



Customer Annual Report

2016/17



Our Vision

For everyone to have the opportunity
to have a place they can call home.

Welcome to your annual report

This year's Annual Report let's you know how we performed during 2016/17. We've also taken the opportunity to share some of the priorities for the year ahead.

Over the past year we've been focusing on improving our services and we will continue to do so.

Customers are at the heart of all that we do – providing people and families with a good quality affordable home, often for the first time, can truly transform lives.

During the year, our Customer Scrutiny panel reviewed a number of areas in the business including our Customer Contact Team, and our Digital Involvement.

As part of their review, they have made some key recommendations, with the aim of delivering better services for all customers, which in turn should help improve overall customer satisfaction.

We invested £19.8m in our homes to ensure customers are warm, safe and can live in well maintained properties.

We have also committed to a £4.5million investment in a digital programme, which will transform the way we do business and help ensure we remain at the forefront of the sector.

After completing an in depth assessment earlier this year the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) awarded Stonewater a rating of G1 and V1. This rating is the highest grading achievable and confirms that Stonewater benefits from strong governance and are financially sound. Retaining this rating is tremendous news and means that we can continue to develop even better services for current and future customers.



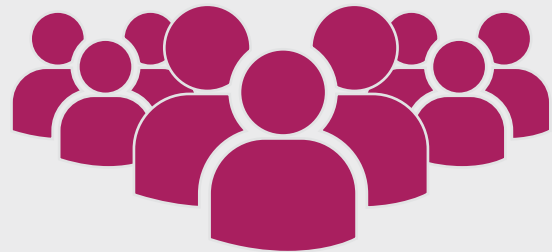
Customer service

We work with an independent research company called Voluntas to undertake regular telephone surveys with customers to find out how well we are doing.

Customer feedback, whether it's good or bad, tells us if we need to do things better and is really valuable to us. We experienced a drop in satisfaction in the first quarter of the year. Feedback we received revealed that the new estate services contracts were one of the main reasons for this.



YOU TOLD US



64%

of customers were satisfied with the overall service provided by Stonewater

TARGET
81%

75%

of customers were satisfied their rent provided value for money

TARGET
78%

53%

of customers were satisfied their views were taken into account

TARGET
64%

Early indications show our performance in 2017/18 has seen an improvement in our key performance areas above which we measure and monitor for customer satisfaction.

What we did:

- > We acknowledged that there were teething problems with our new estates services contracts and we have been working closely with customers and the contractors to improve these new arrangements. We are currently piloting 'Estate Champions' – customers who have volunteered to help feedback to our Tenancy Services Officers on issues, telling us how it really is.
- > Our new single housing system means that whoever you talk to will be able to see your information and records of previous calls. This means we'll be able to deal with any requests or feedback more quickly and efficiently.
- > We have introduced new surveys this year to get feedback in our service delivery for Anti social behaviour, complaints, lettings, new homes and planned maintenance.
- > We have invited customer feedback on service proposals through our Customer hubb.
- > We have improved our complaints process so that we can improve response times.

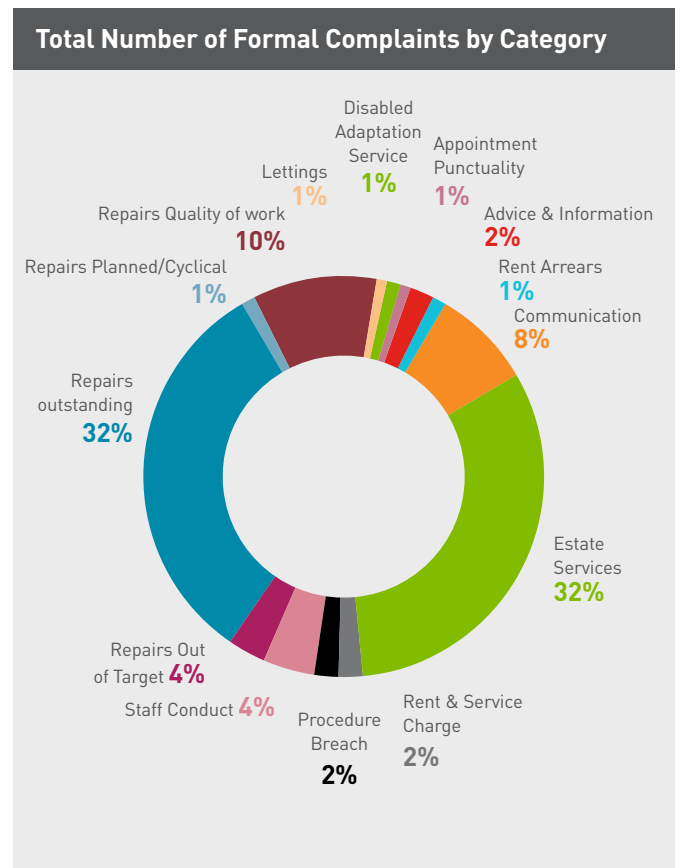
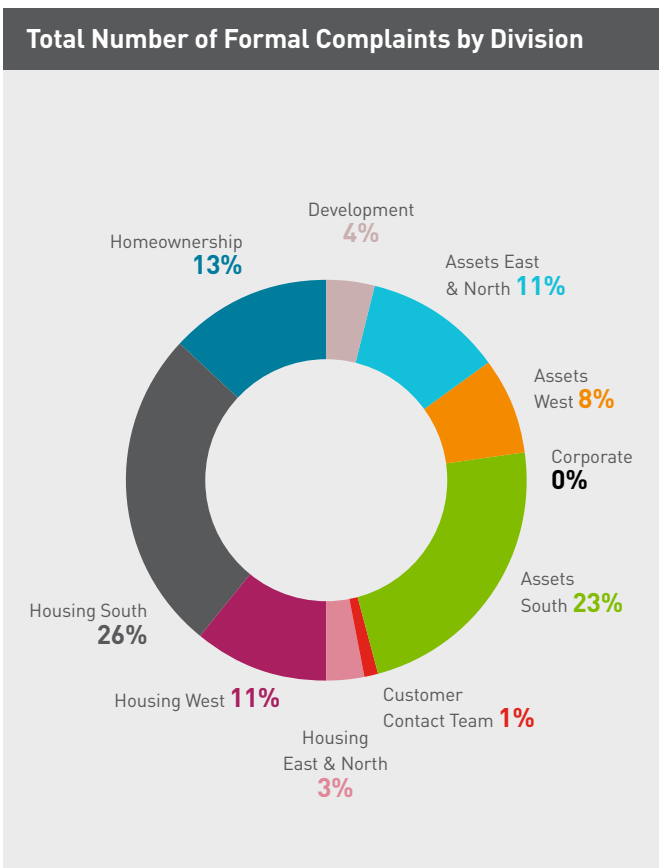


Complaints – how we performed

How we performed

We value your feedback as it helps us understand how you view us and the services we provide. It enables us to review and improve the services we deliver, ensuring we provide value for money.

What you complained about:



What we did

Getting in touch

> To make it easier for you to get in touch we've introduced a single contact number and improved our website making it easier for you to contact us at any time as well as email us. This helps us to deal with things quickly.

Customer Feedback

- > We've introduced a central Customer Feedback Team who deal with all feedback to make sure we are consistent and monitor how well we deal with complaints.
- > The Customer Feedback Team will try and resolve problems for you and will also work closely with colleagues across Stonewater to try and get the best outcome for you.
- > Where it's not been possible to resolve your concerns the Customer Feedback Team will work closely with the independent Customer Complaint Panel and Housing Ombudsman Service where formal reviews are requested.

What we've done

Putting things right

- > We've undertaken a major review on how we handle complaints.
- > Trained staff across the business to make sure they're knowledgeable about how to deal with a complaint and try to resolve issues quickly and easily.
- > We've improved the time it takes to resolve complaints and will continue to make sure we're making it quicker and easier to resolve issues.
- > We've improved our website to make it easier for you to tell us when you're not happy or to let us know when we've done a good job.
- > We want to make sure we deal with problems quickly and don't repeat the same mistakes. We also want to improve customer experience.

Involving customers

- > We want to encourage more customers from across Stonewater to join existing members of the Customer Complaint Panel. The Customer Complaint Panel is independent of Stonewater but plays a vital role in reviewing complaints and in ensuring fairness and transparency.
- > The Customer Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a major review of how we handled complaints from a customers viewpoint. We've implemented the majority of the recommendations.

Learning from complaints

We want to use the learning from complaints to improve how we deliver services.

- > We've improved our systems enabling us to understand the root cause of complaints.
- > We've already used what we have learnt to influence two major service reviews in estate services and contractor procurement.
- > We're also using the learning to improve how we communicate with customers. We want to improve our self service options and complaints are helping us understand customer preferences.
- > We'll continue to use the learning to help us with future service reviews.



Collecting income

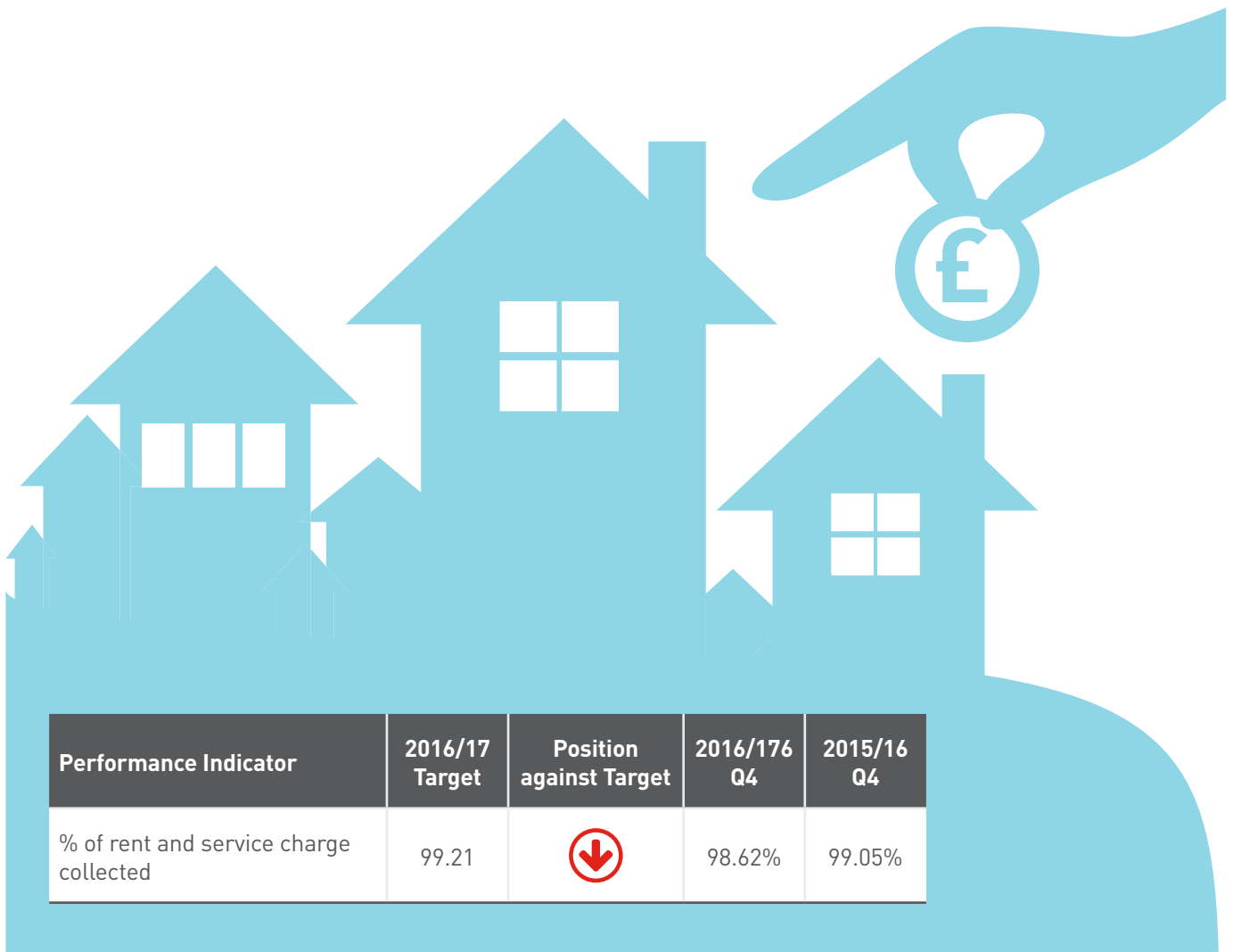
Our income comes from a variety of sources, but mainly from rent and service charges. See page 6 for more information on 'where our money comes from'.

What we did

We restructured and made improvements to our teams, to enable us to work better with our customers and to help them pay their rent on time. Our financial inclusion team are also on hand to offer support. We believe that we will see the full benefit of making these changes during 2017/18. We know we still need to improve our performance on income collection, and we are working hard to address this.

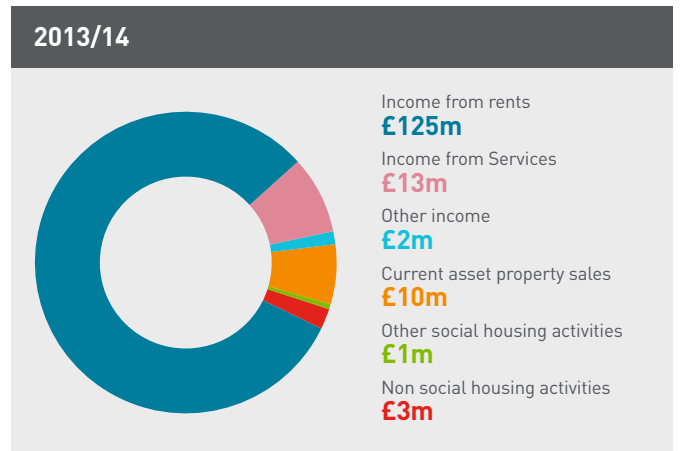
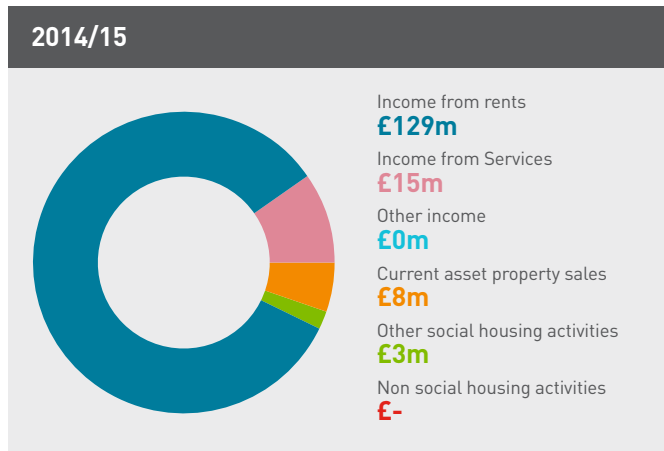
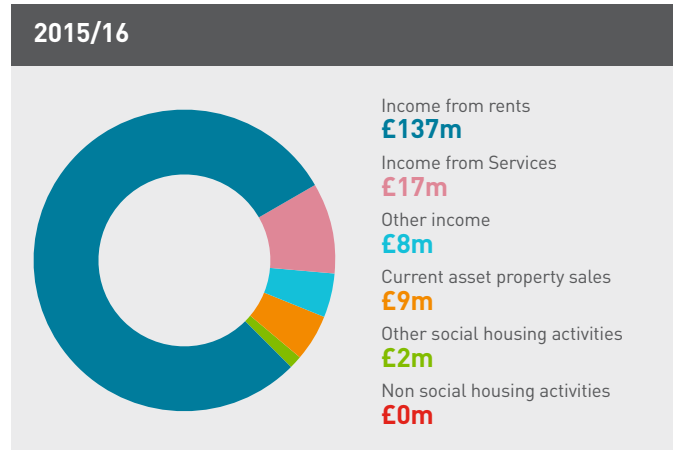
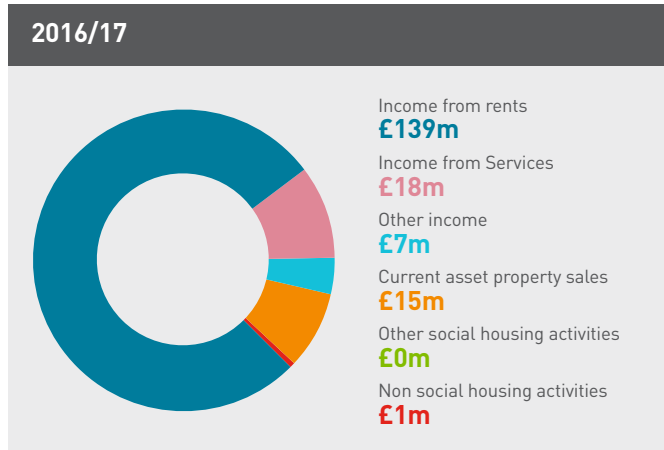
What we plan to do

Our internal auditors will be conducting an audit during 2017/18. The audit will focus on the management of rent arrears including reviewing the policies, procedures and processes in place. The results of the audit will enable the teams to identify areas for improvement to ensure that the staff and systems are working effectively and efficiently.



Where our money comes from

We're a non-for-profit organisation, committed to delivery value for money. Here you can see where our money comes from and how we spent our money this year.

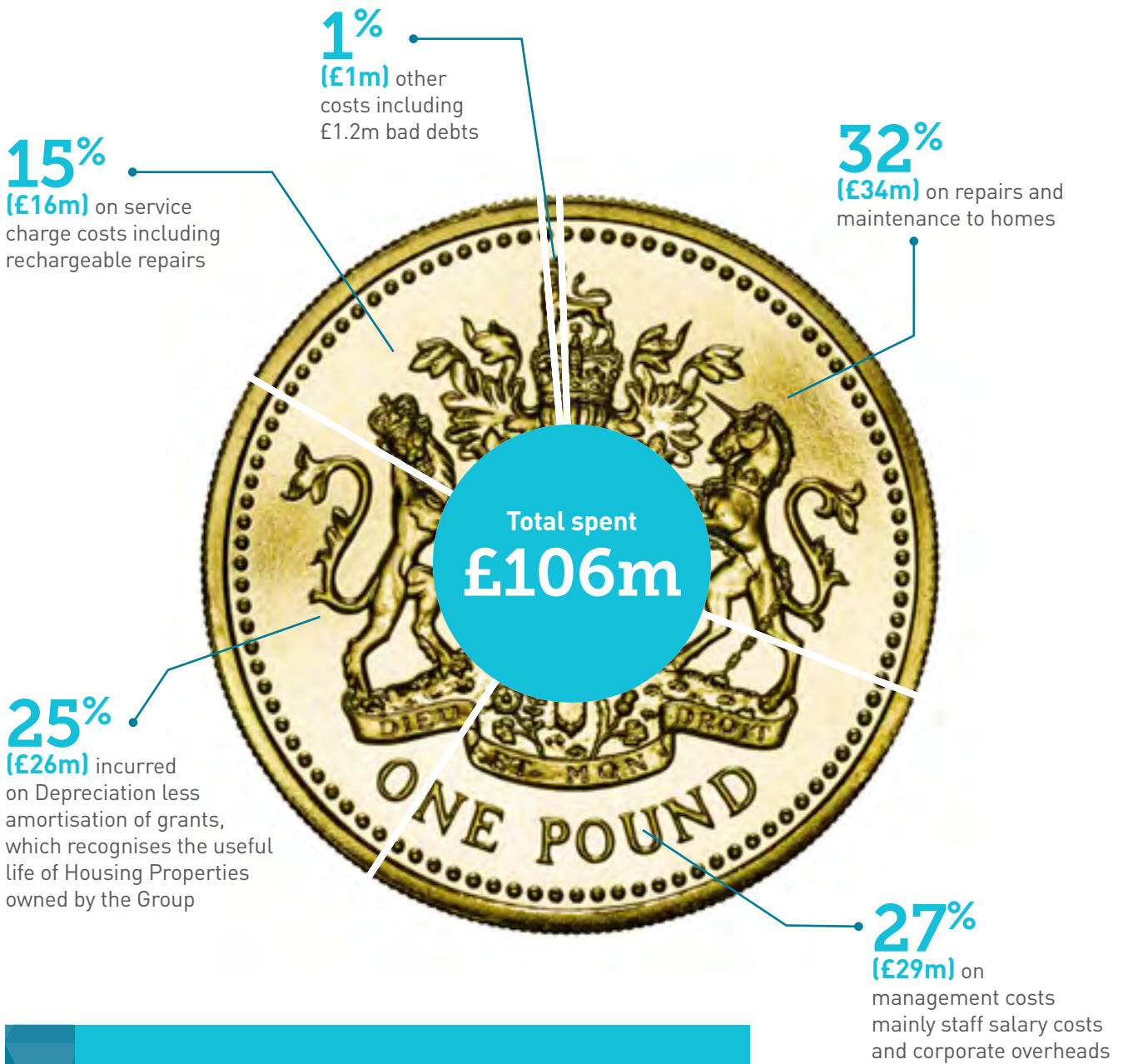


Where our money goes

How do we spend each £1 of rent and service charge income?

Our rental and service charge income in 2016/17 was £157m, compared to £154m in 2015/16.

In 2016/17 we spent:



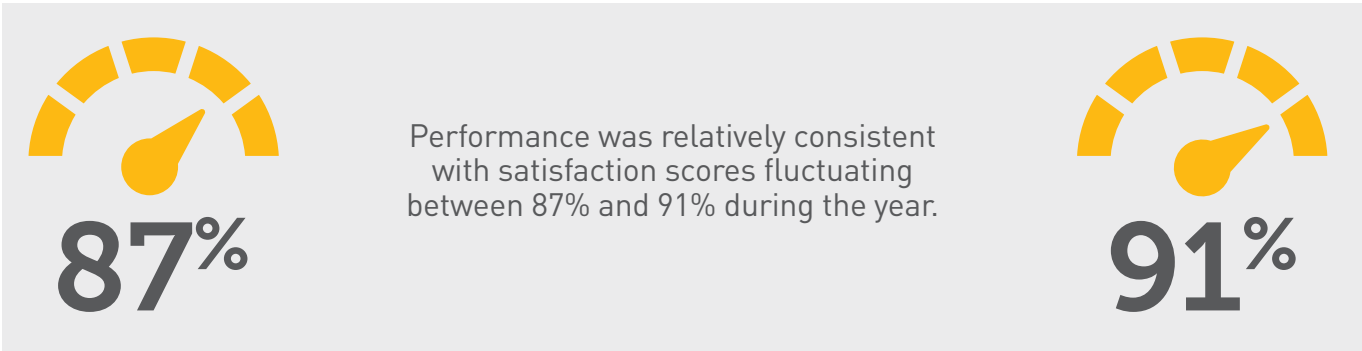
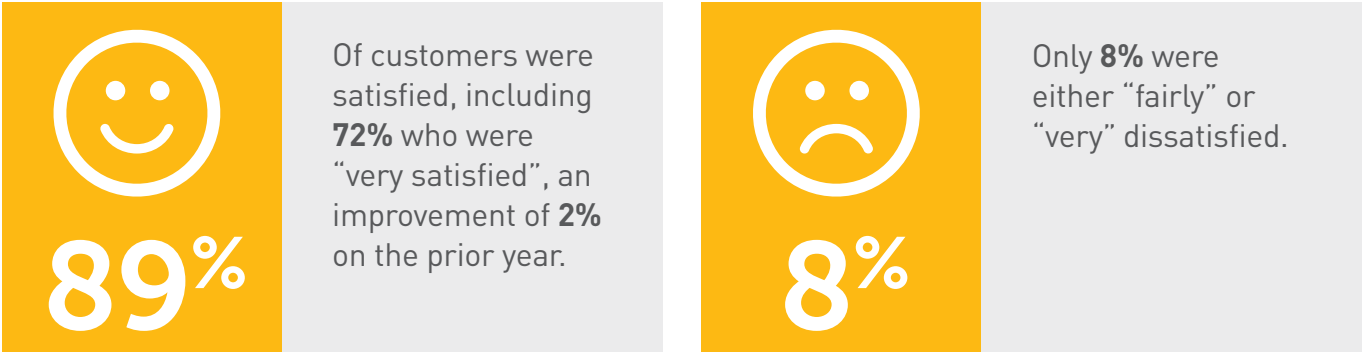
We have generated **£57m** operating surplus on social housing lettings, which represents **36%** of rent and service charge income.

Repairs and Maintenance

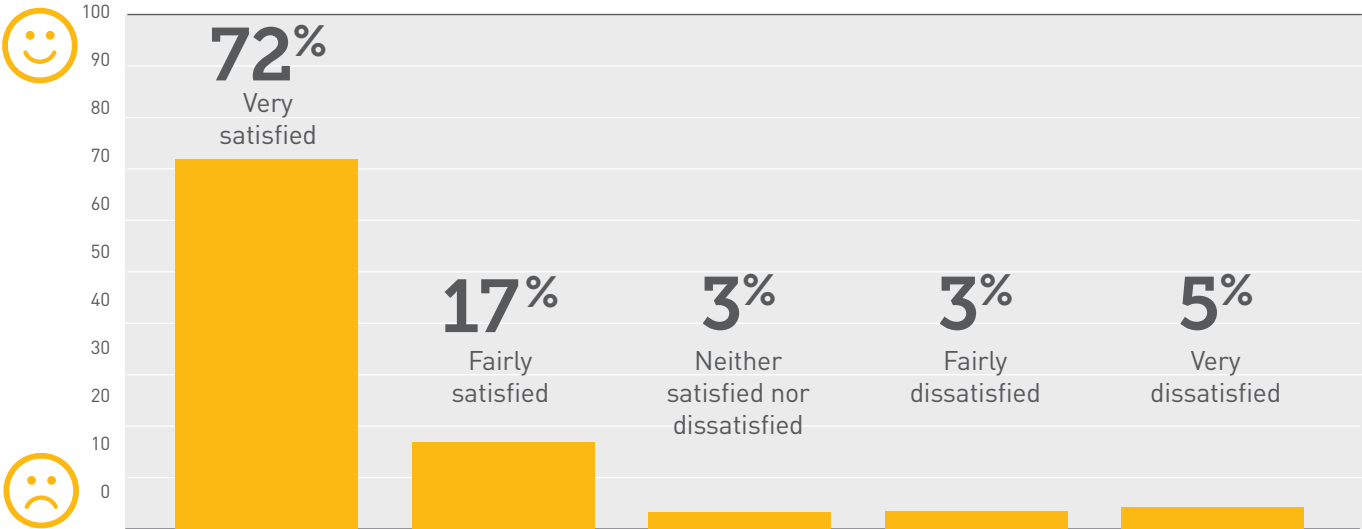
Responsive repairs satisfaction

We're working hard to improve our repairs service to ensure we provide the best service for customers. In most cases an external contractor will work on our behalf and will carry out your day-to-day repairs.

How we performed



Responsive repairs satisfaction



Repairs and Maintenance continued

What we did

Change the way we deliver services – during 2016/17 we underwent an internal assets team restructure, which provided savings in our operating costs. This enabled us to centralise some of our services with the introduction of modern processes and technology.

What we plan to do

Reviewing our suppliers – we have started work on procuring the responsive repairs contract in the south east with new contacts starting from June 2018. The south west repairs procurement will follow with the contract going live from April 2019.



The service that we provide to our customers is a key measure of our success

Did you know?

The cost of the responsive repairs service (which is the cost of fixing things when they go wrong) was £13.8m in 2016/17 and for the current year our budget is £13.6m.

Responsive repairs service
2016/17
£13.8m



Responsive repairs service
2017/18
£13.6m



Planned Maintenance

We carry out a programme of planned works to maintain and improve your home.

As your home gets older we may need to replace or improve things such as bathrooms, kitchens, heating installations and double glazing.

Every year we plan which homes need items replaced due to their age and condition. To do this we plan improvements on the basis of the information held on our Stock Condition Database (a tool we use to look at the current equipment and fittings in our homes and predict when these may need to be replaced and the cost of doing this).



Customer satisfaction for kitchen and bathroom replacements in 2016/17

The feedback we receive enables us to see where we are getting it right and where we still need to improve.

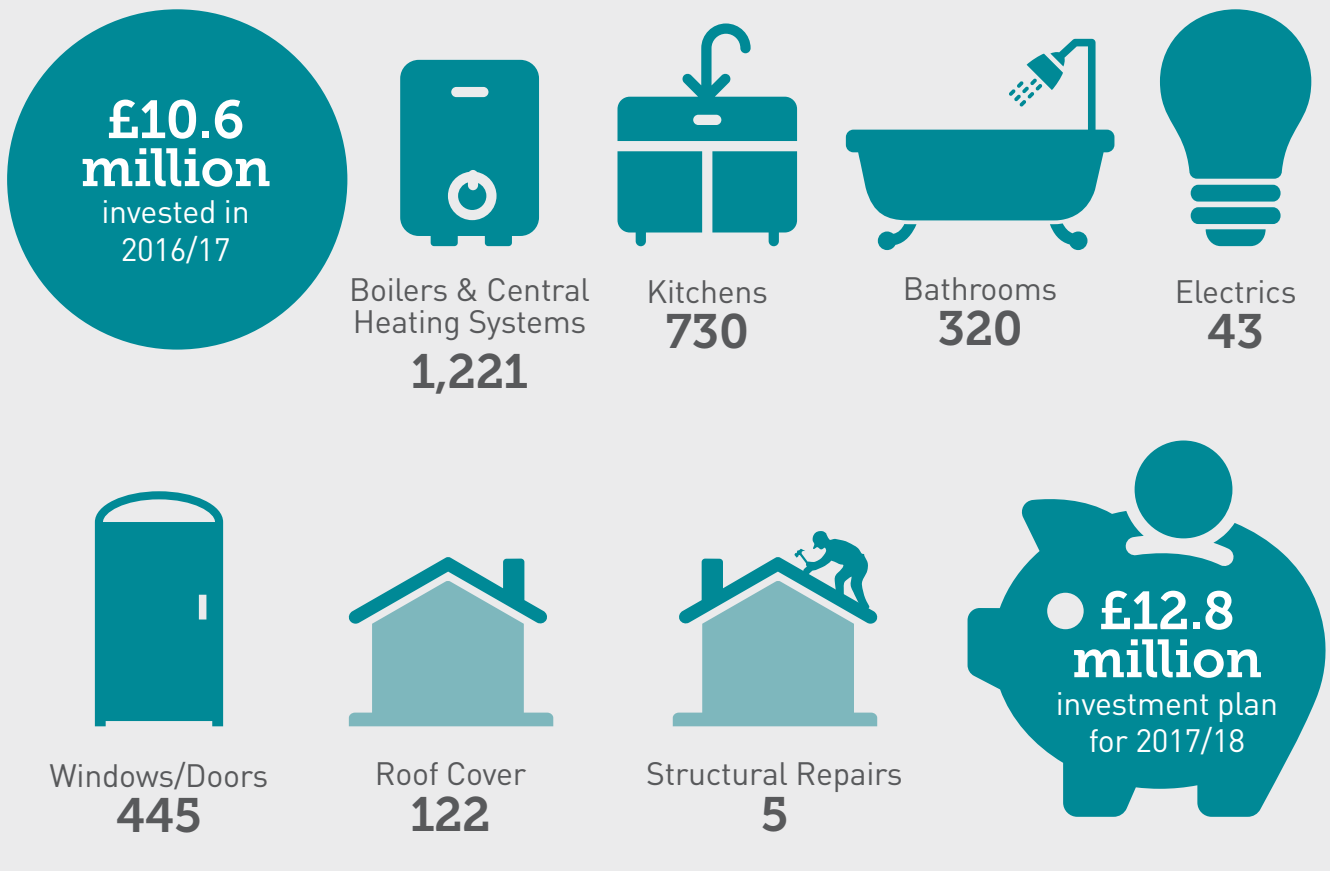


Maintenance activity

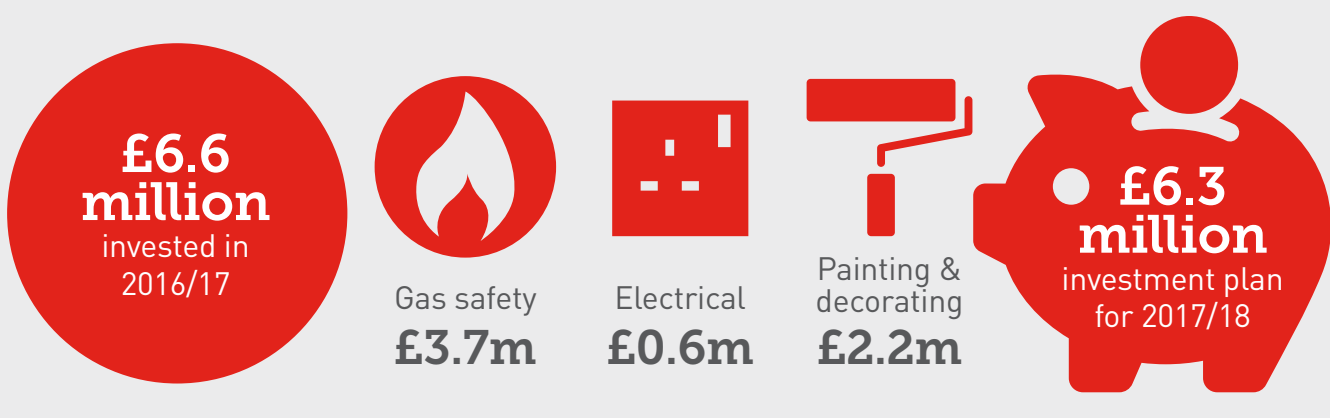


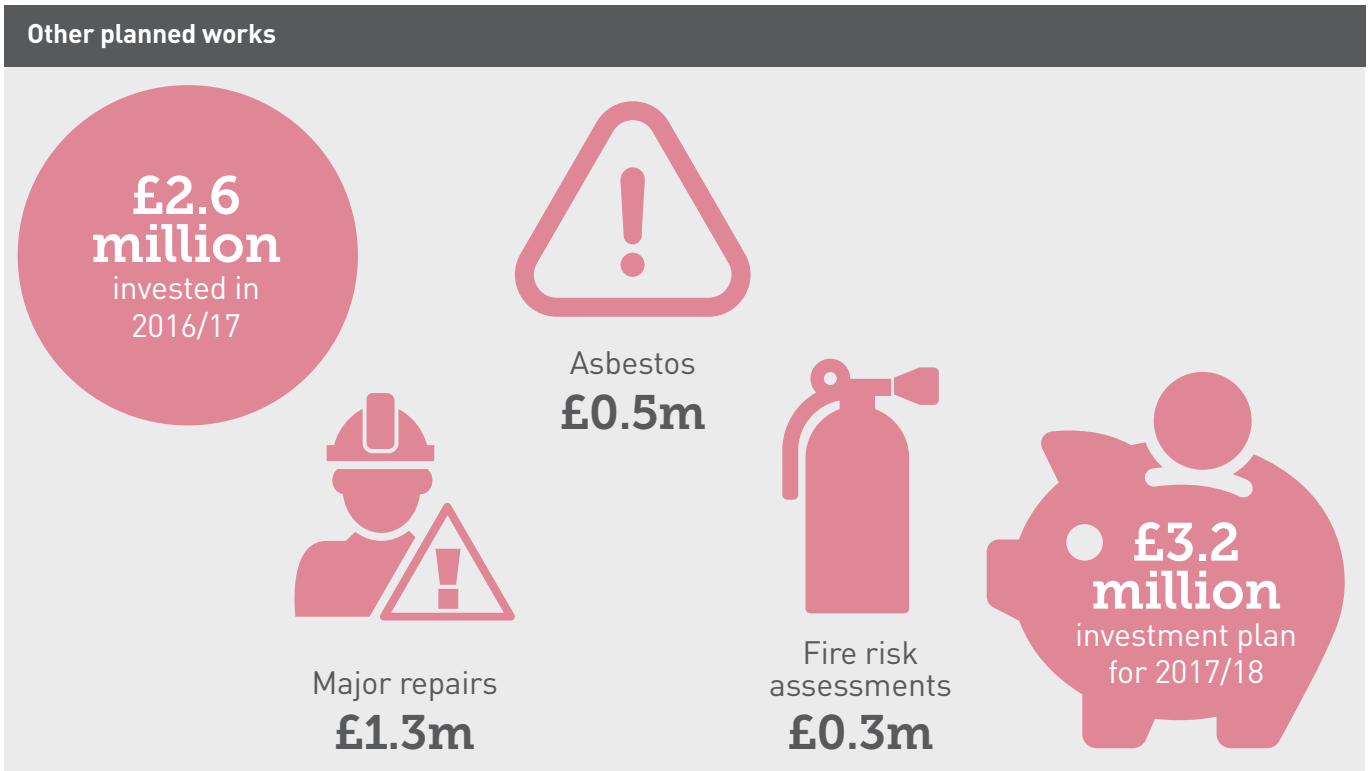
We carry out a great deal of maintenance activity and we are continuing to invest in this area.

Component replacement



Cyclical maintenance





In total we have invested **£19.8m** in our homes and plan to spend a further **£22.3m** next year.

This investment in our homes helps to make them more energy efficient and more sustainable. This benefits you, our customers, who are then able to keep your homes warm for less, but it also reduces emissions and therefore benefits the environment too.

What we did

During the year we carried out a number of stock condition surveys. 2115 full surveys and 1169 external surveys. This helps us gain a better understanding of your homes so that we can make better decisions on where and how we invest money in them.

What we plan to do

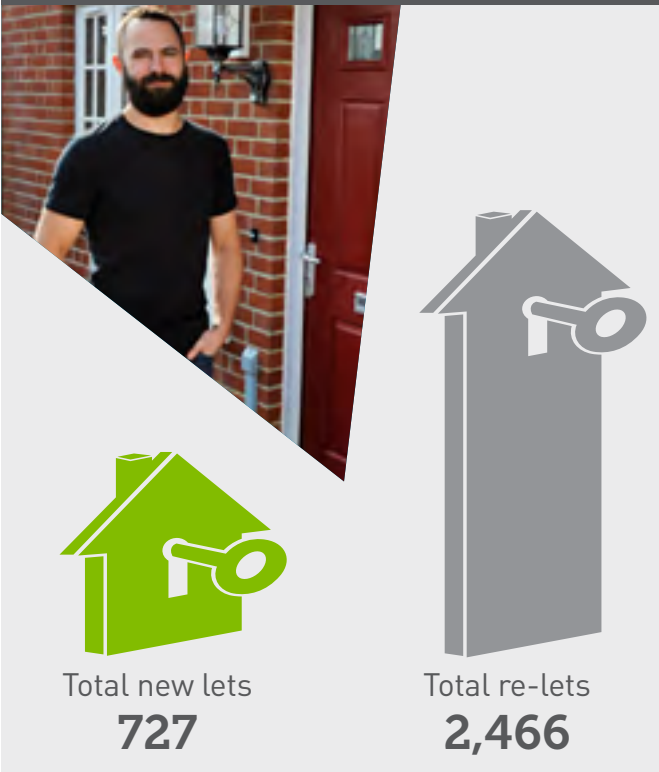
Reviewing our suppliers – we have started work on procuring the responsive repairs contract in the south east with new contacts starting from June 2018. The south west repairs procurement will follow with the contract going live from April 2019.



Letting our homes

Our lettings team are responsible for the repairs to a property once it becomes vacant and for managing the property until a new customer is ready to move in.

We are working with HomeHunt to improve the availability of information for customers and the ability for customers to be able to express an interest in our properties across the country.

How we performed 2016/17



 Total new lets 727	 Total re-lets 2,466
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Did you know?

The cost spent on properties when they become vacant and the money we need to spend to get these ready for the next customer was £4.8m in 2016/17. Next year we are forecasting spending £5.5m.

Money spend on vacant properties 2016/17

£4.8m

Budget for vacant properties 2017/18

£5.5m



We recognise the value that new homes provide. Building new homes enables people to have the opportunity to lead successful lives and have the opportunity to have a place they can call home.

What we did

Faster and more efficient – we are moving away from holding our own waiting lists and have extended the use of HomeHunt to advertise properties not subject to choice based lettings or nomination agreements. We have engaged with local authority partners to renegotiate agreements and have confirmed arrangements with all 137 of the local authorities where we actively work.

What we plan to do

- > Establish a dedicated team to focus on letting new homes.
- > Improve the marketing information for properties, including the addition of floorplans and advertising in different places depending on local knowledge.
- > Establish ‘show flats’ in a number of Retirement Living schemes.

New homes

We want to build more great quality new homes. We build different types of homes to meet a wide range of customers needs, from rented accommodation to shared ownership.

This year we completed 717 new homes. Of these 550 were for rent and 167 for shared ownership. We exceeded our target of 650 new homes. A total of 2,063 more people can now have a place to call home as a result of our development programme.

At 31 March 2017, we were in contract to build 1,190 homes.

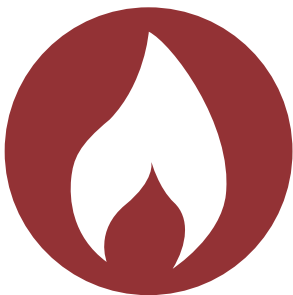


Keeping your home safe

Gas kills

Our responsibility to you

- > We have a legal duty to ensure all of our homes receive an annual gas safety check. It's important that you allow us access for the gas safety check, to ensure the safety of you, your family and your neighbours.
- > We will write to you in good time before the due date of the annual service, offering an appointment. If the appointment is not convenient, you can re-arrange it, but the visit must be before the due date.
- > If you smell gas or suspect there is a gas leak, call the free Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.
 - Do not use a mobile or cordless telephone unless you are outside the property away from the suspected leak.



As of 31 March 2017, **100%** of our homes had an in-date gas safety certificate in place.



There were **no outstanding** Fire Risk Assessments to be carried out at the end of the year.



We are further strengthening our approach to health and safety by redesigning our processes and reporting in this area.

Update on Fire Safety

We understand our customers may have heightened concerns regarding fire safety following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and they have our assurance that Stonewater has Fire Risk Assessments, which are compliant with current legislation, across our whole portfolio. We are doing everything possible to ensure our customers homes are safe and our procedures robust, in terms of fire risk. Priority (high rise and supported/sheltered) schemes have had personal, on-site visits to check arrangements and we also wrote to priority residents with more information. Further details on our position can be found on our designated fire safety update page and on our general fire safety page.



Changing the way we work

We continue to evolve to meet the expectations of our customers.

We have committed to a £4.5million investment in a digital programme 'ConnecteD', which will transform the way we do business and help ensure we remain at the forefront of the sector.

Our digital vision:

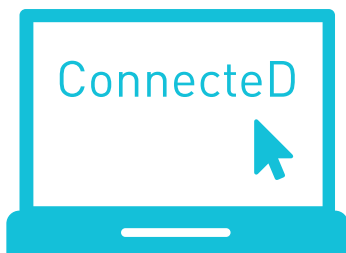
"we aspire to be amongst the leading group of housing associations in the use of technology to deliver services to our customers and internally to our organisation"

Our ambition is to change the way we work, and the way we deliver services to you, our customers, making the most of the opportunities from digital.

Our digital programme launched internally in July 2017. Within the first 12 months, we will invest in the infrastructure that enables us to be a digital organisation, create additional online services for customers and enhance our mobile working capabilities.

Our aim is to have 75% of all customer transactions online by the end of 2020. New online services will start to become available in 2018, including self serve for homeowners.

Our aim is to have **75% of all customer transactions online** by the end of 2020.




REWARD

Reward

We are launching a Reward Scheme which means more choice and services for customers who manage their tenancies well.

Reward will offer three levels of service – gold, silver and bronze. In summary:

 <p>REWARD BRONZE</p>	<p>Bronze service is our 'basic' level of service, which sets out our legal obligations as a Landlord under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. This service applies to customers who do not pay their rent on time or cause nuisance to their neighbours etc.</p>
 <p>REWARD SILVER</p>	<p>Silver service is our standard service that most customers will receive when they pay rent on time and look after their property well.</p>
 <p>REWARD GOLD</p>	<p>Gold service is an enhanced service for customers who go 'above and beyond', paying rent by Direct Debit and managing their tenancy through MyHome Online.</p>

You can find more information on Reward on our website.

This has been a positive second year for us as a newly merged organisation, where value for money has been important in the decisions we have taken during the year.

Every penny we save and every bit of added value we extract means more to invest in providing good quality, affordable homes. We have ambitious plans and remain committed to **Our Vision – 'For everyone to have the opportunity to have a place they can call home'**.



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