

# CUSTOMER ANNUAL Report

2017-18



We'll be here  
to guide you  
through your  
report!



**Merlin**  
[www.merlinhs.co.uk](http://www.merlinhs.co.uk)

# How have we done?

Every day colleagues across Merlin work incredibly hard to deliver a great customer experience and services that make a difference; this year has been no different. At the start of the year the Board set a target to increase customer satisfaction to 86%, I am delighted to say we did better than that: 86.4% of customers are satisfied with the services provided by us, a 2.4% improvement. Not only has overall satisfaction improved but so has repairs satisfaction which went up by 5% to 82.4%. We didn't quite hit our target of 84% but this is a big improvement.

We know there is more to do but we and our involved customers are delighted with the progress made during the year and want to recognise the contribution that our colleagues across Merlin have had in making this happen.

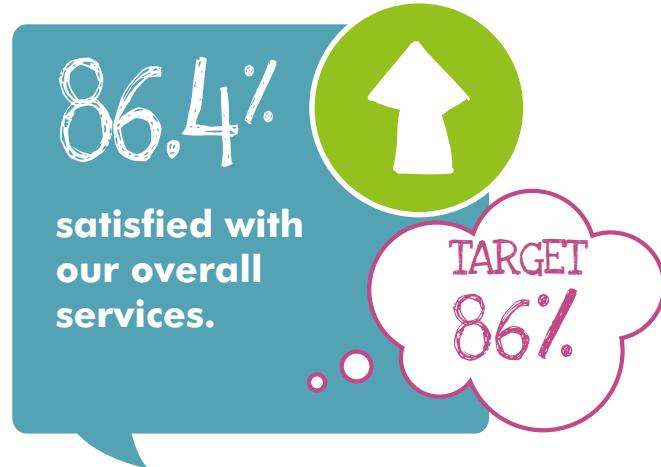
I hope you find this year's annual report informative and useful.

Many thanks

**Paul**

Director of Housing  
and Communities

We want 86% of you to be satisfied with our overall Services.



## Did you know?

During the year we invested £658,000 on community initiatives, this included £115,000 from external funding. Our work in this area positively impacted over 4,500 people (our target was 3,000).

During the year we also focussed our efforts on helping our customers, particularly those looking for work and others who wanted help to improve their wellbeing. We helped 70 customers into work and supported more than 500 customers through our Wellbeing College.

Look at the arrows to see how we are performing since last year.

The colours indicate how well we did against our targets.



## Was the money well spent?

Every year we ask independent auditors to look at the way we are spending our money - they have confirmed money is being used correctly and fully meets financial regulations and the law.

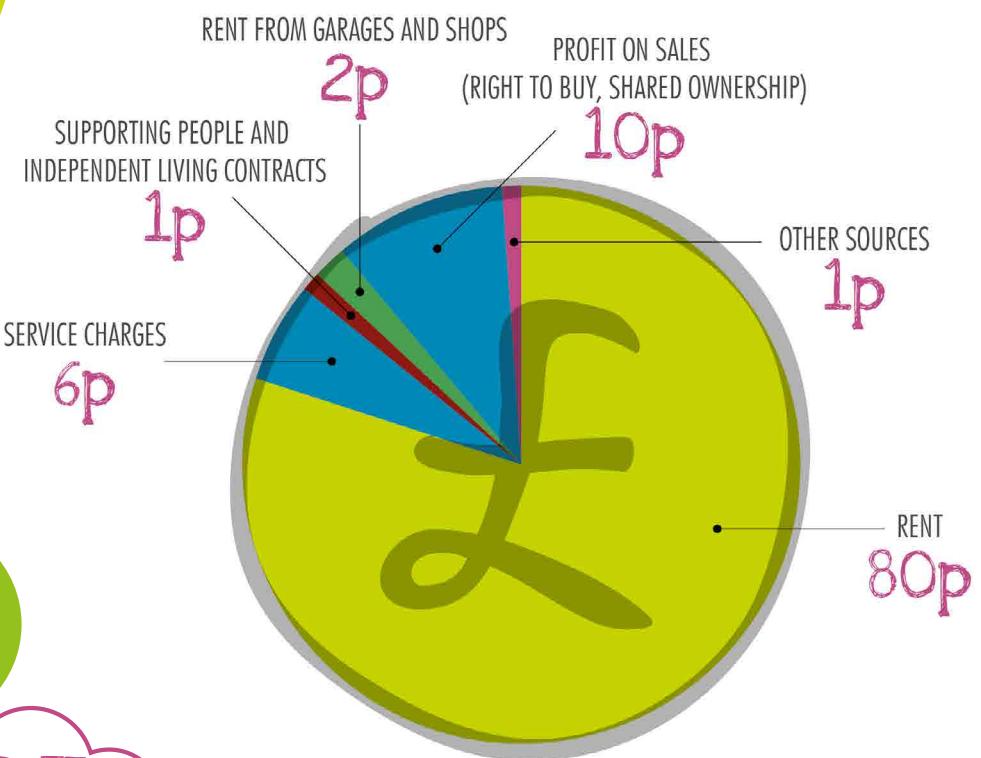
84.9%



satisfied rent provides value for money.

TARGET  
83%

## Income = Where each £ came from:



### Did you know?

Colleagues at Merlin delivered more than 1700 hours of volunteering; supporting numerous groups operating in our community.

## Expenditure = How each £ was Spent:

SURPLUSES REINVESTED IN FUTURE YEARS TO SUPPORT BUILDING NEW HOMES AND INVESTING IN EXISTING HOMES

32p

INTEREST PAYMENTS ON LOANS

10p

COST OF PREVIOUS CAPITAL SPEND

11p

NON-SOCIAL HOUSING COSTS (FOR EXAMPLE GARAGES)

1p

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

20p

STAFF WAGES

18p

CHARGEABLE SERVICES

7p

SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

1p

All our surpluses go back into repairs, investing in existing homes and building new homes.



# Have we helped you keep your tenancy?

Our work to maximise rent collection continues to be excellent; current rent arrears levels ended the year at 1.1% (£446,570), beating our target of 1.8%. Not only are the results one of the best in the country but the income team work hard every day to help customers minimise and manage their debts. They also help customers into work and have developed specialist relationships with partners such as the Department of Work and Pensions to help customers moving on to Universal Credit.

We want to continue to reduce the amount of rent you owe to us.

1.1%

current rent arrears.

TARGET  
1.8%

During the year the team made 5,000 home visits – we are proud that our effort has minimised the levels of evictions (14 in 2017/18) and kept customers in their home.

During the year we've helped 634 customers move home with 109 customers moving into a new built home. We also helped 39 families swap home.

Thanks to our partnerships with organisations such as [SARI](#) and [NEXT LINK](#) we've also supported 106 customers deal with difficult personal issues affecting their tenancy.

Our [Into Work Programme](#) offers customers ways to improve their skills, confidence and ability to move into work. During this year we helped 70 customers into employment and will soon start supporting customers already in work who aspire to move to better paid jobs. We are excited about the next 12 months ahead.



Over  
17,300  
living in our homes

including  
9,527  
tenants

We currently have 88 Universal Credit cases open  
Average debt per property is £315

Find the information you need to prepare for [Universal Credit here](#).



# Have we improved your neighbourhood?

Being able to enjoy your home and your neighbourhood is important to you and we want to help you do this.

We want 89% of you to recommend your neighbourhood as a place to live.



*The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Natalie Colfer.*

Satisfaction with your neighbourhood is influenced in many ways, some of which are in our control, some are not, for example where land is owned by someone else i.e. South Gloucestershire Council. Performance in this area has dipped during the year and we know why – we are working closely with South Gloucestershire to develop solutions to dumped rubbish on some of our estates and to explore options to bring council maintenance of land to the same standard as ours.



This year we've completed 100% of our block inspections which focus on keeping you and your family safe, maintaining ground maintenance and cleaning standards. You've told us that your satisfaction with the cleaning service has improved by 5.1% and by 3.7% for ground maintenance. This improvement has been delivered by us listening to customers and delivering the necessary improvements.

With support from involved customers we awarded ten grants to the value of £37,418 to support community projects in your neighbourhoods.

Over the last three years we have made Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) a priority. Over the past 12 months we opened 469 cases and closed and resolved 422 cases. We've introduced regular call-backs to improve communication. We also spend time developing realistic action plans to make the process more personal and structured. We sometimes offer mediation as an effective solution to resolve ASB cases.

We want 88% of you to be satisfied with the way we deal with ASB issues that may arise.



# Have we maintained your home?

Ideally, we would fix all your repairs and maintenance issues perfectly and within a single visit. In September 2017 we introduced a new repairs policy to help us achieve this and drive up customer satisfaction.

The new repairs policy has simplified the way we categorise repairs. This in turn has made it easier for you to arrange a convenient appointment when reporting your repair. The policy also brought greater clarity around which repairs you are responsible for and what repairs we will fix.

We are delighted that these changes have resulted in a 5% increase in customer satisfaction with the way we deal with repairs and maintenance in your homes.

84.8% of customers are satisfied with the quality of their home, however we want to increase this further. We are working hard to improve our homes; during the year we spent £8.4m in doing so.



We want 84% of you to be satisfied with the way we deal with repairs and maintenance.



*The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Stephen Williams.*

We want 89% of you to be satisfied with the quality of your home.



*The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Mark Goldby.*

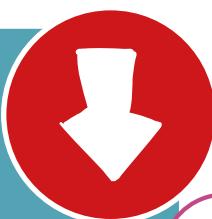


We continue to focus on the challenging target of 90% of repairs being completed at our first visit. We know this isn't where we want this to be right now and work is being put in to improve van stock replacements, the diagnosis of the repair and to better manage customers' expectations.

We want 90% of all repairs to be completed right first time.

69.3%

of repairs completed right first time.



TARGET  
90%

The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Stephen Williams.

We've developed a plan which will allow us to work towards delivering the improvements required. Similarly, the repairs service is being put under the microscope by our customer Scrutiny Group which shows our commitment to getting things right. The scrutiny findings will be available online for all customers to see.

345

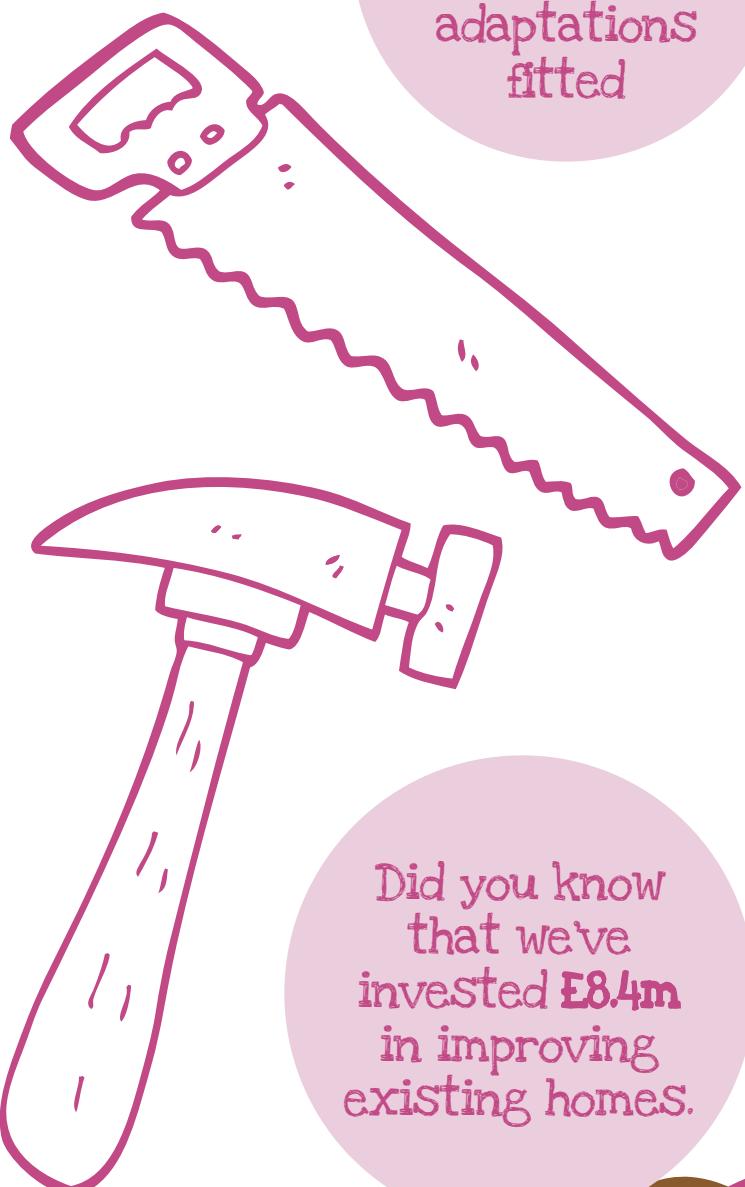
windows and doors fitted

131

central heating Systems fitted

280

aids and adaptations fitted



Did you know that we've invested £8.4m in improving existing homes.



# Have we improved the way we communicate with you?

In 2017-2018 we spoke to 56,077 customers over the phone. This is an average of 4,670 calls per month.

We are proud of the efforts we take to help you, whenever you need us, but we are always seeking to further improve our service. With this in mind, we've recently implemented our new Customer Experience Strategy which defines how our everyday customer service should feel to you, when you contact us to discuss your needs.



This year saw a 3% increase in customer satisfaction in customers finding staff helpful and us answering your query in a reasonable time.

Customers have told us that they appreciate a customer service that takes into consideration their personal circumstances and which displays empathy and integrity. When you contact us on the 0300 number, we want you to feel that we are listening to your concerns, working hard to minimise your time and effort and delivering the outcome you want.

We want 80% of you to be satisfied with the 0300 number.



# What do we do to resolve your Complaints?

We want to learn from your complaints so that we can improve the services we deliver to you. It is important to us to ensure that the resolution to any complaint is managed as quickly as possible.

This year we've changed the way we manage complaints so that they are allocated quickly and within 24 hours. We've done well to achieve this target.

We've also changed our complaints and compliments policy which introduced early resolution complaint handling. This ensures that complaints which can be dealt with more straightforwardly are responded to quickly and we aim to close early resolution complaints within five days. This has been a success. In 2017-2018, under this new approach, we've resolved 252 complaints early. Unfortunately, satisfaction with the way we've handled formal complaints, which are by nature more complicated and take longer to investigate, has dropped.

Moving forward we will monitor complaint satisfaction in more detail. This means we will be able to understand better the variations in satisfaction levels between early resolution complaints and formal complaints and across all service areas.

Did you know that overall, we handled **339** complaints but we received **426** compliments.



We want 95% of you to be satisfied that your complaints were acknowledged within 24 hours



We want 70% of you to be satisfied with the way we handled your complaint.



The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Andrew Ledger.

## How many new homes have we built?

Creating new homes for those currently without one or those in need of a new one, is one of our key social objectives. We built 186 new homes last year, an increase of 55 compared to the previous year. These new homes provide much needed accommodation for over 750 customers.

Our new homes have been built across several local authorities, including South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Bath and North-East Somerset, Stroud and Bristol.

**E33m**  
investment in  
new homes

We aimed to build 235 homes in 2017-2018.

186

homes were built.

TARGET  
**235**



The person tasked with improving this area of work over the next 12 months is Amanda Swann.

Whilst our target of 235 homes was not met we are anticipating that we will deliver at least 300 new homes in 2018/2019, with a healthy pipeline of opportunities in the years beyond this. This has been achieved by developing relationships with key local and national developers. This is great news for local people needing a new home.

**750**  
customers housed



Merlin re-development at Irving Close

# What's new for 2018-2019?

Our priorities in 2018-2019 will focus on three areas: improving the way we deliver our repairs, listening and acting on your views and improving satisfaction with the complaints service.

## The Wellbeing College new headquarters



The Wellbeing College Headquarters opened its doors in March 2018. It provides a base for the Wellbeing College to work from. The new facility is home to our Into Work Programme. It also offers customers and staff access to holistic therapy sessions, yoga and chiropractic treatment sessions. There is an ever-growing catalogue of opportunities for customers at the headquarters but also across the whole of South Gloucestershire. If you want to contact the Wellbeing College to make a referral call 01454 821856.



## Digital engagement

We recognise that people are all on different journeys when it comes to getting online. To improve this area we have been working with our fantastic partner O2 on how best to digitally include our customers. We believe that being online increases connections with others and can result in accessing cheaper services and spending less money on energy bills and shopping. We've been working with a diverse group of customers to develop a strategy to enable customers to become more active online, if they choose to, with as much or as little support from us.

## Bromford partnership

During 2018 we will join forces with Bromford, this will create an exciting partnership that will enable us to do more for you. The benefits the partnership will bring are shaped around four pillars:

1. Customers and communities – Towards the end of 2018 we will start rolling out the neighbourhood coaching initiative; this piece of work will better support customers to reach their full potential
2. Our new homes programme – Over the next 10 years we will invest £1.5bn to deliver 14,000 new homes, a huge increase on current numbers.
3. Transformation – The new partnership will invest significantly in our systems and ways of working which will result in better and more responsive services being delivered to customers. This will also include a new digital solution for customers to access services.
4. Opportunities for colleagues – providing more opportunities for existing and future colleagues, this means we will attract and retain the very best people.



## Your involvement, your way

Who are the best people to decide on how effective we are?

That would be you, our customers. Many involved customers are already taking pride in getting issues identified and seeing their suggestions result in real improvements for the benefit of all.

There is still much to be done and plenty of opportunities to get involved. Anyone is welcome and the greater the diversity of residents that contribute the better the outcomes for all. All you need to be is a Merlin customer with the desire to make a difference.

Participation can be one-off or on a regular basis, so please get in touch:

Ring **0300 1232222** and ask for **Delphine** - Customer Involvement Officer

Talk to us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/MerlinHS](http://www.facebook.com/MerlinHS)



Have your  
Say and  
make a  
difference!

# Merlin

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