

REPORT TO: LIVING IN HACKNEY SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**REPORT FROM: KIMBERLEY DE VERGORI
HEAD OF HOUSING**

DATE OF REPORT: 4 DECEMBER 2019

**SUBJECT: SANCTUARY HOUSING ASSOCIATION'S
OPERATIONS IN THE BOROUGH**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview of Sanctuary Housing's operations in the London Borough of Hackney.

2. Background

Sanctuary Group (the Group) is a housing and care provider operating across England and Scotland. Set up 50 years ago, the Group own and manage more than 100,000 homes. The Group's portfolio of properties includes general needs housing, supported housing, shared ownership and housing for older people. Sanctuary Care, the Group's care subsidiary, was established in 1995 and provides care in almost 100 nursing and care homes. The Group holds G1 and V1 ratings from Homes England, the Regulator of Social Housing, formerly the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which is the highest rating for both governance and viability, demonstrating stability and confidence in the Group's business plan. The Group also hold Investors in People Silver Award.

- 2.1 Sanctuary has worked in Hackney since 1976 and own and or manages around 3,415 homes in the Borough. The vast majority of these are general needs social rents and are located on five estates: Kingsmead, Morningside, Gascoyne, Shore and Old Kingshold estates. (Overall, approximately one-fifth of the homes on these estates are owned by Right to Buy leaseholders). Much of the remainder are made up by the Victorian street properties of the Cass Estate. (See **Appendix 1** for overview of stock).
- 2.2 The Group acquired the majority of the homes in the early 2000s and undertook extensive refurbishment over a period of five years to bring them up to the Decent Homes standard.
- 2.3 The Group also own 20 commercial units in Hackney, including the Kingsmead office, store rooms and 12 shops. The surplus from any non-social housing property revenues is reinvested to the Group's

core social purpose of maintaining and reinvesting in existing stock and delivering new affordable homes.

3. Reinvestment

- 3.1 Since the refurbishment in the early 2000s the Group have been carrying out cyclical improvement works on a planned basis and repairs on a reactive and where necessary basis. In the case of Kingsmead, significant investment since 2014 has included kitchen and bathroom programmes, replacement boilers, replacement lifts, works on doors, windows and communal drains and redecorations of homes. The Group have invested £12 million in Hackney as a whole, over the last four years.
- 3.2 Despite this investment, it was recognised that some of these buildings and homes in the borough did not meet the Group's standards or the standards that residents should expect and have committed to improving them. The Group is increasing its investment to circa £6 million per year between 2018/2019 - 2023/2024.
- 3.3 The reinvestment plans for 2019/2020 will include the following work across Hackney:
- Improvements to internals of homes on Morningside and Gascoyne.
 - Increasing the number of lift replacement programmes on Kingsmead and Morningside.
 - Ground drainage clearance programme across all Hackney estates.
 - Window and roofline replacement on Victoria Park Road homes are also included in the programme.

4. Voids

- 4.1 There are typically only 75 voids per year across the whole of Hackney. The Group's agreement with LB Hackney means that a minimum of 75 per cent of family size accommodation voids go to them for nominations. As a snapshot of this low void rate, in May 2019, the lettings team had eight voids at one time. The average time taken to turnaround an empty property in the borough is 11 days (year to date).

5. Repairs and customer service

- 5.1 Sanctuary's Customer Service Centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Residents can also report repairs using an online form or on social media. In addition, regular repair workshops are held on the different estates.
- 5.2 Local Offers describe the service residents can expect (**Appendix 2**). The Group directly contacted more than half of its residents in

England to develop these offers and they will be reviewed again in 2020.

- 5.3 The target for completing emergency repairs (repairs that need to be 'made safe', such as the loss of essential services like water or electricity) is 24 hours. In Hackney, for the financial year to date 96.9 per cent of emergency repairs (1,213 operations) have been completed on time (within 24 hours). The average time for completion of an emergency repair in Hackney is nine hours.
- 5.4 The target for the completion of routine repairs is 28 days. 85.2 per cent of routine repairs (4,762 operations) have been completed on time. The average time for completion of a routine repair is 16 days in Hackney.
- 5.5 Customer satisfaction statistics (London and South East):

	London and South East
Easy to report the repair	78.7%
Processes and timescales explained	65.0%
Attended when agreed	89.3%
Staff were competent and knowledgeable	91.3%
Staff treated resident as a valued customer	95.0%
First time fix	70.0%

- 5.6 Service standards will be reviewed in the next year (shaped by a conversation with residents about the standards of homes - see section 7) and this will shape the Group's longer term investment plans.
- 5.7 Communal areas
- 5.8 Sanctuary's Estates Maintenance team maintain the vast majority of the communal areas via direct employed staff and a small selection of contractors. Services provided include cleaning, grounds maintenance, window cleaning, arboriculture services and compliance testing.
- 5.9 Standard service specifications are applied to all areas however, these can be adjusted to meet specific scheme requirements.
- 5.10 Service standards are monitored through structured scheme inspections raised through the Group's Customer Service Centre; these are pre-planned over a 12 month period but can also be raised following contact with a resident. In addition, resident led inspections are carried out throughout the year, to provide residents with a means of direct input into service standards.

5.11 The Estates team also carry out additional works that fall outside of the standard specifications; these are raised as work orders via our Customer Service Centre and include works such as fly-tipping and graffiti removal, gutter clearances, cleaning and clearance of empty properties.

6. Complaints

6.1 There are several ways for residents to make a complaint or report an issue: online, by email, by contacting the local office, by phone, by writing (postal) and by social media.

6.2 There are two internal stages to the complaints process:

6.2.1 Stage 1: Frontline resolution: the aim is to resolve these within 10 working days or less.

6.2.2 Stage 2: Investigation: if the complaint isn't resolved to the resident's satisfaction at Front Line Resolution stage, the complaint can be escalated to Investigation. The aim is to undertake the investigation in 20 working days and written response will be sent detailing the outcome.

6.3 When feedback or complaints are received about Sanctuary Housing, the information is used to improve the service provided. For example, comments received about the poor behaviour and attitude of external contractors. As a result, a Code of Conduct was developed, which all contractors are expected to follow. Sanctuary's maintenance staff have also received additional customer service training.

6.4 If a resident is dissatisfied with the response, details can be provided of how they can escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service or via a Designated Person.

6.5 Sanctuary is one of a small number of Landlords selected to be an active partner in the Housing Ombudsman's Programme of Engagement. This is a really positive opportunity for the Group to better understand the expectations of the Ombudsman when it comes to complaints handling and any areas that can be further developed.

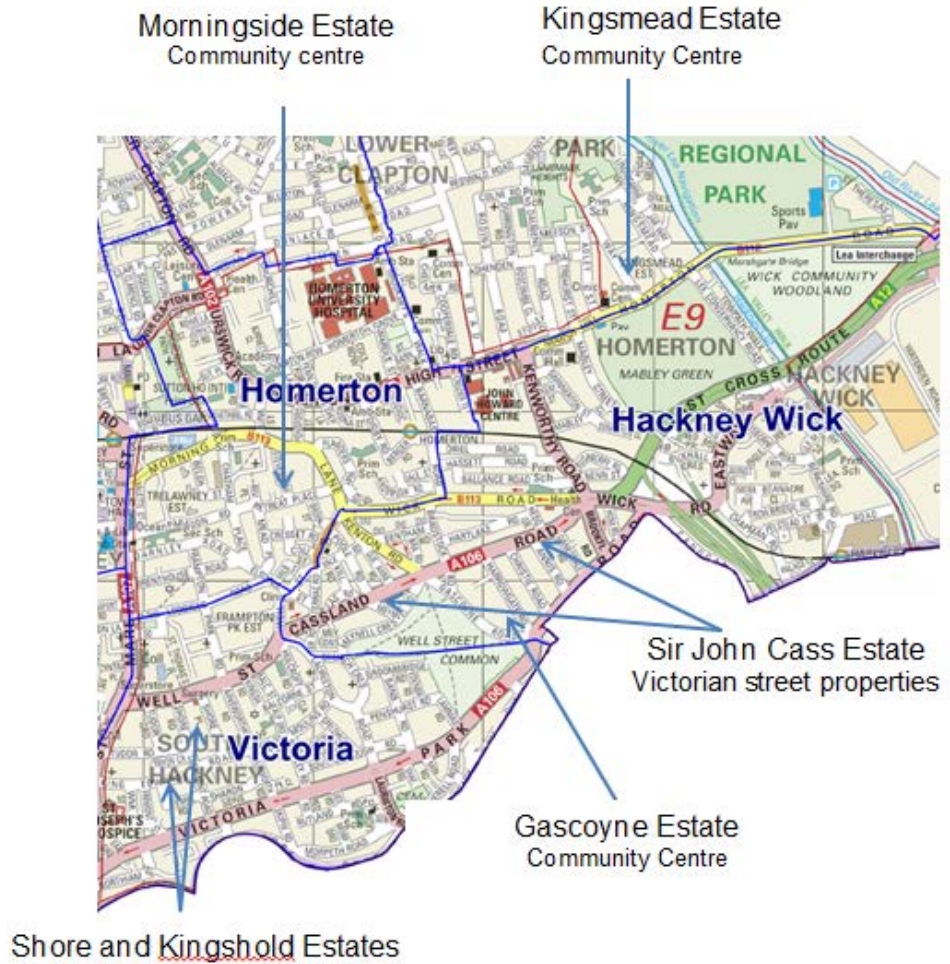
7. Resident scrutiny

7.1 Residents are at the heart of shaping and scrutinising services and Sanctuary's mechanisms to enable residents to do this has been accredited by the external, independent housing consultants Housing Quality Network.

7.2 The scrutiny process takes many forms; principally there is a National Residents' Scrutiny Panel which meets quarterly, with senior housing staff. This is a formal panel meeting where Sanctuary's performance against specific regulatory expectations is monitored, for instance, levels of customer satisfaction or how quickly empty homes are re-let.

- 7.3 The panel also has a practical function to actively review specific areas of service on a task and finish basis or continuously in some areas. This is carried out by groups of residents who are recruited to form 'Communities of Interest'. An example of this is the Procurement Community of Interest, which involves a group of residents who work with the Group Procurement team to establish new service contracts; the group has been involved in looking at selecting a new contractor for lifts in our flats and larger schemes.
- 7.4 There are about 400 resident led estate inspections undertaken across the country each year, where residents inspect an estate with local housing and estate services staff to assess the condition of an estate against the Local Offer to 'make sure your neighbourhood is well maintained'. Kingsmead was inspected in July 2019 and the lead resident reported the estate to be in good condition.
- 7.5 The Group will be launching 'A Conversation with Sanctuary' in 2020, a very ambitious programme of resident engagement to develop a more detailed understanding of the priorities for services and the quality of housing stock from a resident's perspective. This will form the basis of reviewing 'Local Offers' - Sanctuary service standards from 2020 onwards.
- 7.6 In addition to formal resident scrutiny and engagement work, staff regularly meet with and speak to residents' associations and other people in the community about reinvestment plans and other matters that affect the whole community. For example, currently consulting with residents of the Gascoyne Estate on how best to use the disused drying rooms in buildings across the estate and whether these can be converted to additional social rented homes.
- 7.7 The Group are looking at different ways for the three community centres on the Kingsmead, Morningside and Gascoyne estates to be run and are working with a working party of active residents and others in the community to shape a new model.

Map of Sanctuary's homes in Hackney



Local Offers 2017-2020

Home

- If you have an emergency repair, we will respond to you within 24 hours.
- If your repair is not urgent, you will be offered an appointment at a date that suits you.
- If we fail to fix your repair on the first visit to your home, we will give you the date of a further appointment.
- We will make sure your home is safe and compliant with health and safety law.
- We will make sure your home is repaired to the Decent Homes Standard.

Customer service

- We will make it easy for you to contact us if you have a problem or want information or advice.
- If a staff member cannot resolve your query immediately, they will explain the process and the timescale for resolution to you.
- If you have a problem, we will keep you informed regularly of how we are dealing with your query or complaint, and the reasons for any changes.
- If you cannot get through or you leave a message, then someone will call you back within one working day (Monday to Friday).
- Information on the level of service you can expect from us is available on the website.
- We will provide training for staff to ensure they are competent, knowledgeable and treat you as a valued customer.

Neighbourhood

- Make it clear to you what to do if you experience antisocial behaviour.
- Respond within one working day if you report a serious incident.
- Make sure your neighbourhood is well maintained.

Moving home

- If you want to move home, we will help you identify options to meet your needs.

Value for money and governance

- We will provide an annual assessment of performance against plans and objectives.
- We will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation and remain accountable to our residents and partners.
- We will use external credit rating companies to check our performance and make sure we continue to be financially strong.
- Our Group Board is committed to effective leadership and controlling the organisation and supporting residents