plumlife board.
- Resident associations are in place, with frequency of meetings tailored to that scheme.
- We have set up an e-panel where we can consult virtually with residents.
- We will always consult residents when decisions are made which impact the use and enjoyment of their home. We realise that meetings don't suit all our customers so we offer a range of approaches.



How we can get better:

- We need to ask residents how they want to be consulted and adapt our service accordingly.
- We need to ensure that feedback on the impact of involvement is always given to residents.
- We need to increase the amount of resident information collected and put processes in place to ensure it is kept up to date.

42%

of sales last year were to BME applicants which puts us in the top 25% nationally

1c Understanding and responding to diverse needs

What we do to meet this standard:

- A recent inspection by the Audit Commission found that we have a strong strategic approach to diversity. This is providing direction and a sound basis for the promotion of equality and diversity.
- We understand the benefits of offering a choice of tenure for residents with support needs. 6 of our residents with learning disabilities own a share of their home through the Home Ownership for people with Learning Disabilities (HOLD) scheme.
- If you are a shared owner, we have a downward stair-casing policy in place if you get into financial difficulty.
- We use targeted marketing in areas with high BME populations to encourage new customers.

How we can get better:

- We need to monitor all services by diversity strand and use resident information to better tailor services to meet customers needs.
- To fulfil legal obligations that affect all service providers we need to train staff on identifying signs of abuse when dealing with vulnerable children and adults, and how to deal with such instances.

2 Home

2a Quality of accommodation

The standard applies if:

- You bought your home, or a share in your home, directly from Plumlife.
- You live in a building where Plumlife is the managing agent.
- You fully rent your home from Plumlife

This standard does not apply if:

- You bought your home from another company.
- You live in a building where another company is responsible for managing the building.



What we do to meet this standard:

- All new developments are built to high standards.
- Satisfaction with new homes is high at 98% which shows that our development specification meets the needs of our customers.
- We have a new asset management database in place which identifies the condition of the properties Plumlife maintains and allows us to prioritise and budget for any work needed.
- A robust approach to setting sinking funds is in place for most schemes to ensure that funds are available to maintain the building. An Equity Loan scheme has been developed for shared owners in old fair rent schemes where no sinking fund is in place to help fund major works.

98%

of you are satisfied with your new homes, which shows that our development specification meets the needs of our customers



2b Repairs and maintenance



The standard applies if:

- If you fully rent your home from Plumlife we are responsible for carrying out repairs to your home.
- If you live in a building where Plumlife is the managing agent, this standard applies to repairs to communal areas in the building.

This standard does not apply if:

- If your building is not managed by Plumlife, the company that manages your building is responsible for carrying out repairs to communal areas.
- You live in a house which you own either a share in, or outright.
- Repairs inside your flat unless it is fully rented.

What we do to meet this standard:

- Repairs to communal areas are carried out within service standard timescales.
- A full consultation is carried out for all major works and residents have the opportunity to nominate contractors.
- Informal consultation is also carried out for smaller jobs for example, residents are given a choice of paint colour or carpet samples.
- Seventy six per cent of residents are satisfied with repairs completed.
- Satisfaction with the quality and standard of major works is 95% and 82% of residents thought the works represented good value for money.

82%

of residents said they were satisfied with the major work consultation.

95%

of you are satisfied with the quality and standard of major work.



How we can get better:

We need to improve the use of customer information and satisfaction information to tailor our services.

3 Neighbourhood and community

3a Neighbourhood management

The standard applies to all schemes where Plumlife is the managing agent.

What we do to meet this standard:

- Contracts are in place for all services, and a procedure is in place to ensure that checks are carried out on the service provided.
- Regular scheme inspections are carried out which customers are invited to attend.
- A full consultation is carried out before entering into any contract which allows residents to nominate a contractor and influence the level of services they receive.
- The frequency of services is set at a scheme level and is reviewed with residents at budget time dependent on need and cost.
- Caretaker services are in place in some schemes to carry out minor repairs and ensure that the scheme is kept tidy.
- We are currently reviewing our grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the service provides value for money. Levels of satisfaction were generally high at 75% and where issues have been identified these are being considered by Plumlife staff and contracts being reviewed.



How we can get better:

Satisfaction information is not currently collected for all services e.g. cleaning services.





3b Local area co-operation

The standard applies to all Plumlife residents.

How we can get better:

Our properties are spread across 30 local authorities and with a small team, it may not always be the best use of staff time attending numerous local authority forums. We need to make sure that there are strong links between Plumlife and other teams in Great Places who regularly attend these forums.

What we do to meet this standard:

- We have an excellent reputation for partnership working.
- We have a strong relationship with our partners and we know they like to work with us.
- We are a member of several forums where we share good practice with other providers working in the sector.
- We are part of a group that is developing a benchmarking service for owner occupied housing; this will help us to compare our performance with other providers and improve our services.
- Staff do attend meetings held in some local authorities. Where other organisations (for example the police or local authorities) ask us to get involved we do so.

3c Anti-social behaviour

The standard applies to all Plumlife residents.

What we do to meet this standard:

- We link into a Great Places specialist team with good links to other agencies.
- There are very few incidences of ASB however a staged approach is taken when dealing with cases, and the majority of closed cases are resolved through early intervention by staff.
- We have a robust group-wide policy for dealing with ASB, and where it meets our criteria we are committed to working with partner agencies to resolve it.



How we can get better:

We need to publicise how Plumlife can help residents who experience anti-social behaviour.

4 Value for money

The standard applies to all Plumlife residents.

What we do to meet this standard:

- Significant savings across Great Places have been made over the last year including £500,000 by renegotiating energy contracts, and £100,000 through a new agreement for recruitment of temporary staff.

This means that more funds are available for service development.

- Our approach in Plumlife is heavily scrutinised by residents as we provide very transparent information on costs: all service charge expenditure is itemised for residents and accounts sent at the end of every financial year which show where money is spent.

- A formal consultation is carried out for all service contracts and major works. An informal consultation is still carried out for smaller jobs. Residents have the right to nominate contractors and the opportunity to influence the specification of works.
- A minimum of two, but usually three quotes are always obtained before awarding contracts to ensure value for money.
- Where appropriate, we buy goods and services as part of larger contracts with Great Places to take advantage of economies of scale.

82%

of residents thought major works works represented good value for money

How we can get better:

We need to improve the way we measure value for money.

