

Neighbourhood Life

Winter 2017

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Hello!

The season of giving something back

As we enter the season of giving, I wanted to share with you some of the ways Network Homes has been giving back to the communities we work in over the last few months.

October saw the culmination of our three month 'giving something back' campaign. The project encouraged everyone who works at Network Homes to give something back to our communities and support good causes. Groups of staff got together to help a variety of initiatives including collecting for and helping out at foodbanks; donating business clothes to young people unable to afford them for job interviews; teaching older people digital skills; donating toys to local hospitals; and a charity skydive.

My fellow executive directors and I chose to help out at one of our extra care schemes in Willesden, which enables elderly people to live independent lives. We were tasked with refreshing the main raised flowerbed by removing all the weeds, planting new flowers and giving it a general tidy up. Seeing the smiles on residents' faces and the difference this small gesture made, helped me think about the combined impact of all the giving something back projects on the charities, residents and local communities we helped.

On 13 September, a team of twenty Network Homes cyclists embarked on a 300 mile journey from London to Paris on a charity bike ride. Four days later and having climbed the equivalent of Mount Snowden on each of them, the team arrived at their destination. They raised the highest ever challenge amount for our chosen charity,

St Mungo's, which supports homeless people (you can read more about this incredible achievement on page three).

Tackling homelessness is something that fits perfectly with our values. Over the past few years we've established a number of initiatives to support homeless people and Network Homes is one of only five housing associations in London providing temporary accommodation.

One of the projects I'm particularly proud of is the work we're doing to support homeless young people in partnership with New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC): Project Vista is a unique initiative providing safe, stable and affordable accommodation for young people who are on very low wages or seeking employment and who are in urgent housing need. It's a prime example of a housing association putting its social purpose first. In October Project Vista won first prize at the London Homelessness Awards. The £30,000 prize money will go directly to NHYC to help them continue their important work.

Building and managing homes is what we do but that's not the whole story. At Network Homes, we believe in giving back. We do this by investing in our communities, by contributing to sustainable initiatives, and by adding community value to everything we do.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful festive season.

Helen Evans
Chief Executive

**Don't miss
Universal Credit
update
Page 17**

Office opening hours and service over the Christmas period

As always, we aim to provide you with a great service at all times including over the festive period. Our office opening hours during this time will be:

Office opening hours

Monday 25 December and Tuesday 26 December 2017	Closed
Wednesday 27 to Friday 29 December 2017	9am to 5pm
Monday 1 January 2018	Closed

Our offices will be open as usual from Tuesday 2 January 2018. Normal office opening hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Remember, you can use the self service portal to report a repair, view your rent account and pay your rent, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, online via our website at www.networkhomes.org.uk. If you have an emergency repair while our offices are closed, please contact us on **0300 373 3000** and you'll be directed to our out of hours repairs service.

Audio, Braille, large print and translation services

We can provide any section of this document to you on audio CD, in Braille or in large print. Sometimes, we can also help with translations into other languages. If you require these services please contact Customer Services on **0300 373 3000**.

London to Paris bike ride - c'est magnifique!

At the end of September, 20 volunteers from Network Homes completed a 300 mile bike ride from London to Paris, raising £66,000 for homelessness charity, St Mungo's - the highest ever amount raised for St Mungo's during a challenge!

Throughout the hilly four day journey, the cyclists climbed around 4,300 metres – the equivalent of scaling Mount Snowdon every day for four days. On the final day, they rode in convoy through the streets of Paris, including navigating the notorious Arc de Triomphe roundabout, to the finishing line at the Eiffel Tower. They were cheered on by the public.

St Mungo's (Network Homes' charity of the year) work directly with people who are sleeping rough, in hostels and at risk of homelessness in London and South England. As a social housing provider, we share St Mungo's goals of ending homelessness. We're working to help stop homelessness in London not only by raising money for St Mungo's, but also by:

- ▶ working in close partnership with St Mungo's which is managing agent at two Network Homes schemes
- ▶ providing rooms for New Horizon Youth Centre, a charity which supports homeless young people across London into stable employment



- ▶ providing rooms for several organisations that need accommodation to support homeless people
- ▶ providing temporary housing for families who have been made homeless - we currently house over 1,000 homeless families across London
- ▶ working to promote our services to private landlords to offer more temporary accommodation – helping to avoid homeless families having to stay in B&Bs.

James Dean, Corporate Projects Director and lead Network Homes cyclist said: "I loved the riding and getting to know my colleagues better! This is an epic achievement from our cyclists and we've raised a lot of money for St Mungo's. We believe in the value of services they provide to end homelessness and supporting people through some tough times to rebuild their lives."

Robert Neale, Corporate Partnership Executive at St Mungo's said: "Network Homes has put so much energy behind our partnership, it's incredible to see their efforts culminate in such a successful challenge. We would like to thank everyone who made this possible – from the cyclists and their supporters, to the event organisers and companies sponsoring the Network Homes team."

"I loved the riding and getting to know my colleagues better! This is an epic achievement from our cyclists and we've raised a lot of money for St Mungo's."

James Dean
Corporate Projects
Director

New homes for private rent at The Big Blue in Sudbury Hill

We're launching our first SmartRent homes for London professionals in Sudbury Hill, Ealing. These private rent homes will be ready in 2018 at 20% less than market private rents. The homes will be available unfurnished, with furnished rental packages also on offer.

The Big Blue will consist of 270 brand new studios, and one and two bedroom flats. Tenants will be able to enjoy a residents' lounge, as well as private outdoor space in the majority of homes.

With stunning views over central London, Harrow and Wembley, direct access to public transport and on-site management services, The Big Blue will offer residents a quality home, hassle free.

We will take care of the repairs and maintenance in your flat while you're at work – if you give us permission.

To be eligible for these homes, you must currently live or work in London and be able to pay one month's rent in advance, plus one month's rent as a deposit.



For more information or to register your interest, visit our website at www.networkhomes.org.uk/thebigblue.

Network Homes and New Horizon Youth Centre crowned winners at the London Homelessness Awards



Project Vista was awarded first place at the London Homelessness Awards held on Wednesday 18 October 2017 at City Hall in London.

The project is an innovative partnership between Network Homes and New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC) which helps

homeless young people across London by giving them a stable place to live while they improve their employment situation, and save enough money to become self-sufficient.

There are currently four flats provided by Network Homes and managed by NHYC,

with 20 young people living in the flats in Islington and Hackney. The rooms are allocated to young people by NHYC and individuals are able to live in the property for one year, with ongoing support from the Centre to improve their employment situation and life skills. So far, the project has housed 36 young people and they have all completed an independent living skills programme and gained employability skills.

The judges were impressed by the collaborative approach between the two organisations and the way in which Project Vista puts young people at the heart of the project while bridging a gap in provision.



Irene celebrates a century

Irene Roberts, best known as Rene, reached a major birthday milestone this October as she celebrated turning 100.

Irene has been a resident at Portland Place, one of our sheltered housing schemes in London, for the last 40 years. She celebrated her birthday in style with family followed by a party with friends. Christine Kiwanuka, Scheme Manager, presented Irene with flowers and a card from Network Homes which she added to her collection of gifts, including a telegram and a card from the Queen.

Rene is still very independent and does a lot of things for herself without the help of a carer. She lived through World War II and has many stories to tell especially about the war. One notable story is about when she took a train from London to Scotland to search for her husband. She was the only woman on the train and the soldiers kept wondering what she was up to!

When we asked her what has been her secret to making it to 100, giggling away, Irene said: "I have lived and still live a life of contentment. I'm always content with what I have."

Happy 100th Birthday Irene!

Volunteers build legacy for Hertford community

On Tuesday 12 September, Network Homes took part in a celebratory event held at Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School to recognise the achievements of six Green Team volunteers who improved local community green spaces in Hertford.

The Green Team is an employment and skills project run by community charity Groundwork Hertfordshire in partnership with Network Homes. For 14 weeks, from July to September, the Green Teamers planted up the newly-landscaped section of the public playing fields at Hertford Heath and installed new features in the grounds of Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School. They also created a new work area outside one of the classrooms with raised growing beds, seating and extra work surfaces. Within the school's woodland, the team replaced a fence and renovated a shed that will become a play area for pupils.

On top of this valuable practical experience, the Green Team volunteers worked towards qualifications to help boost their job prospects.

Jackie Trundell, Head of Neighbourhood Services at Network Homes, said: "We're pleased to fund the Green Team project again this year. It's a fantastic initiative and gives local people the opportunity to develop new skills, gain work experience and improve their employment opportunity. Network Homes believes in building thriving communities, so it's great to see what the volunteers have achieved and the difference they've made to their community."



Notting Hill Carnival comes to Beldanes Lodge

On 17 August more than 70 residents from sheltered and general needs schemes as well as people from the community attended Beldanes Lodge in Willesden, London for Beldanes Carnival.

Notting Hill carnival is a big annual summer event in London that many residents have attended in the past. It's not as accessible for our older residents so we decided to bring the fun to them by hosting our own carnival at Beldanes Lodge. It was a great way to give residents who are unable to attend the Notting Hill carnival the chance to re-live the experience in the safety and comfort of their community, surrounded by people they know.

The Beldanes Carnival was a great success among residents. It was open to all older residents who want to socialise, have a good time and meet like minded people. Many people attended the carnival in costume and partied away as they enjoyed the day with friends and

family. There was also a variety of food for all to try from Thailand, Philippines and the Caribbean Islands reflecting Network Homes' diverse community.

This was a fantastic event with the local community helping out. A local resident who used to make and design costumes for Notting Hill Carnival provided the outfits. St Michaels Church Steel Band played a medley of songs and the Mahogany dancers performed free of charge. We also partly funded the event using the Luke Onyeali Memorial Fund. This fund was a donation left to Network Homes by a former resident to provide activities and events that contribute to tackling loneliness and isolation across our Older Persons Service.

If you would like to find out more about activities at our schemes, contact Anne Marie Weir, Activities Co-ordinator, on **020 8782 5431**.

Summer of fun for residents in Hertford

It's been fun and games this summer in Hertford as we hosted community fun days for residents at Sele Farm, Crouch Gardens and Hornsmill.

We invited Network Homes' residents and members of the local community to our fun-filled, family events with a range of activities for all ages as well as information about our services. At each event, our Worksmart employment and training advisor, neighbourhood teams, and income and tenancy teams were on hand to answer questions.

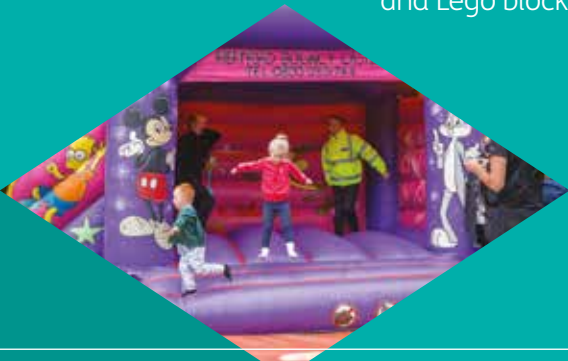
Sele Farm

We kick-started our summer of fun in Hertford with the Sele Farm Fun Day held at St Andrew CE Primary School on 22 July. Over 250 residents came along to enjoy the entertainment, find out more about the regeneration plans for their neighbourhood, and speak to us about what they would like to see improved in the future.

Meanwhile younger residents enjoyed the bouncy castle, live graffiti art workshop and the climbing wall. People of all ages enjoyed the live stage performances whether it was listening to the Pantasy Steel Band, watching the St Andrew CE Primary School Little Performers dance routine or taking part in Zumba and Tai Chi sessions. Residents also had the chance to speak to other local organisations about the services they offer.

Crouch Gardens and Hornsmill

In August we held our second fun day at Crouch Gardens followed by the Hornsmill Fun Day in September. Local residents had the opportunity to tell us what improvements they wanted for their area and register their interest in starting a Residents Association. At both events they enjoyed lots of entertainment and food including face painting, a bouncy castle, cake stall and a sweet stall. At Hornsmill we also had a tea cup ride, tombola and Lego block builder game.



Sun, sea, sand and fun activities for London residents



This summer has been an exciting one for residents in London as we hosted a selection of activities including community events, fun days and trips to the beach.

In July, we held a fun day at Carnwarth Road Estate in Hammersmith in partnership with Arhag Housing Association and Tideway London. Young talented residents showcased their cake decoration skills while parents and their children had fun on the bouncy castle. Everyone also enjoyed the delicious jerk chicken and cupcakes on offer.



In the same month, we also took residents from East London to Southend-on-Sea for some fun at the beach and fairground. Thankfully, the rain stayed away long enough for us to enjoy the classic seaside experience of fish and chips and hot sugary doughnuts. Everyone spent time trying out the Adventure Island rides before heading home.

To top it all off, in September, residents from Northolt enjoyed a day of activities and entertainment at our fun day at Rectory Field. Visitors had the opportunity to suggest names for the new blocks on the estate as well as find out more about the regeneration plans for their area.



Westside radio compered throughout the day and provided a DJ for the event. There were also plenty of activities for all the family to enjoy. This included face painting, fairground rides, smoothie making on the smoothie bikes, bouncy castle and wall climbing. In addition, the police, fire brigade, health charities and local organisations came along to give residents advice about staying safe in the community, local services and health tips.

Keep an eye out for our winter activities!

If you missed out on any of these events, don't worry as we have a range of activities planned for December. Details of our winter events will be posted on our website and social media. So if you want to be the first to know, make sure you follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Annual summer ball is a show stopper for older residents

On Friday 21 July, we held our annual Summer Ball - a dinner and dance for older people in London. It was a great success with over 150 residents attending the prestigious event at The Holiday Inn Hotel in Brentford, London.

Every year the dinner and dance gets bigger and better, and gives our older residents an opportunity to get together and meet new people of a similar age. It's a time where they can enjoy themselves and celebrate their achievements.

Some residents received awards for their contribution to their community including Good Neighbour Award, Blooming Award (best garden) and Outstanding Achievement Award. It gave our

award winners a great sense of pride and appreciation for the work they do to help others.

There was plenty of entertainment including a performance from the Young at Heart Choir, a singer and banjo player, raffle draw with prizes and lots of dancing which had the floor packed.

The feedback we received from residents was fantastic. 93% said they enjoyed the event and 86% said they felt more socially connected as a result of it. Many people also commented that it was the best event Network Homes has hosted. We will continue to bring our older residents together to build a strong sense of community spirit across all our schemes.



Music nights get toes tapping



Every month, we hold a music night at one of our sheltered housing schemes in London. It's a great opportunity for our older residents, including those not in one of our extra care or sheltered schemes, to get together, have fun and build friendships.

Violet Ogieriakhi, a Network Homes resident, tells us more about how important these events are to her and her friends.

"Music Night is one of my most loved events. It's like a therapeutic activity for all. I enjoy and look forward to it as it makes me feel happy to be with other residents."

"What makes it more enjoyable for me is going to the different schemes. You get to know and meet other residents."

"It's amazing to watch those who cannot get up to dance, still enjoying the music. They'll nod or shake their heads and some move their feet and legs from side to side. This shows they are appreciating the music as a form of therapy."

"I look forward to seeing the entertainers who make the evening more enjoyable and variable. I also enjoy the bonus ball games and raffles. Music night is a way of getting the residents and members of our community together and making new friends."



Worksmart opens the doors to new career opportunity



Through our Worksmart employment and training service, Tara Charles, a Network Homes resident, secured a role as a trainee site manager with one of our construction contractors, Denmark & White.

Tara already had previous experience and qualifications in the jewellery industry but there were limited opportunities for her to progress her career. She was looking for a new job which would allow her to put her supervisor experience to good use.

While looking for a job, Tara received a text message from us about a job opportunity as a trainee site manager. She got in touch with Kamara Jackson, Worksmart Employment and Training Advisor, who encouraged her to attend an interview. Kamara helped Tara by providing support with updating her CV and interview preparation techniques. Tara successfully passed her interview and in June this year, began her new role as a trainee site manager with Denmark and White at Gladstone Place in Hertford.

Since starting the job, Tara has enjoyed learning about construction sites. She said: "One of my main responsibilities has been to take daily photographs of the progress of the site. I have been working alongside Gary Davies, the site

manager, who is very knowledgeable and has years of experience in the construction industry.

"I would like to thank Network Homes and Kamara Jackson for all their help and assistance. She gave me the confidence I needed to take a big leap in my career. I still keep in contact and I feel we've established a good relationship in case I need future support."

If you're interested in accessing employment and training opportunities please contact our Worksmart team on **0300 373 3000** or email worksmart@networkhomes.org.uk.

"I would like to thank Network Homes and Kamara Jackson for all their help and assistance."

Tara Charles

Worksmart teams up with Brent Works for job and recruitment fair

In August, Worksmart, in partnership with Brent Works, hosted a job and recruitment fair at Brent Civic Centre in London. Over 400 people attended the fair.

It gave Network Homes residents the opportunity to meet face-to-face with potential recruiters and gain employment advice and support. They also had access to free benefits advice.

24 employers including Delaware North, Greggs Bakery and Wates were at the fair to speak with attendees about employment opportunities at their organisations.

Jemima Collins and Emma White, Network Homes' resident liaison officers, were on hand to offer helpful interview advice and useful tips. Those who came along also had access to free outfits for their job interviews. We had collected over 50 outfits from staff at Network Homes which we handed out to residents at the event to help them look the part and feel empowered for their job interviews.

If you missed out on this event, don't worry as next year we'll be hosting two job and recruitment fairs. Keep an eye out for further

announcements on our website as well as on our Facebook and Twitter pages in the New Year.

For more information about our Worksmart employment and training service please contact the Worksmart team on **0300 373 3000** or email worksmart@networkhomes.org.uk.





Annual report for tenants 2016/17



**Network
Homes**

Because good homes
make everything possible

Welcome to our annual report for tenants 2016/17, highlighting our performance and achievements over the last year.

2016/17 has been a good year for us - our first as Network Homes. We've continued to make progress towards achieving our ambitions to build 1,000 new homes a year, achieve 90% customer satisfaction and increase our financial strength.

85%
overall customer satisfaction

RESI
Landlord
of the Year
2017

Housing
Association of the Year
at What House?
Awards 2016

Your rent

We set the rent for our social rented homes in line with the Government's policy on target rents and based on the size and value of the property. The chart below shows the average rent for our properties per week.



Average social rent per week 2016/17

Bedsit	£88.13
1 bed home	£111.81
2 bed home	£136.39
3 bed home	£155.25
4 bed home	£192.36
5 bed home	£206.61
6 bed home	£163.46



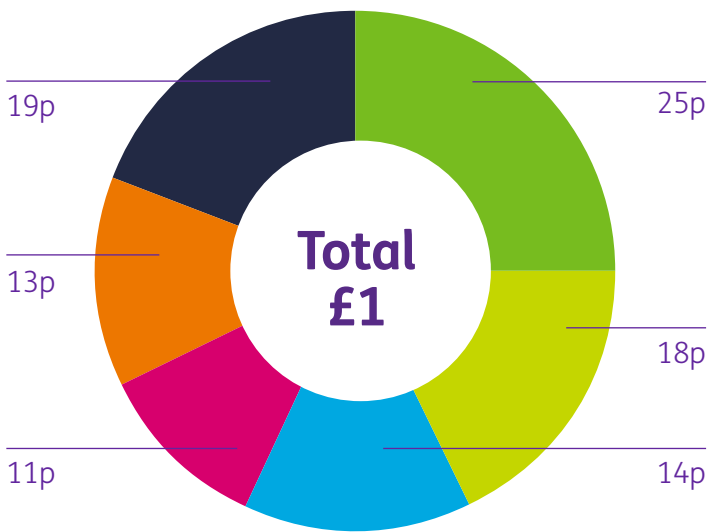
Average affordable rent per week 2016/17

1 bed home	£177.75
2 bed home *	£210.38*
3 bed home	£198.46
4 bed home	£229.23
5 bed home	£374.40

In 2011, the Government introduced a new policy on rents called Affordable Rents. All of our rents for new homes and some of our rents for existing homes let after this time have been at the Affordable Rent level. Our Affordable rents are set in line with the Government's guidance. Affordable rents are capped at 80% of the market rent level.

***Please note:** the average rent of a two bed home is higher because we have more two bed homes in London, where rents are typically higher, than we have in areas outside London.

How we spend each £1 of your rent



- ▶ Housing management and administration
- ▶ Repairs and maintenance
- ▶ Payment for leasing properties
- ▶ Services
- ▶ Depreciation
- ▶ Loan interest payments

3.7%
current rent arrears

Empty homes

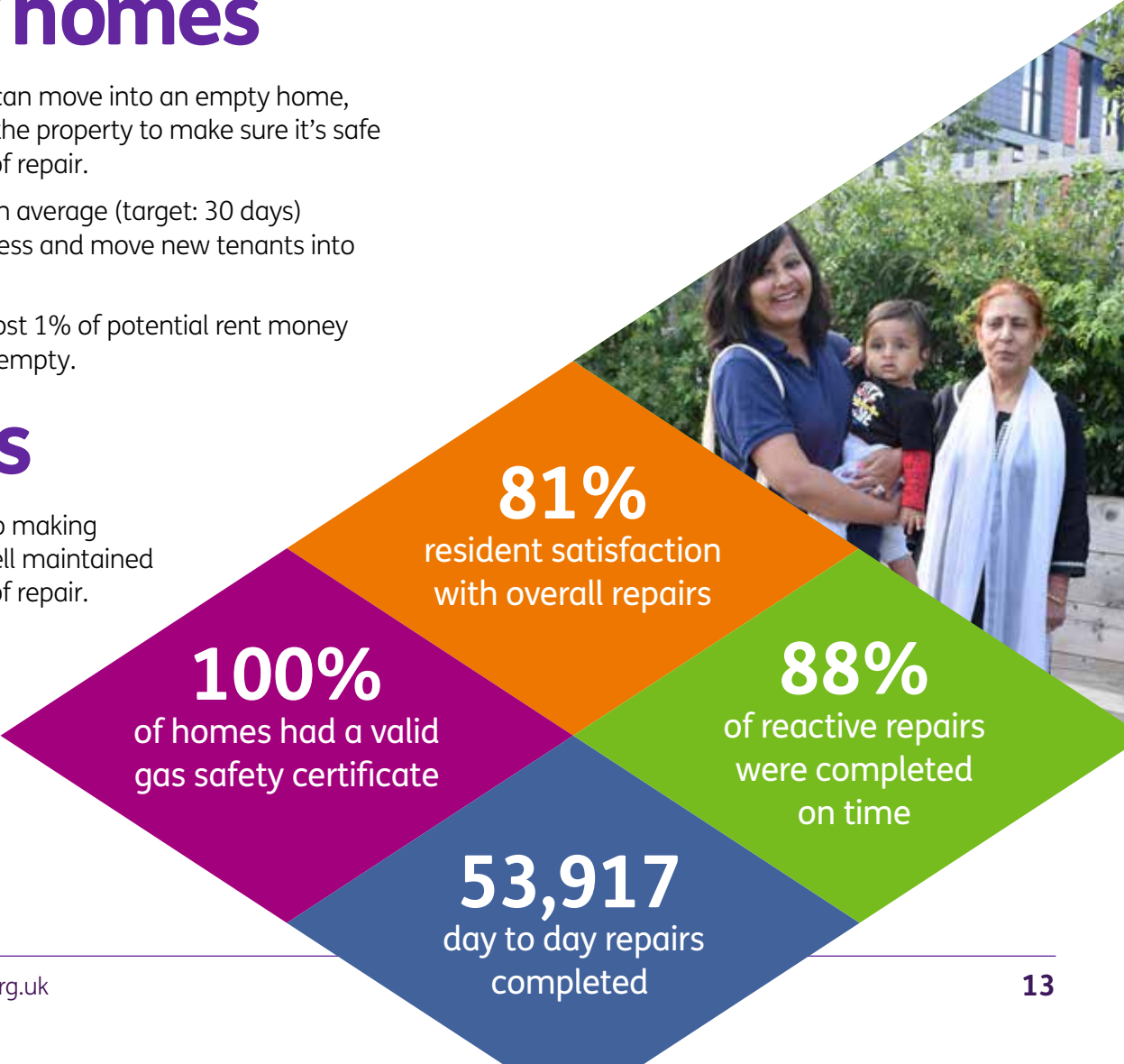
Before new tenants can move into an empty home, our surveyors check the property to make sure it's safe and in a good state of repair.

It takes us 33 days on average (target: 30 days) to carry out this process and move new tenants into a home.

During 2016/17 we lost 1% of potential rent money due to homes being empty.

Repairs

We are committed to making sure your home is well maintained and in a good state of repair.





85%
of our customers were satisfied overall with our services

90%
satisfied with our customer service centre

81%
of enquiries resolved at first contact

Customer services

We're dedicated to providing you with a high level of service and we're working towards achieving 90% customer satisfaction. In June 2016, we launched the self service portal. This gives you the option to make a rent payment, check your rent account and monitor the progress of repairs online at your own convenience. At the end of the year over 1,300 customers were registered to use the portal with more joining every month.

We recognise the importance of learning from customer complaints and welcome them as a valuable form of feedback about our services. We aim to resolve all complaints at stage one of the complaints process. Last year, one complaint reached the Independent Housing Ombudsman Service and this complaint was not upheld.

Stage of complaint	Number of complaints
Stage 1 (Resolved by the Management Team)	1,732
Stage 2 (Resolved by the Director or Executive Director)	116
Stage 3 (Resolved by the Board)	18
Total number of complaints received	1,866

93%
of complaints received were resolved at Stage 1

Thriving communities

We've invested in you and your communities to help you access advice, employment and training, as well as to improve communal areas and take part in community projects. We also encourage resident involvement at every level of the organisation and offer a variety of ways to get involved and help us to improve our services. This year, we ran 'The Big Conversation' survey with residents where you told us what involvement activities you are interested in. The results will be used to develop new activities for 2017/18.

Our communities in numbers during 2016/17:



243

referrals to our job ready programme, Worksmart

9

residents accessed employment training and support

34

residents supported into work

£13,636

of social value produced through provision of young persons' street Dance workshops in Hertford

84

CVs were produced via the Worksmart programme and **59** interviews took place

£146,454

of social value produced through regular choir and bingo sessions for older residents in London

668

residents got involved with Network Homes over the year

► Different ways residents got involved:

- **8** Local Panel meetings held
- **8** Network Homes Panels held
- **1** Mystery Shop conducted
- **1** Resident Quality Inspection conducted
- **1** Scrutiny Project started
- **537** residents attended the first ever Network Homes Residents Day.

Value for money

We're always monitoring services to make sure we're delivering value for money. We benchmark our services using HouseMark, a membership-based organisation which seeks to help the social housing sector improve performance and achieve value for money.

This year, we've:

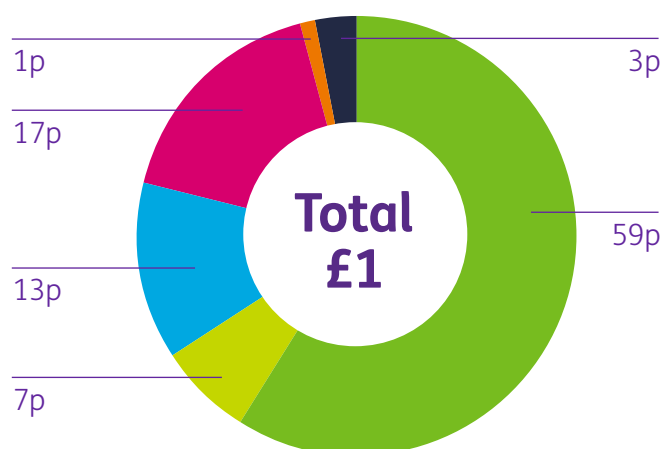
- ▶ completed **468** new homes
- ▶ started **1,235** new homes
- ▶ invested **£112 million** in new homes
- ▶ invested over **£40 million** in maintaining our existing homes.

Financial results

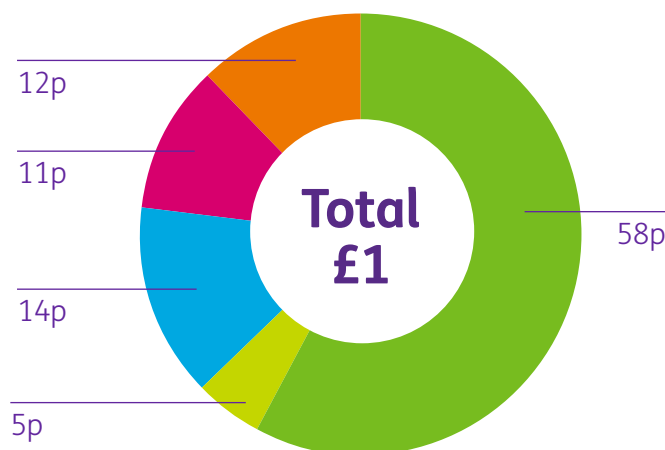
We made a net surplus of £52million after tax which we will reinvest back into providing new affordable homes, maintaining existing homes, and improving services for customers.

Network Homes income	£'000
▶ Social housing income (rent, service charge and grants)	£146,497
▶ Surplus on sales of properties	£17,066
▶ Other social income*	£33,362
▶ Non-social income +	£43,625
▶ Revaluation of investment properties	£1,347
▶ Restructuring of loans	£8,720
Interest on bank deposits^	£422
Total income	£251,039
Network Homes expenditure	£'000
▶ Social housing costs	£109,191
▶ Cost of properties sold	£9,741
▶ Loan interest payments	£26,218
▶ Other social costs	£21,388
▶ Non-social costs	£23,451
Total expenditure	£189,989

Where each pound comes from



Where each pound goes



We are an award-winning housing association and build award-winning homes. These are a few of the awards we won during 2016/17:



16 ^Interest on bank deposits amount to less than 1p therefore it is not shown on the pie chart.
 *Other social income includes fees from agency contracts, supporting people contracts and sale of shared ownership properties.
 + Non-social income includes rent from commercial properties, rent from student accommodation properties, and market sale properties.

Are you up to date about Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a combined benefit that will affect you if you're claiming Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit.

Your payment for these benefits will now come in one monthly combined payment directly to your bank account. This means you will be responsible for paying your rent directly to us, your landlord, unless you have an Alternative Payment Arrangement.

Universal Credit is being rolled out in phases, according to your nearest JobCentre Plus.

The following areas will be affected soon:

December 2017

Barking, Brixton, Dagenham, Ealing, Hatfield, Stockwell, Watford.

February 2018

Clapham Common, Marylebone, Redbridge, Streatham, Westminster.

March 2018

Barnsbury, Finsbury Park, Highgate, Kingston, Twickenham.

Already claiming one of those benefits?

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will tell you when you will be moved across to Universal Credit. It's important you follow the instructions otherwise your payments will stop.



Need to make a new claim?

You can apply for Universal Credit online at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit. There is a waiting time of six weeks before you will get paid, so if you claim on 1 December, you will not be paid until mid January. Your next payment would be in mid February.

Our Welfare Benefit Advice team can assist you with claims and give you information on any help you may be entitled to. You can contact them at welfareadvisors@networkhomes.org.uk or call **0300 373 3000**.

You can also try our benefits calculator at <https://networkhomes.entitledto.co.uk>.

If you need help getting ready for work or finding employment, our Worksmart team can help you, contact worksmart@networkhomes.org.uk.

Silver Spotlight

When we surveyed our older residents in spring this year, some of you asked us how to access help with getting around, meeting people and getting involved in the community. If you'd like more information or advice on any of those things, here are some useful contacts.

Help getting around

Dial-a-Ride and London Taxicard scheme are door to door transport services for people living in London. To use these services, you must have a permanent, long-term disability or serious disability.

Dial-a-ride is free but you have to become a member. London Taxicard gives you subsidised door to door journeys in licensed taxis and private hire vehicles.

To apply for Dial-a-Ride, call TfL on **0343 222 7777** and get an application form posted to you.

To apply for a Taxicard, call **020 7934 9791** and get an application form posted to you.

Help meeting people

Age UK has a free befriending service where you can meet and talk to people with similar interests to you. If you would like to find out about this service, visit your local Age UK or call them on **0800 055 6112**. There are also tips on meeting new people on Age UK's website at www.ageuk.org.uk.

Get involved

We run activities in our sheltered housing schemes which anyone is welcome to come along to. If you would like more information about these activities, call our Older Persons Service on **0300 373 3000**.

We also have a variety of resident involvement activities, such as resident panels and forums, that you can join. To find out more contact our Community Engagement and Investment team on **0300 373 3000**.

Changes to the way you make payments over the phone

We're changing the way we take payments over the phone by improving the security we have in place when you provide your card details. This ensures your card details are not compromised in anyway.

What is changing?

If you would like to make a payment over the phone with us using a credit or debit card, you'll now need to enter your card number using your phone keypad, instead of reading it out to our advisor. If you need any help to do this, you can ask our advisor who will remain on the phone with you.

Why is this change happening?

Network Homes takes data protection seriously and is making these changes to keep your card details secure. Typing your card details instead of reading them out increases security, as no one will overhear. We will no longer know your card details or record them on our system. Only allpay and the bank will see your details in order to process the payment.

Will this mean making a payment is harder?

The customer service advisor will still be on the phone to help you throughout so it will not make the

process any harder for you. If you enter a number incorrectly, just ask them to delete your entry so you can start again. The advisor will not see the number entered as it's replaced with special characters on the system, e.g. *.



Paying your rent over the festive period



We understand you may have a lot of expenses over the festive period but it's important you don't forget to pay your rent. If you have any concerns about paying your rent, please contact us on 0300 373 3000.

There are a number of ways you can pay your rent:

▶ **Online self service portal** – pay online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.networkhomes.org.uk.

- ▶ **Direct Debit** – contact us on **0300 373 3000** to set up a Direct Debit.
- ▶ **Over the phone** – via allpay, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **0844 557 8321** or call us on **0300 373 3000** between 8am and 6pm. You'll need to quote your unique 20 digit rent payment card number.
- ▶ **Standing order** – make payments to Network Homes Limited, sort code: 20-05-03, account number: 53408728. Please remember to quote your payment reference number which you'll find on your rent account statement.
- ▶ **Pay Point outlet** – pay at the Post Office or any Pay Point outlet using your rent payment card.

▶ **AllPay payment app** – download the app for free from your app store. For more details visit www.allpay.net.



Remember, we're here to help. If you're struggling to pay your rent, please let us know as our Income team can offer advice and support. The earlier you contact us the sooner we can speak to you about your options.

Changes to Network Homes sort code

On Sunday 12 November 2017, the sort code number for our bank account changed. This is due to changes that Barclays are making to their business accounts.

Our new sort code is **20-05-03**. There is no change to our account number – it is still **53408728**.

The change of sort code affects all payments made into the Network Homes bank account. Please take the time to note the new sort code and ensure it is changed on your chosen payment method.

It is really important that you change the sort code so your payments go to the correct account.

If you would like to set up a standing order or you already have a standing order in place to pay your rent or service charge, please ensure you use the details below:

- ▶ Account name - Network Homes Limited
- ▶ Sort code – 20-05-03
- ▶ Account number – 53408728

You will also need to use your payment reference number to help us identify your payment.

If you have any questions about this, please contact us on **0300 373 3000**.

Fire safety tips over the festive season



As the festive period approaches, we want to remind you of things you can do to keep your home safe.

Here are some top tips to remember:

- ▶ It's really important that you test your smoke alarm weekly. Remember to clean it and remove dust.
- ▶ Always place lit candles on a non-flammable base away from other objects and check they are completely out before you go to sleep. Don't leave candles unattended.
- ▶ Ensure candles are placed in a safe place away from young children or pets.
- ▶ Only use festive lights that are 'CE' approved (there should be a CE marking on the packaging) and always ensure these are turned off and unplugged before you go to sleep.
- ▶ Decorations can burn easily – don't attach them to lights or heaters.

- ▶ Do not overload electrical sockets. Watch out for faulty and over-heating electrical equipment and wiring/cables.
- ▶ Most fires start in the kitchen so never leave cooking unattended.
- ▶ Make sure cigarettes are completely out.
- ▶ Ensure you have and know your fire escape plan. This could prove life saving!
- ▶ If you live in a flat, familiarise yourself with the building's fire strategy.

...And finally, enjoy this festive period.

If you require any assistance or advice relating to fire safety, please contact the Fire Safety team on **0300 373 3000** or firesafety@networkhomes.org.uk. You can also download our Fire Safety in Your Home booklet from our website at www.networkhomes.org.uk/firesafety.

Top tips for keeping warm and saving energy this winter

We're at that time of the year when the temperature drops. Many people will experience higher energy bills as the heating gets turned up to keep the winter chill out.

We've pulled together some top tips to help you stay warm this winter as well as save on your energy bill.

- ▶ Set your thermostat to 18-21 degrees and use a timer to turn the heating on and off. This helps save on your fuel bills and prevents pipes from freezing.
- ▶ Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home. Shut them at night to stop the heat escaping as quickly.

- ▶ Close internal doors to unheated rooms.
- ▶ Block any draughty gaps to stop rooms feeling colder.
- ▶ Keep stuff away from your radiators. Ensure furniture and other obstructions have been moved so heat can circulate more freely around your room.
- ▶ If your radiators have cool spots when the heating is on, bleed them to improve their efficiency.
- ▶ Ensure you're getting the best deal with your energy supplier and switch if you find a better one.

If you have any repair issue with your property, please contact us on **0300 373 3000** or report a repair via our online self service portal at **www.networkhomes.org.uk**.

Update about our ground maintenance and cleaning service

In June this year, we ran an online survey to find out what you thought about the ground maintenance and cleaning service you receive.

Thank you to everyone who took part. Your feedback is valuable and it will help to inform the decisions we make about this service.

We're currently sourcing and reviewing new contractors to provide the cleaning and ground maintenance service. We're also reviewing your feedback to find ways to continue improving the service you receive.

Keep your details up to date

When you become a Network Homes tenant we collect a number of details from you to help us provide the services you need from us as your a landlord. It's important you let us know if any of these details have changed.

You should especially let us know if any of the following details change:

- ▶ Contact details – e.g. telephone number and email.
- ▶ Next of kin.
- ▶ Change in circumstances – e.g. births, deaths, marriages or civil partnerships.

We hold and process your information in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. Please let us know if any of your details have changed as soon as possible so we can update your records. You can call us on **0300 373 3000** to do this.

Take advantage of the discounted home contents insurance scheme

Now is the time to get home contents insurance so you have protection against any unexpected damage or loss to your personal belongings from water leaks, fire, theft, vandalism or flood in the home.

While we care for and insure the structure of your home (building etc), it is your responsibility to insure your home contents and personal possessions.

You have access to affordable home contents insurance through the My Home Contents Insurance scheme provided by Thistle Tenant Risks. You do not need a bank account or to go through credit checks to use this scheme. Some of the other benefits are:

- ▶ Affordable insurance premiums – payments from £2.91 a fortnight.
- ▶ Easy and flexible payment options - fortnightly or monthly by cash using a swipe card at the Post Office or Pay Zone outlets, monthly by direct debit or annually by cheque, postal order, debit or credit card.
- ▶ No excess on claims – you don't have to pay the first part of the claim.
- ▶ No minimum property security requirements - e.g. no special door or window locks required.
- ▶ Cover on a new for old basis with no deduction for wear and tear – except in respect of linen and clothing.
- ▶ Cover for fire, theft, flood, water damage and other household risks.
- ▶ Cover for damage to internal decorations and external glazing which you are legally responsible for under your tenancy agreement.
- ▶ Cover for accidental damage to sanitary fixtures such as toilets and washbasins.



And much more!

For more information:

Phone **0345 450 7288**, visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk or contact us on **0300 373 3000** for an application booklet.

We recommend that all our customers insure the contents of their home either through the My Home Contents Insurance scheme or by making their own arrangements.

Winner of the summer home contents insurance competition

Over the summer we attended community fun days where we met with you and gave you information about our recommended affordable home contents insurance scheme provided by Thistle Tenant Risks.

During this time, we also ran two competitions, sponsored by Thistle Tenant Risks, to give you the chance to win £25 worth of Love to Shop vouchers.

Helen Evans, Network Homes' Chief Executive, randomly selected the winner. Congratulations to **Elaine Carauna from Hertford** who won our first competition.



Elaine Carauna, winner of the summer competition.

Update from your local resident panels

Out of London Panel update

Hello, I am the Chair of the Herts and Outer London local panel.

The panel is tenant led and tenant owned. Our role is varied. We take part in policy reviews and currently have a panel member on a focus group to help shape Network Homes' Equality and Diversity Strategy. We also look at the current environment, including government housing policies, assessing any possible implications to current and future Network Homes residents.

We're regularly involved in service procurement assessment panels and scrutinise Network Homes' performance data. We hold departments to account for their actions and suggest areas for service improvements. This is a key way for us to ensure our landlord is achieving the best possible value for money.

Some members of the panel will also attend the Network Homes Panel which is the central resident body that brings together views

from all Local Panels. This is a platform where Network Homes can discuss any items of concern with panel members. Board members from the Customer Services Committee attend the meeting which gives the tenants a voice at the heart of Network Homes. Helen Evans, Network Homes' Chief Executive, also comes along and supports resident involvement.

There is a maximum of eight tenants on the panel which includes two councillors and two independent members. We do currently have vacancies so if you're interested and would like to join us, contact Ian Lamerton, Co-Regulation Manager at Network Homes on **0300 373 3000**.

Network Homes will reimburse your expenses and can also arrange a training programme tailored to suit your needs.

Till the next update!

Cedric Carter

Chair of Herts and Out of London Local Panel

London Panel update

Since my last update in the summer newsletter, we've been busy interviewing residents interested in joining us. As a result, we hope three new members will be part of the panel soon.

We had to cancel the meeting in August but the next meeting later this year will be an important one as the Chair and Vice Chair positions will be up for election. In addition, Network Homes will present information on Welfare Reform and Value for Money.

All the best!

Till the next update,

Catherine Joseph

Chair of London Local Panel



No barriers to involvement!

We want you to be actively involved with Network Homes so you can help us to improve our services.

The best way you can help is by taking part in our resident involvement activities. To make this as simple as possible we will:

- ▶ reimburse you for travel expenses incurred when getting to and from our meetings and events
- ▶ reimburse you for childcare costs to take part
- ▶ provide you with documents in Braille or audio formats if you need them.

If you'd like to know anything else about resident involvement expenses or benefits of being an involved resident please get in touch. You can email get-involved@networkhomes.org.uk or call **0300 373 3000** and ask to speak to the Community Engagement and Investment team.

The BIG Conversation gets valuable feedback

In April 2017, we ran the BIG Conversation, a consultation activity to find out how you feel about Network Homes' resident engagement opportunities.

In the survey, we asked you how you felt about our involvement opportunities, from Residents Associations and Community Champions, to Tenant Panels and Mystery Shoppers. The survey also tested how aware you were of these opportunities, how often you engage with them, and how you want to see them developed in the future. You also had the chance to let us know about any areas for improvement.

We were delighted with the response. 225 people completed the survey which shows that you are keen to have your voice heard. We were also able to refer 73 residents to our Worksmart programme for employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

As a result of the BIG Conversation, the Community Engagement and Investment team is making several changes which include:

- ▶ Launching a new Menu of Involvement Activities - a leaflet explaining what the involvement activities are and what they include.



- ▶ Promoting the support we offer involved residents to reduce or remove barriers to taking part, such as reimbursing you for the cost of travel to meetings.
- ▶ Developing a points-based incentives scheme, so that residents who provide their valuable feedback are rewarded for their efforts.
- ▶ Increasing promotion of all involvement opportunities across a variety of channels so residents don't miss out.

If you're interested in finding out more, or getting involved with Network Homes, visit our website www.networkhomes.org.uk/getinvolved, contact us at getinvolved@networkhomes.org.uk or on **0300 373 3000**. We would love to hear from you. Don't forget we can help with travel, childcare and other expenses so you can take part in our activities.

Become a mystery shopper and help to improve our service

Do you want to be involved in shaping Network Homes' services? Do you have excellent observational skills and a good memory? Would people describe you as committed, enthusiastic and reliable?

If this sounds like you, why not become a mystery shopper? Mystery shoppers are residents who have received special training to inspect our services and identify areas where we can make improvements. You'll use your own customer details to take part in made-up scenarios to test our services. For example, we may ask you to phone our Contact Centre or visit our reception.

We'll review your findings and give you feedback about what we've done with your observations. We'll also let you know about any recommendations we've made to improve services.

If you would like to be a mystery shopper or for more information about our involvement activities, please contact us at getinvolved@networkhomes.org.uk or on **0300 373 3000**.

► Get ready for Network Homes' Residents Day 2018

When: Saturday 24 March 2018, 11am to 3.30pm

Where: Brent Civic Centre, Wembley Park

Residents Day is coming back for 2018. Following on from the success of last year's event, we're going to make this one even bigger and better.

There will be delicious food and refreshments, workshops on key topics affecting you, advice and information and the opportunity to meet the team from Network Homes.

We'll also be presenting awards to our involved residents in recognition of their commitment to their local communities and in helping us to improve our service. We'll be inviting you to cast your votes for the winners soon.

So don't miss out! Look out for the invite in the coming months and save the date in your diary.

If you would like to receive updates and information about our Residents Day, follow us on Twitter @networkhomesuk and our NetworkHomesUK page on Facebook.



Keep in touch

 0300 373 3000

 customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk

 www.networkhomes.org.uk

 @networkhomesuk

 www.facebook.com/networkhomesuk

Registered office: Network Homes, Olympic Office Centre, 8 Fulton Road, Wembley, HA9 0NU.

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If you would prefer not to receive the Network Homes newsletter you can opt-out by emailing marcomms@networkhomes.org.uk or writing to Marketing & Communications Team, Network Homes, Olympic Office Centre, 8 Fulton Road, Wembley, HA9 0NU.