



Keniston

Smaller

Caring

Big enough to make a difference



Annual report to residents 2023-24

www.kenistonha.co.uk

A message from our Chair and CEO

Jonathan Card, *Chief Executive* and Emma Keegan, *Board Chair*

During the year, Keniston continued to focus on our core purpose – to keep all our homes in a safe, secure and well-maintained condition, with responsive services that meet our residents' priorities. A key test of how well we are achieving this is the feedback we get from our residents.

In line with changing regulations, we carried out a new-style survey in late 2023, using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Social housing landlords across England and Wales did the same.

We are delighted that these show that so many of our residents are happy with the services we provide; trusting us to deliver what they need. In particular, for all our rented homes:

- **90%** are satisfied with overall services
- **89%** are satisfied with the repairs service and the time repairs take, and that their home is well maintained
- **88%** said that their home is safe
- **90%** said they find Keniston easy to deal with, and **89%** that we treat them fairly and respectfully, and
- **86%** are satisfied with the upkeep of communal areas.

These results put Keniston above the average for similar housing associations across the country –



with several results putting us into the top 25%. We're proud to be high performing, but we are equally keen to avoid becoming complacent. People's expectations of us, and the pressures we experience, are increasing. We need to work hard to continue to perform well.

Good quality homes

As part of our approach to ensuring the longer-term future of our homes, during the year we carried out a major assessment of each building's condition, including its energy efficiency and future investment needs. This has confirmed that, while our buildings are well maintained, some properties will need investment in the coming years to improve insulation standards. We are working on the options for how to achieve this in ways that meet both statutory standards and the interests of all those who live there.

While our priority is to look after the interests of Keniston residents and our existing homes, we have not lost sight of the acute need for more good quality social housing. Our plans for 26 new homes within the Darrick Wood estate were rejected by Bromley Council in 2023, but we decided to lodge an appeal against this decision and we are awaiting the outcome.

If we are successful, we plan to work with existing Darrick Wood tenants to manage the building works in everyone's interests. In the longer term, we also plan to redevelop the former older persons' housing at Robert Whyte House on the Bickley estate.

Strategy and policies

Overseeing Keniston's strategic direction is our Board of Directors, made up of a dozen individuals drawn from a range of backgrounds.



During the year, we said goodbye to our two longstanding co-Vice Chairs, Shehla Husain and Peter Voisey, who stepped down at the end of their terms. It is pleasing that we have been very successful in recruiting several new members: Rachel Hewett, Mariola Viegas and Andy Pert joined us in January, followed by Marcia Gillings and Simon Hague later in 2024. Collectively, they bring a range of skills and experience, including building surveying and architecture, strategic planning, audit and landlord services.

A key task during the year for the Board and the Executive Management Team has been to develop – with input from residents and our staff – Keniston's next three-year forward plan. As part of this, we have refreshed our mission and values statements. Alongside an overall statement that Keniston is *Smaller, Caring, Big Enough to Make a Difference*, our restated values are:

- **Respect** Valuing diversity and treating everyone fairly as individuals
- **Openness** Listening, being accessible, and communicating clearly
- **Inclusivity** Our culture is one in which everybody matters
- **Integrity** Building trust by doing what we said we would
- **Excellence** Taking pride in providing the best customer experience

Keniston's staff are a key asset of the organisation. Working for Keniston can be very rewarding, but standards are high and we expect

dedication and commitment. Staff wellbeing is important, and we use annual staff surveys to check on this, with a range of measures to support and develop our people. We have a settled staff team, and this helps greatly in providing good landlord services.

Overseeing our approach to risk management is a key role for our Board. As always, the world around us presents Keniston with many risks. We look to achieve our core purpose while managing risks realistically and with appropriate measures in order to protect the organisation. Each Board meeting assesses current risks and updates our approach to managing them. In addition, our Audit & Risk Committee monitors how we manage risk, including an in-depth look at selected risk areas each meeting.



During the year, we finalised our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and policy with input from the Resident Panel, staff and Board members, and are now working on implementing the revised approach across how we work.

As well as looking more widely at how we listen to and involve residents in what we do and how we do it, we have some specific aims:

- Firstly, to further develop our

longer-term plans for investment in our properties, building on the information from the surveys during the year.

- Secondly, to launch our new strategic plan to guide the organisation through the coming years.
- Finally, to recruit a new Finance & Resources Director as, during the current financial year, our highly valued longstanding colleague Andrew Shiatis will be stepping down.

1 About Keniston

We are a non-profit-making housing association, providing low-cost social housing for people in need of a home.

We provide **628** general needs, **184** sheltered housing and **33** leasehold properties, of all sizes, on estates across the London boroughs of Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Bromley, Bexley and Croydon, and also in Crawley.



2 Lettings

We let **47** homes during the year (previous year, 32).

Our average letting time was **15** days (previous year, 14). This was ahead of our target of 16 days.

We helped **two** households transfer to another Keniston home and completed **seven** mutual exchanges (previous year, 10).

Our new home survey was completed by the residents at **51** of our 54 new lets (including the seven mutual exchanges). The results were positive:

- **100%** agreed we gave enough information about the property and its immediate location.
- **100%** agreed Keniston's staff

New resident feedback

"May I take this opportunity to thank you, your team... for all your kind help and support. This will always stick in my mind and your managers need to be aware of all the good work that you guys do and the extra support, which I know is not in your job description... One very happy customer."

were polite and helpful throughout the process.

- **96%** were satisfied or very satisfied with Keniston's whole allocations process.

Our lettings performance	Keniston 2022-23	Keniston 2023-24	Other small HAs 2023-24	Keniston target 2023-24
Average letting time (days)				
General needs	15	18	35	16
Housing for older people	13	13	24	16

3 Estate services

Estate satisfaction

We carried out satisfaction surveys at nine estates.

Satisfaction at Tarling Close increased by **19%** compared to the previous survey. At that time, although cleaning standards were being met, residents had been unhappy with the cost and inconsistency of the service provided by agency staff while their normal cleaner was on long-term sick leave. They are very pleased that, since then, we have taken on a new cleaner.

At one sheltered scheme, some expressed dissatisfaction with the

performance of the Sheltered Scheme Manager. However, this was due to misunderstanding about her role. We held a meeting with all concerned to resolve this.

Estate satisfaction scores

Pound Green Court	100%
Lyham Road	100%
Merrow Street	100%
Hornsey/Tollington	100%
Darrick Wood houses	100%
Bickley	95%
Darrick Wood flats	89%
Tarling Close	85%
Darrick Wood sheltered	81%



Resident feedback

"I feel very grateful to be living on this estate, with an excellent housing association who are exceptionally attentive and very helpful... in dealing with all matters including tenants' needs and repairs... In recent years, [we have had] new kitchens, bathrooms, fences, major building alterations, etc."

"The estate is much improved with the change of gardeners."

"Feel very well looked after – good staff, nice new windows and very happy in my flat."

"Living on Keniston estate for 35 years, I find that staff are helpful and friendly. (Don't change!!)"

"I think Keniston staff go above and beyond in assisting with tenants' issues. They are always happy, polite, informed, courteous and prompt to act on any issue."

Anti-social behaviour

Our staff received **29** reports of anti-social behaviour.*

This was significantly fewer than the year before, when we received 47. There were no reported hate incidents.

Of the complaints we received:

- **28%** (eight) were low level
- **58%** (17) were medium level, and
- **14%** (four) were high level.

Noise and neighbour nuisance accounted for **49%** cases, while **28%** of cases were drug-related.

We work closely with the police, social services and other agencies,



such as mediation services, to help resolve anti-social behaviour.

We carried out two evictions this year. One home had been abandoned, while a second household was evicted for severe and ongoing anti-social behaviour.

**When comparing ourselves with other landlords, this would equate to 34 cases per 1,000 properties.*

Estate improvements

With funds from our Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods initiative, we:

- refurbished/replaced several outdoor benches
- installed CCTV cameras to deter anti-social behaviour
- put up noticeboards at several sites
- added planting and made improvements to landscaping on several estates
- provided new composting bins
- added lighting
- upgraded boundary walls, and
- provided new curtains for the sheltered scheme lounge

4 Complaints

Complaints we received

We continue to receive a low number of complaints, receiving **11*** during the year – below our target of 20. (The previous year, we received eight.)

We resolved all these complaints at stage 1. We upheld one case and partially upheld another. We did not uphold the remainder.

Two complainants asked to go to stage 2. In one case, we declined, because we had already answered their complaints at stage 1. The other resident withdrew their request once they were satisfied their repair works were progressing.

Four complaints related to day-to-day maintenance:

- A contractor had failed to

attend an appointment – we paid compensation to the resident concerned.

- A resident felt the fabric of the building was not fit for purpose.
- A resident had to deal with a leak from above.
- A resident was unhappy at being recharged for a repair.

There were **seven** complaints about housing management. They related to:

- parking arrangements
- services paid for but not received
- neighbour nuisance
- feeling unsafe at home due to neighbours and mental health
- a member of staff, and
- the cost of tree removal.

**When comparing ourselves with other landlords, this would equate to 13 complaints per 1,000 properties.*



Lessons learnt

Part of our approach is to learn lessons from complaints. This year these included:

- We should discuss the details of a complaint with the resident. Having a clearer understanding, assists us to reach a positive resolution.
- We should answer **all** the points they raise, because this can stop things escalating.
- We should take action when situations first arise.
- We need to get our contractors to communicate with Keniston, as well as our residents.
- We now have a panel of staff from across Keniston, who assess complaints independently – this is helping us to focus on finding solutions.
- Our mutual exchanges/voids forms will now list trees/large shrubs in gardens, to clarify who is responsible for them.
- Our maintenance teams will highlight where trees and large



shrubs affect drains and paths.

- We should not pass on a contractor's personal contact details to residents.

Housing Ombudsman

Since 1 April 2024, we have had a legal duty to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's latest complaints handling code and self-assessment.

In line with the code, we can report that:

- We refused no complaints.
- We were compliant with the code.
- The Ombudsman did not feel the need to provide us with any reports on our performance. (They do this sometimes if they

receive complaints about a landlord.)

You can read our self-assessment, as approved by our Board, online at: www.kenistonha.co.uk/about-us/publications/complaints

Stephen Hoad is our Board member responsible for complaints. He makes sure our Board gets regular information and he meets regularly with our Operations Director, Sue McDonnell, to discuss our complaints performance and service improvements.

Stephen commented:

"I recognise that at times we may not always get it right. Keniston has provided clear and transparent data on complaints to the Board, utilising an effective complaints system. This system allows for proper consideration to allow fair outcomes. The system also allows Keniston self-improvement and learning, whilst also gathering valuable insight and intelligence to strengthen performance."

5 Repairs and maintenance

Repairs performance

We carried out **2,599** repairs. Of these, **2,202** were day-to-day repairs, and **97.2%** (98.4% the previous year) were completed on time, against a target of 97%.

The other **397** repairs were for voids, servicing and planned maintenance.

Repairs satisfaction

Satisfaction with repairs was **89.6%** against a target of 95% (previous year, 92.5%) – meaning that we missed our target and performed a bit less well than the year before.

We measure this figure from your responses by text and on paper. Please provide us with supporting information when you respond to our surveys, so that we can look at the area where you believe our service fell short.



Our repairs performance	Keniston 2022-23	Keniston 2023-24	Other small HAs 2023-24	Keniston target 2023-24
Repairs completed on time	98.4%	97.3%	93.6%	97%
Average days to complete responsive repairs	6.3 days	8 days	No longer benchmarked	6.5 days
Cost per property – responsive repairs and voids	£1,042	£987	£866	Not applicable
Cost per property – major and cyclical works	£1,775	£1,207	£1,056	–

Repairs spending

The average cost per property of day-to-day repairs was **£487** (previous year, £379). The rise in spending is a sign of the cost-of-living pressures we are all living under.

We spent **£334,554** on empty homes (previous year, £270,667).

More homes had become empty than in previous years, which explains the additional cost. Some had been left in a poor condition, so that we had to do a lot of work before re-letting them.

We also spent:

- **£1,377,519** on new kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems and

- other major works to 340 homes
- **£177,317** on external decorations to 214 homes
- **£13,270** on improvement works, and
- **£22,526** on adaptations to 37 homes to make them more manageable for someone living with disabilities.



Investing in our homes

Major works and redecorations

Overall, **99%** of residents were satisfied with the major works we carried out.

We send your survey results and comments to our contractors and staff and put them on our website.



Whites Meadow before (left) & after (right).



Tarling Close before

Satisfaction with works completed at your estate

Darrick Wood: boiler renewal, kitchen refurbishment, & cyclical redecoration	100%
Whites Meadow: kitchen refurbishment	100%
Tarling Close: window replacement	99%
Darrick Wood sheltered flats: entrance door replacement	100%
Nethewode Court: door entry system	89%
Pound Green Court: cyclical redecoration	100%



Tarling Close after

Resident feedback

Window replacement:

"I am so grateful to Keniston for not just giving me a wonderful flat, but also the care they take over tenants and properties. Keniston and their staff are professional, polite, and a caring housing association."

Kitchen replacement:

"I am very grateful for the improvement in the facilities we now have – especially the new flat and outside doors, and especially the new kitchens."

Cyclical decoration:

"As always, very satisfied with everything done."

Front door replacement:

"You have an amazing team. Thank you once again. They have been amazing – helping us to overcome the situation with my daughter's health disabilities."

Health and safety

By the end of the year:

- **100%** of our properties had a valid gas safety certificate.
- We had recorded **one** accident, but it did not need to be reported to the the Health & Safety Executive.
- **100%** of our properties met the Decent Homes Standard.

Fire safety

We instruct a consultant to carry out fire risk assessments for our taller blocks (11 meters or more) each year, and for all other blocks every two years. We carried out fire risk assessments at **15** schemes in 2023. This resulted in a number of recommendations.

Only **four** low-priority actions were still outstanding at year end.



6 Resident involvement

Community events

We held **17** community events during the year. They included:

- fun days in Crawley and at the Bickley estate
- a coach trip to Brighton, funded by the Darrick Wood community, and
- a Queen's Jubilee tree-planting ceremony.

Our sheltered residents held:

- four parties to celebrate the King's Coronation
- a talk by the local police community support officer
- four Christmas parties
- two social events at Easter and one in the summer, and
- hosted a local school choir, who came to sing Christmas carols.

During the year, our sheltered residents also held twice-weekly bingo sessions, weekly card games, a fortnightly quiz, and a



monthly fish and chip day (with discounted rates from a local shop). A mobile hairdresser attended the schemes regularly, as well as a beautician.

A Sheltered Scheme Manager helped two residents to get an allotment through their local council.



Engaging with residents

Resident meetings

We held **21** resident meetings, with 110 people attending.

Satisfaction surveys

We also carried out **17** different surveys by post and phone, which resulted in 658 resident responses.



Resident Panel

We consulted with the Resident Panel on new policies, using email and online Zoom meetings. The Panel discussed our:

- strategic plan
- policies on anti-social behaviour and pets
- Better Homes, Better Neighbourhood process
- welcome pack for new residents, and our
- new equality, diversity and inclusion straplines.

Resident Panel feedback

Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods:

"It's good to have a small fund to make improvements which residents do not always have to pay for... in their service charges."

Pet policy:

"I ... am in agreement with the contents of the new policy. Much more detail and specifics are given compared to the previous policy."

Strategic Plan:

"Staff continue to demonstrate they are subject to regulatory constraints – and human values take precedence over organisational requirements."

Estate walkabouts

We held **10** walkabouts last year, helping staff and Board members to stay in touch with local issues.

Foodbank

We advertised the benefits of the Bromley Foodbank, the Community Larder at St Nicholas Church in Orpington and Hayes Community Foodbank in West Wickham, and asked for donations. Our staff delivered the many items residents donated. We also issued foodbank vouchers to residents in need.



Staff awards



After careful deliberation by the Resident Panel and Keniston Management Team, our Resident Liaison Officer **Jane Westpfel** was our latest staff award and voucher winner.

The resident who put Jane forward told us:

"I should like to nominate Jane Westpfel in repairs for the award. As regards the installation of new windows and doors, Jane was always updating the residents very promptly, often in the evening when events had occurred that day.

"Also, when on site, she would ask residents if they were OK and had any other issues. Considerate and concerned at all times."



7 Help with finances

Our rent arrears at the end of the financial year were **2.36% of the total due (previous year, 2.28%) against a target of 2.6%.**

This was an amazing achievement in the current climate.

Our Rent Income Team referred residents struggling with their finances to:

- Christians Against Poverty
- Help on Your Doorstep in Islington
- the Citizens Advice Bureau
- SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity
- Thames Water Sure Plus Customer Assistance Fund
- British Gas Energy Trust
- StepChange and National Debtline – who offer specialist debt assistance.

We assisted residents with their applications for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments. We also secured nine Discretionary Housing Payments to help residents with their rent.

We secured grant funding from a local authority Household Resident Support Fund to help one resident who needed to buy essential household appliances.



8 Value for money

We have to demonstrate to our residents and stakeholders that we are offering good value for money in the services we provide.

We analyse our costs and performance across all range of activities, comparing trends over time and with our two peer groups:

- regionally, with our chosen benchmarking group – London and the South East – which has about 36 members, and
- nationally with the Acuity all-Subscribers Group, which has 154 members.

With a high number of homes becoming empty during the year (**47** compared to 32 in the previous year), together with a significant rise in inflation, our underlying running cost per unit increased from £5,505 to **£6,247**. This is slightly higher than average for our benchmarking groups.



However, despite a £20 increase in our housing management cost per home – which rose to **£340** – this was still significantly lower than average.

The increase in our cost per home for repairs and management of empty homes, at **£1,148** (£1,042 the year before), reflects high levels of inflation and the high standard of remedial work we carry out on an empty property before reletting.

8 Our staff

Our staff in 2023-24 was made up of **37** people, fulfilling **29.2** full-time equivalent roles. In all:

- **24** of our staff were female and **13** male
- **32** of our staff were white British and five were from a black minority ethnic background.

Six staff left us during the year, while four joined us.

Training

Our staff took part in around **194** (89 the previous year) training sessions, at a cost of **£6,012** (£4,017, in the previous year).

Staff sickness

Our average staff short-term sick leave was **4.88 days** (5.29 the previous year).



Above: Our Senior Management Team. Left to right: Jonathan Card, Chief Executive; Sue McDonnell, Operations Director; Tony Coward, Property Services Director. (Not pictured: Andrew Shiatis, Finance & Resources Director.)

Our average long-term sick leave was **23.03 days** (20.2 the previous year). We have two staff members

who both have longstanding chronic health conditions. There is no ongoing salary cost to Keniston.

9 Our Board

Our Board provide a rich mix of strategic, legal, financial, housing, asset management and development experience.

Emma Keegan (Chair)
Housing professional



Ian Pinches (Chair of Audit & Risk Committee)
Semi-retired portfolio Non-Executive Director



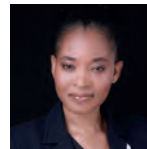
Sally Rice (Chair of Development & Growth Committee)
Independent housing consultant



Simone Bailey
Director, train service provider



Liz Emmanuel
Chartered Management Consultant



Rachel Hewett
Director of System Strategy at NHS Kent and Medway



Stephen Hoad
Chartered Surveyor



Andrew Pert
Chartered Internal Auditor



Mariola Viegas
Design and Technical Lead, Architect and Design Manager



Lucy Worrell
Head of Corporate Strategy & Change



10 Our financial performance

We generated a surplus of **£594,000** on a turnover of **£6.4m**.

This was a pleasing result for a year when our rents were capped at 7% - 3.1% less than inflation at the time the rise was calculated.

We did a good job of managing our income, collecting **99.2%** of rent owed, against a target of 100%. We also beat our arrears target, which we had set lower than the previous year – achieving **2.36%**, at year end, of the total due, against a target of 2.6%. Both of these results compare favourably with other social landlords.

We completed day-to-day repairs within **eight days**, missing our 6.5-day target. However, in line with our target, we completed **97.2%** of repairs on time.



Income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
Turnover	6,399,686	6,060,316
Operating expenditure	(5,375,447)	(5,043,625)
	1,024,239	1,016,691
Profit on disposal of a social housing property	–	–
Impairment of property costs	(58,563)	(383,565)
Operating surplus	965,676	633,126
Interest receivable and finance income	14,514	15,531
Interest payable and other finance costs	(385,374)	(329,112)
Surplus for the year	594,816	319,545

Balance sheet at 31 March 2024

	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed assets		
Housing properties	45,590,186	45,691,249
Other fixed assets	472,573	462,951
	46,062,759	46,154,200
Current assets		
Debtors	402,782	288,186
Cash and cash equivalents	1,347,806	2,137,808
	1,750,588	2,425,994
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,485,660)	(5,950,686)
Net current assets	264,928	(3,524,692)
Total assets less current liabilities	46,327,687	42,629,508
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(24,969,134)	(21,738,771)
Provision for liabilities	(723,000)	(726,000)
Total assets	20,635,553	20,164,737
Capital and reserves		
Non-equity share capital	10	8
Revenue reserves	20,635,543	19,887,182
	20,635,553	19,887,190

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