

Customer Annual Report

2022-2023

Abri

Creating communities,
empowering lives



Introduction from our involved customers

As Abri customers, we're so pleased to be introducing Abri's 2022-2023 Customer Annual Report. The report is a regulatory requirement that Abri must produce, but it's for customers, so it should be developed with customers. And that's exactly what Abri did. When Abri reached out to customers to get involved the three of us raised our hands. We've worked with colleagues at Abri to produce a report that we think covers what customers want to hear – how Abri has been performing and what it has done for its customers this year – in a simple and accessible format.

It's so important that landlords listen to their customers and use their feedback to create and improve their services, we've seen first-hand that Abri does this. As well as being involved with Abri, the three of us are proud to be part of other, national panels, including the Government's new Social Housing Quality Residents Panel and the Housing Ombudsman's Resident Panel. On these panels we've taken part in discussions on repairs and maintenance, damp and mould and complaint handling across the entire sector.

We urge all Abri customers to have their say, whether it's through a quick survey or as part of a panel, your opinion matters.

The last year has been a tough one for all of us. We're all struggling with the cost of living, and damp and mould has become a sector-wide issue to tackle. Because these two topics are so important to customers, we felt they deserved their own sections within this report. You'll find information on damp and mould at the start of this report, and at the end of the report, a directory of resources and tips we've compiled, for anyone who is struggling. Keep this page somewhere safe.

Please join us to help strengthen the customer voice within Abri by getting in touch with Abri on My Abri or by giving them a call.

**Sioux, social rent,
East Hampshire**

**Jeanette, shared owner,
Hampshire**

**Dorothy, sheltered bungalow,
Castle Cary, Somerset**



Welcome

I'm delighted to share Abri's 2022-2023 Customer Annual Report, created in partnership with some of our customers. This report highlights how well we at Abri delivered our services over the last 12 months, any significant projects we undertook and the ways we've worked with and for our customers to improve our homes and communities.

It's been a challenging year for our customers. Our priority has, and continues to be, on ensuring our customers live in safe, warm and sustainable homes in thriving communities. Our main areas of focus have been on supporting customers through the cost of living crisis and investing in our homes, particularly on issues like damp and mould. We know how important these topics are to you, that's why we worked with our customers to create dedicated sections about these within this report.

The main body of the report is broken into five themes, these themes follow the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures that come into force from 1 April 2023.

1. **Keeping our properties in good repair**
2. **Maintaining building safety**
3. **Respectful and helpful tenant engagement**
4. **Responsible neighbourhood management**
5. **Effective handling of complaints**

Within these themes are 22 performance and satisfaction measures, set out by the Regulator for Social Housing, that every housing association must report on. You may be asked to take part in a survey asking how satisfied you are with services like repairs, complaints and managing your neighbourhood. Our results will be published alongside every other housing provider's, so you can see exactly how well we're doing compared to everyone else, and where we need to improve. The performance figures in this year's report are slightly different to those that must be reported on from April 2023, but we wanted you to see how we're doing against the five themes and where we need to make improvements.

We recognise that our performance and service delivery in some areas this year are not where they should be. We have some work to do to increase our customers' satisfaction particularly around complaints. We know the building blocks of customer satisfaction are a well-maintained home, supported by an effective housing management and repairs service. We don't always get this right, resulting in dissatisfaction and increased complaints. As we look to the new financial year, we will redouble our efforts in ensuring we deliver quality core services and get things right first time. Our focus will be on three things: improving the handling of our complaints, increasing the speed of our repairs response, and making our customer contact centre quicker to get through to and more effective in handling your queries. We're improving the systems we used to hold data on our properties and communities to make better informed decisions. We're changing our phone system to make calling us quicker and more reliable.



We're also ensuring our colleagues are more visible and accountable to our customers, spending more time with you, in your community, to better understand the issues you're facing and areas we need to improve.

I'd like to thank the customers who helped shape this year's Customer Annual Report. We hope you find it an informative and easy-to-read review of our services and some of the ways we've supported you and your neighbourhood this year.

Ralph Facey

Executive Director – Operations

How did we do?

Here's a quick look at how we performed in 2022-2023



106,294

non-emergency responsive repairs completed

27,771
emergency responsive repairs completed

83.4%
customer satisfaction with most recent repair

£85m

Total spent on all repairs and maintenance

£4m
cladding project investment



99.96%
of homes with a valid gas safety certificate

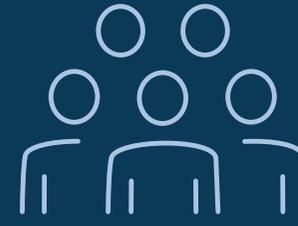
100%

assets with a current Fire Risk Assessment, that require one



81.1%
customer satisfaction with kitchen planned works

3
Resident Scrutiny Group reviews



6,529
customers consultation responses



85.1%
customer satisfaction with bathroom planned works

522

new bathrooms

645

new kitchens



89.9%
customer satisfaction with the quality of their home (affordable rent)



86.5%
customer satisfaction with the lettings experience

£3.7m

invested in cost of living support

1,702 homes let (re-let and new build)



99.57%
of Fixed Electrical Installation Inspection and Test Certificates within five years



328
new homes sold

£90,739

community grant funding provided



41%

customer satisfaction with the handling of most recent complaint – upheld

152 re-sale homes sold



576 into employment or a better job



24.89

average number of working days taken to respond to formal complaints (stage 1)



£3.4m

customer gains secured by Abri's Tenancy Support Service



98.8%
customer satisfaction with the sales process

93.5% customer satisfaction with customer contact centre interaction

82.6% customer satisfaction with the quality of their home (market sale and shared ownership)

125



stage 1 complaints received per 1,000 homes



96.78%

of our Partnership Living care and support providers were rated as good or great

£10.2m
social value generated



72.53%
of service enquiries resolved informally



17

stage 2 complaints received per 1,000 homes



40

cases of domestic abuse handled on average per month

£455,924

Partnership Funding provided

63.37%



of stage 1 complaints handled within timescale (including extensions)

customer satisfaction with the handling of most recent complaint – not upheld

9.4%



97%

of customers living in our housing for older people were supported to establish and sustain their independent living.



33.46%

of stage 2 complaints handled within timescale (including extensions)

Protecting your home from damp and mould

It's important to protect your home from damp and mould, treating it where you can or reporting it to us as soon as possible for us to address.

Spotting early signs

Here's a few things to look out for before mould growth appears:

- Condensation on windows and walls
- Damp areas and mould appearing on walls, particularly behind furniture and in corners
- Peeling wallpaper
- Black mould on window frames

Day to day activities like cooking, washing, ironing, even breathing can contribute to damp and mould. Did you know each person in a home will create around four pints of moisture a day? In a house with four people that's over 100 pints a week.

What we're doing to tackle damp and mould

We take all instances of damp and mould seriously, respond promptly and take appropriate action. This includes working with a damp and mould specialist to assess the extent of the problem, understand the cause and follow any recommendations to resolve the issue. This could be carrying out mould washes, installing fans in kitchens or bathrooms, or installing ventilation systems to reduce moisture.

What you can do to reduce the risk of damp and mould

Try to dry clothes outdoors to prevent excess moisture. If you need to dry them indoors, keep them in a room with the door closed and windows open until the clothes are dry.

Bathrooms and kitchens are the main areas for condensation. When cooking, boiling the kettle or taking a shower, keep the door closed and open windows. If you have an extractor fan make sure it's turned on. If you don't have a fan, wipe down any cold surfaces to remove any moisture that could have settled on the surface. Did you know some plants (like orchids, peace lilies and spider plants) can help reduce moisture in the air?

Don't overfill your wardrobe or cupboards, this stops air from being able to circulate properly. Air moisture trapped in warm cupboards can create mould. You might notice your clothes smell musty or feel damp, these are signs that a cupboard is overfilled.

Keep your furniture at least 5cm away from walls so air can circulate freely around your home.

What to do if you spot damp and mould

If you notice mould on your walls or ceiling, use a damp cloth and mould-specific cleaning product or bleach and water to clean it off then dry the area with a soft cloth. Make sure you wear protective gloves, a face mask and follow the product's guidance.

If mould growing on walls or surfaces appears again, or you smell strong odours or see condensation that doesn't go away, you need to report it to us.

You can report damp and mould by speaking to your Housing Partner or any Abri colleague in your area, through your My Abri customer portal account or giving us a call on 0300 123 1567 (south) or 0300 330 9434 (south west).



Keeping our properties in good repair

We believe everyone has the right to a safe, warm and sustainable home. Every day our teams visit thousands of customers to keep their homes to a good standard, from fixing things that break to carrying out large scale replacements of kitchens and bathrooms when they reach the end of their life.

Responsive repairs



27,771

emergency responsive repairs completed



106,294

non-emergency responsive repairs completed



83.4%

customer satisfaction with most recent repair

Delivering high quality repairs

We know how important it is that repairs are made to your home quickly and right first time. This year we teamed up with Travis Perkins, Rexel UK and City Plumbing as our material suppliers, to be certain that the products we use are of a high quality and good value for money. These suppliers have committed to supporting our communities too, by investing in our community projects and offering volunteering and work experience opportunities.

This includes Travis Perkins providing materials to help create a new community space in Chieftain House in Whitehill and Bordon for the community to access affordable services. Rexel UK also supplied toolkits for trainee electricians to complete their course.

Reporting your repairs on My Abri

This year we made it easier and quicker to report repairs by launching one new My Abri customer portal. Depending on the type of home you have, you can report repairs, book repairs for a date and time that suits you and if things change you can even reschedule or cancel the appointment.

Visit www.myabri.co.uk



£85m

Total spent on all repairs and maintenance

Planned maintenance



522 new bathrooms and **645** kitchens



81.1%

customer satisfaction with planned works on kitchens (as of January 2023)

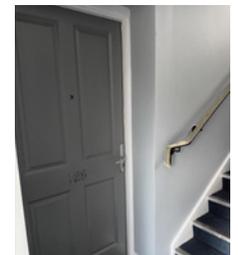


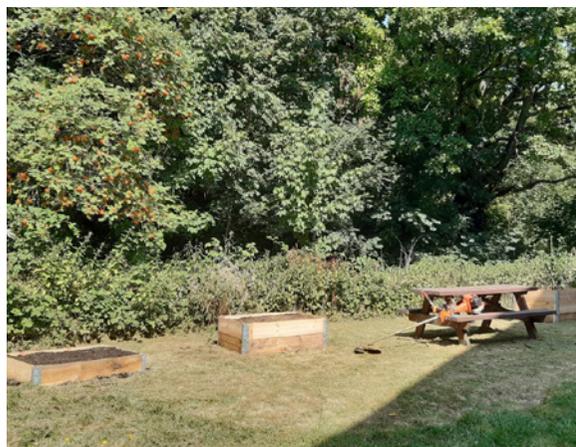
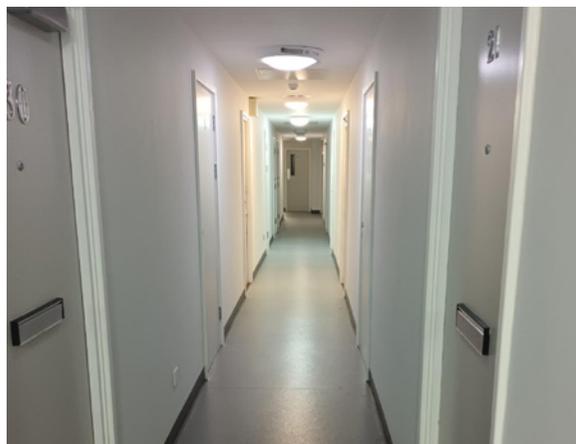
85.1%

customer satisfaction with planned works on bathrooms (as of January 2023)

Modernising Orchard House

Our planned maintenance team spent £70,000 on modernising and brightening up the communal areas of Orchard House, one of our independent living schemes in Alton. The work included a full redecoration, we repaired damaged handrails, corridor doors, cleaned all the windows and replaced the carpets. Our grounds maintenance team also installed six swift boxes for nesting birds.





New windows at Cranbury Terrace

We spent £50,000 on a full window replacement at Cranbury Terrace, Southampton. Being in a conservation area, this building is protected by special controls including the materials we can use. Planning restrictions meant the windows need to be wooden and in keeping with the style of the original ones. To do this we used a contractor who had carried out a window replacement programme in another conservation area. Cranbury Terrace customers will now benefit from safer and warmer homes thanks to their new windows.

Upgrades at Burma House

Burma House in Mansbridge is home to 51 customers. The block has a plant room that delivers hot water and heating to the individual properties. Customers reported fluctuating temperatures due to the existing heating system, so we carried out a full replacement, to better regulate the temperature in the communal areas. The work was completed within six weeks.

We also completed a full internal redecoration of communal areas, including doors, replacing corridor and staircase flooring, and upgrading the lighting in corridors. We've invested more than £52,000 in this work so far, and to install new internal floor coverings we're investing another £41,000 in the building.

Customers also told us that there was no outside communal space to enjoy, so our grounds maintenance and community investment teams worked with Green Earth Plan to install a bench and three planters at the back of the block overlooking Monks Brook.

Redecorations in Weymouth

A few years ago, we took on the management of several properties in Weymouth. This year we fully redecorated the internal communal areas at eight of these buildings and upgraded all of the communal floor coverings in five of these buildings. In total, we invested more than £85,000 in this programme of work.

Maintaining building safety

The safety of our customers in our homes is our highest priority. There's several ways we keep homes safe, whether it's making sure all our gas and electric appliances are serviced or investing in large scale projects like replacing cladding.



£4m
cladding project investment

Over the next ten years we're investing £435m in our existing homes. This includes improving building and fire safety, tackling issues like damp and mould and making them more energy efficient.



99.96%
of homes with a valid
gas safety certificate



99.57%
of Fixed Electrical Installation
Inspection and Test Certificates
within five years



100%
assets with a current Fire Risk
Assessment, that require one

Some of our percentages aren't where we need them to be. We want to be 100% compliant with all our safety measures, but sometimes we don't gain access to a property to carry out the necessary work. Please make sure you let us into your home to carry out these services, it's really important for the safety of you and your family.

Fire safety and cladding replacements

In July 2022 we finished a £1.7m project to replace the cladding and insulation at Mulvany Court in Portsmouth.

Following the Grenfell tragedy where the cladding was an aluminium composite material (ACM), all landlords reviewed the cladding on their high-rise buildings. The cladding at Mulvany was tested and was found to be a High-Pressure Laminate (HPL) which was installed correctly in line with local authority building control. However, government advice changed, meaning HPL cladding could no longer be used on new or refurbished buildings. To reassure customers they were safe in their home, Abri took the decision to replace the cladding and insulation at Mulvany Court.

Mulvany Court now has non-combustible cladding panels with new mineral wool insulation, which is also non-combustible. The new cladding and insulation also covers fire breaks and barriers around the building and the openings around windows, doors, air and flue vents. Hampshire Fire and Rescue confirmed it meets the latest fire safety standard, including the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 that came into force in January 2023.



We completed this work with our main contractor, d&b facades, working in 19 sections to minimise the disruption to our customers. While the works were carried out a Waking Watch was put in place as an extra safety measure to alert everyone if there was a fire.

In addition to Mulvany Court, this year we invested £1.5m on cladding remedial works and fire safety works at Park Reach in Southampton. This is due to be complete in October 2023. This year £2.2m has also been invested on cladding works at Berry Court, Bournemouth.

Respectful and helpful tenant engagement

Who better to tell us how we can improve than our own customers? Listening to and working with our customers is vital to making sure we deliver great services. There are plenty of ways customers can get involved at Abri and have their say, from being a member of our Resident Scrutiny Panel to completing a short survey. Here are just a few things customers have got involved in this year.



Resident Scrutiny Group

It's been another productive year for resident scrutiny at Abri. The following section sets out just some of the work members of the resident scrutiny group (RSG) have been involved in.

RSG is an independent body of Abri residents. We scrutinise services and performance across Abri. Think of what we do as providing constructive criticism. We are responsible for holding the organisation to account for its decisions and actions. RSG is an important element of governance. Working in project teams we review Abri's services and policies, generate insights and make recommendations for improvement.

Have you ever thought about getting involved in resident scrutiny? If the answer is yes, then I'd love to hear from you. Drop me a message at kevin.williamson@abri.co.uk and we can arrange an informal chat. I can tell you about the different flexible options for getting involved, what our current plans are for 2023-24 and answer any questions you have.

In ending this short piece, I need to thank three groups of people. Abri staff, the Executive Team and Board Members. They value the work that we do, and support our continued development.

They have ensured a fair hearing and influence for our work. We aim to maintain the mutually respectful relationship we have developed, which has open dialogue, healthy challenge and joint-endeavour at its heart.

My biggest thanks go to members of the RSG, past and present. They have given up their time to bring great insight, passion and impact to improving services at Abri for all residents. It's a pleasure and a privilege to work for such a committed and talented team. I'm looking forward to another productive year together – there's lots to do.

Kevin Williamson, Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Group

The Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG) carried out three reviews this year

1: Communications – the group made ten recommendations to help us improve how we communicate with customers including recording what customers preferred to be known as and sharing important communications with a group of customers before they're sent to be sure they'll be understood and well received. Three of these recommendations have already been completed.

2: Planned maintenance – This review looked at the customer's journey from start to finish of our planned maintenance programme.

The group found the service is effective but made seven recommendations to improve, including being more open about timescales, sharing a list of FAQs, keeping customers updated on each stage of the works and letting neighbouring properties know about any disruptions too.

3: Complaints – this review is still taking place and due to finish in May 2023. The review is looking at customers experience of Abri's complaints handling process.

You can find the full report for each RSG review on My Abri.

RSG continues to monitor progress for their 2021-2022 reviews on repairs, sustainability and anti-social behaviour. Some of the recommendations remain outstanding as they're reliant on changes to our systems or data collection.

Co-regulation In November 2022, RSG met with Abri's Group Board and Executive team for their annual co-regulation day. This is where the group can hold Abri to account and better understand decisions made by the business. Topics included our rent setting process and how prepared Abri are for the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. In 2023-2024 RSG will meet with the Group Board and Executive team twice a year. One session will focus on decisions made by the business. The other will focus on specific issues such as damp and mould and cost of living.

The Scrutiny Sounding Board This group sits under RSG to support with reviews and customer engagement including supporting RSG with the communications review by taking part in a survey. We plan to get this group involved in even more reviews in the next financial year.

Consultations

When we make a change or introduce a new service, policy or process we do this with our customers, so you have a say in what it looks like. This year we completed three consultations.



6,529
customers consultation
responses

Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and priorities

894 customers took part. We asked customers what we should prioritise when creating our new approach to inclusion. We heard a range of examples from customers who have been affected by inequality, lack of opportunity and discrimination. Your feedback was used to shape Abri's revised Inclusion and Belonging strategy.

Permissions policy

120 customers got involved in shaping our new permissions policy. We wanted to make sure the new policy provided customers with clarity on how and when to request permission for different activities such as making alterations to your home or running a business.



Resident Scrutiny Group priorities for 2023-2024

938 customers responded to the consultation to help shape the Resident Scrutiny Group's annual work plan for the 2023-2024 financial year. Following our customers feedback the group will be reviewing estate management and communal areas, mandatory safety testing and Abri's response to the cost of living crisis. The group will also carry out a follow up review on repairs, which was completed in 2021-2022.

Other consultations

2,955 residents took part in our consultation on changes to our independent Living services. 1,622 customers took part in our resident involvement strategy review

Other ways our customers have had their say

Outside of our Resident Scrutiny Group and consultations there are plenty of other ways we make sure we're listening to and working with our customers to improve our homes, communities and services.

Thriving Communities

Our Thriving Communities panel has focused on supporting Abri's Community Fund this year to support local projects in our Community Investment Zones. The group has also helped monitor our delivery against Abri's Community Investment strategy and helped the business communicate effectively with its customers by looking at some key communications for us including this year's heads up rent letter.

Local action plans – you said, we did

Sometimes, when things go wrong for a number of customers we create localised action plans. This is so we can capture everything our customers are telling us in one place, be accountable to our customers and communicate how we're addressing each concern. Here's some ways we've done this:

Castle Park View, Bristol: Customers were concerned about maintenance of communal areas and bin stores, so we introduced additional cleaning schedules, regular bin store clearances and replaced carpets in heavy-wear areas. Customers were also worried about community safety and vulnerabilities, so we recruited a dedicated Housing Partner for the area to be more present in Bristol, we're reviewing all our allocations agreements with the council to manage the level of vulnerable customers housed in one scheme, and we commissioned two partners to design and implement support programmes to address concerns about vulnerable residents.

Mansbridge, Southampton: Customers reported problems with fly tipping in the area. We carried out a series of community action days and our grounds maintenance team now have a dedicated team that regularly check the estate and remove fly tipping. Customers were also concerned with the condition of external painting on some properties, this feedback informed our planned external painting programme and we've prioritised work in this area.

Longwood Park, Slough: Customers raised that parking and security was a concern, so we continued security patrols and introduced parking patrols. Customers also told us about bird mess on windows and cladding. We carried out a two-month cleaning programme of all windows, cladding and walkways, and installed bird deterrents on window ledges.

Carlton Road North, Weymouth: Customers complained about deteriorating windows and doors that provided no insulation from the outside. These properties sit within the Lodmoor conservation area, so we've submitted a planning application to the council to replace the windows and doors. Rodents were also found around the block due to a thick hedgerow. We removed the hedgerow, Pest Control completed a course of treatments and will return every other month to inspect baiting stations whilst we identify a long-term solution.

Somerset Court, Gosport: Customers told us the gardens were not user friendly due to damage caused by badgers. We installed fences, raised flower beds and ran a series of programmes with CIC Love Outdoors.



Cost of living research and support

At the end of 2022 we listened to over 4,200 customers, our largest customer engagement to date, about how they were impacted by the rising cost of living. We will continue to understand the impact the rising cost of living is having on our customers through further engagement in the new financial year. Here's what customers told us:

- All customers, regardless of tenure, have been impacted by the cost of living
- 8/10 customers said their financial situation is worse than it was earlier in 2022
- 64% of rental customers and 52% of shared owners say they would be unable to manage an unexpected expense. Customers with a disability are more likely to be unable to manage an unexpected expense than those without
- 40% of rental customers (whose rent is not covered by HB or UC) and 40% of shared owners said they were finding it 'very difficult' or 'somewhat difficult' to afford their rent or housing payments
- 83% of rental customers and 77% of shared owners said they were concerned about their household finances
- 21% of rental customers and 9% of shared owners said they had debt they are finding difficult or unable to manage
- Younger rental customers aged 39 and under are more likely to have debt that they find difficult to manage
- 42% of rental customers and 34% of shared owners have gone without heating
- 22% of rental customers and 14% of shared owners have gone without food because they couldn't afford it
- 16% of rental customers and 4% of shared owners had used a food bank in the last six months
- Customers said they were concerned about the future, only 20% of rental customers and 33% of shared owners felt positive about the future

The top three things our rental customers said they want us to prioritise are:



Improving energy efficiency of our homes



Repairs and maintenance



Safety of our homes

Richard's story

Richard is in his 60s and lives alone in his rental flat in Hampshire. He is isolated, feels alone and doesn't go out often. He can only afford to heat one room in his flat and spends all his time in this room. He lives on only one meal a day and says this is the choice he has had to make to ensure he can pay for a little bit of heating alongside food. He fears for his future.

Jackie's Story

Jackie is a shared owner, she is under 30 and lives with her partner in Devon. They have already changed their spending habits to save money and prioritise their rent and mortgage payments before anything else. She says not a day goes by when she doesn't panic about money and is budgeting carefully to identify areas of spend that can be cut out. She's chosen not to put the heating on this winter and is fearful that in the future there will be nothing left to cut back on, and they won't be able to afford to pay their bills.

How are we supporting our customers?

Over the next ten years we're investing £435m in our existing homes. This includes improving building and fire safety, tackling issues like damp and mould and making them more energy efficient.

In 2022-2023

we invested £3.7m

in cost of living support directly for our customers and through community investment.



We expanded our Tenancy Support Service

We grew our Tenancy Support Service in response to the cost of living crisis. They help customers with:

- Budgeting and money advice
- Benefits advice to ensure you're receiving what you're entitled to
- Signposting to specialist agencies and local support
- Tenancy-related advice and guidance

Making our homes more sustainable

We're working to retrofit our homes to help reduce customer energy bills, make homes warmer and meet our net-zero commitments. Abri aims to start work on retrofitting 400 homes over the next two years and will be spending £67 million over the next five years to bring all our stock to have a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of Band C by 2030.

In 2022 we carried out retrofit works to 31 homes in Bruton, Somerset, increasing the EPC rating of every home in the project by three bands! Making them either EPC band A or B. This not only makes the homes more energy efficient, it will help keep them warmer and reduce our customers energy bills.



“ The work took under three months starting in October 2022 and finished in late December 2022. As part of the retrofit programme, our home benefitted from a range of measures including updating cavity wall insulation, insulation to the loft and eaves and installing solar PV panels.

I can honestly say we have noticed a huge improvement in the warmth of our property. The property overall looks much improved with the addition of new windows and doors.

“I have a smart meter in my property and have noticed that my energy bills have reduced considerably. I am on a fixed rate tariff for my electric so I can make a fairly accurate comparison on the previous year's costs and this year's. We are thrilled with the outcome from the improvements made. “

Robert Kinghan, customer in Bruton

Thanks to our customers we learned a lot from this project to help us make improvements for the next set of retrofit works we complete. This includes making sure we are clear and honest about the work at the outset (including any disruption to access or noise) and where possible not changing things after we've agreed works with the customers.

Addressing food inequality

Our Good Grub Club tackles holiday hunger and social isolation and has helped hundreds of families since we set it up in 2017. In July 2022 we partnered with six organisations to run the club for 12 months, providing £56,000 from our Partnership Fund. Between July 2022-March 2023, Good Grub Club supported 123 young people and their families.

Community pantries allow customers to access food for a fraction of the cost of supermarkets and help reduce food waste. Our pantry in our Round About Café, Mansbridge, which opened in December 2021, was so popular we decided to open another one in our Café 1759 in Whitehill and Bordon. We've also supported local pantries, fridges, and food projects across our geography, including a community pantry in Westfield Somerset, a community fridge in Salisbury, and a pop-up in Sawyers Close, Windsor.

We also held slow cooker workshop courses across our geography. The sessions included support and education on using cupboard store ingredients as a healthy, low-cost energy option for cooking. 56 people took part in the sessions and were each given their own slow cooker and food to cook the recipes shown during the sessions.



Household Support Fund

Our partnership with Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) meant we secured £31,000 from the Household Support fund to support Abri customers with the cost of living crisis. We were given access to 200 unique codes to support customers to claim a one off £145 cash per household.



Resident Involvement Review

In last year's Customer Annual Report we said we'd review the ways our customers can get involved and have their say at Abri. With thanks to those customers who gave us feedback, we completed a full review and found the existing structure was complex and didn't address the different needs of each of our communities. We now have a proposed new resident involvement structure with engagement and actions driven up by our customers and into the organisation, not the other way around.

We will:

- Have more meaningful customer engagement, looking at our services as a whole and within our different regions
- Ensure we're accountable to our customers and they have their say on matters like safety and complaints
- Work with our Resident Scrutiny Group to review and improve our services
- Create regional customer panels that give customers the opportunity to meet regularly to advise us on how we can improve services and meet their community's specific needs
- Support local groups and co-create opportunities for customers to lead on making a difference in their community

We're still making some final amendments to our new resident involvement review. As soon as it's ready we'll share the new structure and all the ways you can get involved.

Responsible neighbourhood management

We want our customers to feel like they can belong, grow and thrive in their home and community. Aside from repairs and maintenance, the majority of our services are about helping you in your home and community day to day. This could be finding you a home that meets your needs, helping you sustain your tenancy, finding ways to keep you independent for longer and keeping our neighbourhoods safe. We have colleagues on the ground, in your areas dedicated to making this happen. Over the next year we'll be even more visible in our communities and will make it clear who you can contact about your home and neighbourhood.

Our homes



1,702 homes
let (re-let and new build)



86.5%
customer satisfaction with
the lettings experience



89.9%
customer satisfaction with
the quality of their home
(affordable rent)

328

new homes sold

152

re-sale homes sold



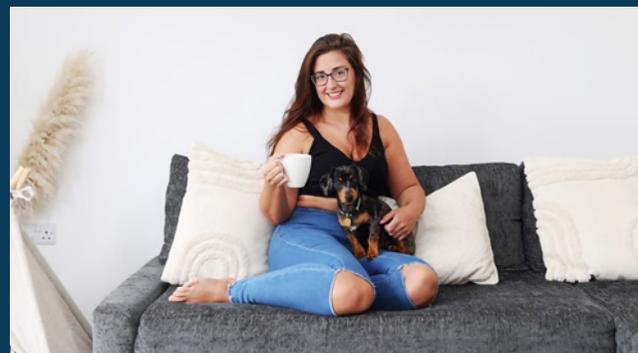
98.8%
customer satisfaction with
the sales process



82.6%
customer satisfaction with the
quality of their home (market sale
and shared ownership)

Downsizing in Windsor

Whether new or existing customers, our team helps find a home that's right for each household's individual needs. One customer in a three-bed home in Windsor was on full benefits and discretionary housing payments (DHP). Due to the length of time DHP had been claimed, it was unlikely these payments would be continued. Abri and the customer agreed downsizing would be the customer's best solution. The customer loves gardening and wanted to remain in Windsor. When a one-bedroom bungalow became available, the Hub (an Abri support service in Windsor) was there to help. This included registering the customer with Thames Home Choice, reviewing their rent account, changing their benefits and providing constant reassurance. The customer is now happily living in their bungalow, working on their garden and is part of the scheme's Residents Social Club.



"My abri home is a dream come true!"

Kirsty was looking to get on the property ladder and buy her own home for the first time. With a long commute each day, she was pleased to learn that there was a Shared Ownership scheme available closer to work. She now owns a two-bedroom semi-detached property at our Woodgate development in the village of Pease Pottage, West Sussex.

Settled in her new home, Kirsty is pleased to be a part of our community at Woodgate: "I hadn't heard of Shared Ownership before doing some research into it. My partner is a mortgage broker, so he initially advised on what to do with my income and budget. I used this and the outline of the area I wanted to live in as the first way to narrow down my options. I came across Abri's Woodgate and it felt right straight away and I was so happy when I completed and it was mine.

"I feel so blessed to be living in a beautiful, calm area like this. By using Abri's Shared Ownership scheme, I have been able to purchase a brand-new home that I can put my personal touch on and decorate the way I wish.

"Based on my current income, the deposit I had managed to save and a portion of money I had kindly been gifted, I was able to buy a 30% share of the property of which I plan to staircase in the future to own a higher percentage of the property. The turbulence of the housing market, coupled with the cost of living going up, meant that for me, it seemed like securing my own home was out of the question – especially in an area like Pease Pottage. But, that isn't the case at all. My Abri home is a dream come true."

Help to Buy

Abri is one of Homes England's three Help to Buy agents. We're so pleased to be able to support thousands of families own their home. Sadly, the government announced that this would be the last year of the Help to Buy scheme. We will look to continue supporting customers realise their home ownership dream through our shared ownership offer.

Additional services

This year we brought our grounds maintenance and cleaning service in house, meaning we have more control over the quality of the service provided, and we can get our customers involved too. If you see our Abri colleagues out and about maintaining our open spaces, please say hello, we'd like to hear what you think of the work and any ideas you have.



Clean up day at April Square

Our grounds maintenance and community investment teams organised a clean up day at April Square, Portsmouth to reduce fly tipping and anti-social behaviour in the area. The day was spent removing rubbish dumped in surrounding areas and helping customers remove items from their home. The team repurposed some old tyres, with spray paint, wood and screws to create DIY planters which children from the community helped plant flowers in. The work was in collaboration with VIVID and Home Group who also have homes in the area, and the April Square Residents Group.

Supporting our customers

Helping customers sustain their tenancy

We want our customers to be able to sustain their tenancies that's why we have a team dedicated to helping our customers ensure they're accessing the benefits they should be and making the most of their finances.



£3.4m

customer gains secured by
Abri's Tenancy Support Service

Helping a customer receive Discretionary Housing Payment

A customer came to our attention after requesting a food parcel. The customer is waiting for a hip replacement and suffers with chronic pain leaving him unable to work, which impacts his mental health. One of our Financial Recovery Officers supported the customer by applying for Disability Benefits, contacting the local village agent to help the customer access a doctor and food parcels, referring him to a specialist charity who provide emotional and financial support and helping him make a successful application for a Discretionary Housing Payment. Six months on and he's been awarded disability benefits of over £850 a month and feels much more positive.

Backdating benefits

Our Tenancy Support Service completed a claim for housing benefit for a customer during a joint visit with a Community Safety Officer, and supported a customer who's been a victim of domestic violence receive a backdated housing benefit claim of £1,127, plus ongoing entitlement.

Enabling customers to live independently

We want to help empower lives, that's why we provide supported housing where the accommodation is provided alongside care or support to help people live as independently as possible in a thriving community. This includes long term Independent Living properties for older people and our Partnership Living schemes for a range of customers who need a specialist form of either long term or short term housing, for example single homeless people, people at risk of domestic abuse, young people at risk and people with mental health problems, physical or learning disabilities.



97%
of customers living in our housing for older people were supported to establish and sustain their independent living.



96.78%
of our Partnership Living care and support providers were rated as good or great

Creating a consistent service

We want to create a consistent service offer across all our Independent Living schemes. A service that improves our customers lives and strengthens their communities. This year we consulted with customers to find out what mattered most to them and how the service could be improved. All of this feedback was used to create one new way of working that will keep our schemes safe and secure, ensure customers maintain their independence and reduce isolation. This new way of working will start from April 2023.

Keeping active at Bearley House

At the end of 2022 our customers at Bearley House in Somerset told us how they'd like to become more active, particularly outside. With the help of Somerset Activities and Sports Partnership, our Independent Living team applied and secured funding for sport and activity equipment including a table tennis table and assisted gardening tools, to keep our customers enjoying their hobbies and exercise.

Charlie Roberts, Independent Living Partner at Abri said: "The table tennis table has given customers an activity they can do every day and I haven't seen a day go by when it hasn't been used. The garden has always been a big thing here at Bearley House and the residents can't wait to get planting in April. A few customers who suffer from poor mobility are excited by how accessible the vegetable garden is for them and to use the assisted gardening tools so they can all muck in without a struggle."

Here's what two of our customers at Bearley House had to say:

"The table tennis table has made a big difference and has kept me more active."

"I can't imagine the garden without all the new features and there is more to come. Looking forward to planting season."



Neighbourhood safety

We want our homes and neighbourhoods to be safe places to live and work. Our Housing Partners and Community Safety team work closely with external partners, like the police, to make this happen.



40
cases of domestic abuse handled on average, per month

Crimestoppers

In August 2022 Abri became the first housing association in the UK to partner with Crimestoppers to do just this. Crimestoppers is not the police, it's a charity that helps people speak up about crime by reporting it 100% anonymously.

We're drawing on the expert knowledge of Crimestoppers to support our Community Safety approach and running campaigns to help you know how to spot the signs of crime and report them. So far our campaigns include drug related activities, knife crime and modern day slavery.

CrimeStoppers.
Speak up. Stay safe.

You can report crime and give information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or visiting their website [crimestoppers-uk.org](https://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

Tackling criminal activity in our properties

Community Safety Officers Simona De Sio and Ricky Chahal attended one of our homes in Havant, along with Havant Police as part of an ongoing operation. The property was being used for suspected drug dealing and criminal activity. As a result, Havant Police obtained a Closure Order from Portsmouth Magistrate court. This meant the customer and any other visitors to the property were prohibited from entering the property. Following this, we worked with a contracting agency to secure the property so no one could access it and stop possible break-ins. The customer was served with a ground 7a Notice of Seeking Possession, meaning we'll work with our legal team to refer the case to court for eviction. Following the closure order being implemented, we spoke to some of the neighbours and they were very pleased with the outcome. They said they would enjoy the respite and felt they could sleep safely at night knowing their homes and street are safer, now that the property was closed.

Investing in our communities

We believe our homes and communities should be for people to belong, grow and thrive. That's why we look for ways to work with our customers and partners to give back, investing in initiatives that help address local issues and create opportunities for everyone. Our focus this year has been supporting customers through the cost of living crisis.



£90,739

community grant funding provided



£455,924

Partnership Funding provided

Enabling customers through our Employment Services

Mokhtar was 19 years old when he fled to the UK to seek asylum from the war, with no surviving family left in Sudan. After a brief spell in Portsmouth, he settled in Southampton. With English not being his first language, he didn't feel like he fitted in or there was a future for him in the UK. Through support from our Employment Services and our Project UP, Mokhtar has been supported to learn new skills and improve his English. He worked at the Isle of Wight Festival through our Abri Work Academy, and we've recently helped him enrol at Fareham College in a construction course.

"My confidence has really grown and I feel so much lighter knowing I have skills and I am confident to use them.

It has totally changed my life and I can see not only a future for myself but a happy productive one.

I always wanted to have a family and now I think that could happen. I have a proper future now, thank you."



£10.2m

social value generated



576

into employment or a better job

Our Community and Partnership funding

Here's just a few projects we've helped fund this year to support our communities:

- **£10,000 to Your Planet Doctors for the Grow your own Rainbow project in Bournemouth to support the community grow their own food and learn about sustainable growing.** "I have autism and growing my own things is a life skill I can learn"
- **£26,000 to Windsor Cycle Hub to support the development of a hub for leisure rides and the upcycling of old bikes for community use** "the first few rides really helped me to get my confidence back and learn some new areas to cycle"
- **£1,540 to St Peters Community Centre in Yeovil to run a Youth Drop In to provide young people with a place to meet friends, share their views and try new activities.**
- **£2,997 to Groundwork South in Bristol to help set up a Community Café providing customers access to low cost, healthy food**

Effective handling of complaints

We want to deliver great services, homes and clear communication. But sometimes we don't get things right. Everyone at Abri is empowered to accept and handle complaints.



93.5%
customer satisfaction with
customer contact centre interaction



72.53%
of service enquiries resolved
informally



125
stage 1 complaints received
per 1,000 homes



63.37%
of stage 1 complaints handled within
timescale (including extensions)



24.89
average number of working days
taken to respond to formal
complaints (stage 1)



17
stage 2 complaints received
per 1,000 homes



33.46%
of stage 2 complaints handled within
timescale (including extensions)



41%
customer satisfaction with the
handling of most recent complaint
– upheld



9.4%
customer satisfaction with the
handling of most recent complaint
– not upheld

Learning from our mistakes

We've spent the last year simplifying Abri's management structure, ensuring our repairs, housing management and community services are all aligned to deliver better services. But it's crucial that we build on this by listening to our customers more carefully and act on what customers are telling us. We strive to provide a fair and effective resolution to any complaint and use the learnings to improve how we work.

This year we've themed our complaints and compliments to make it easy to see where we're excelling or areas we need to work on.

Top three compliment topics this year

1. Customer service – help and support available
2. Standard of works completed
3. Colleague behaviour – being helpful and kind

Top three complaint topics this year

1. Time to complete works
2. Missed appointments
3. Standard of works completed

How to give us a compliment or raise a complaint

There are several ways you can give us a compliment or raise a complaint:

- Head to www.myabri.co.uk
- Email us at customerrelations@abri.co.uk
- Give us a call on 0300 123 1567 (south) or 0300 330 9434 (south west)
- Write to us at Abri, Collins House, Bishopstoke Road, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO41 6AD
- Speak to your Housing Partner or any of our colleagues

Turning complaints into compliments

In April we moved away from using a contractor to maintain our open spaces in Somerset to doing this work in-house. We brought on board new grounds maintenance colleagues to deliver this service. During the transition period we saw a high volume of complaints but by working closer with our customers to understand their needs, we managed to turn the complaints into compliments.

Here's one example:

"My emails to you over the past years have always been negative in nature with me complaining about the state of the grass and the poor quality of the cutting here. It's now time for me to say thank you.

Yesterday, your team arrived to cut the grass - evidently with new equipment - and I could see straight away that this was going to be different from the usual slap-dash efforts we have endured in the past. It was obvious to me that more time, care and attention was being given to the task. I was able to speak to Lee and he freely gave me some of his time, patiently allowing me to relay the history of this situation. He responded by explaining that it would be difficult to achieve a decent result at this first visit because the grass was so long and there were still large piles of dead grass lying around from the previous cut some weeks ago - quite a mess. However, he went on to explain that with subsequent regular visits he would be able to gradually lower the cutters and get us back to a good quality result eventually.

This was very encouraging, and I would like to compliment Lee in particular on their attitude and their willingness to listen. They were polite and courteous and a pleasure to deal with."

How else do we keep improving?

- We're a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, and create self-assessments each year (or if changes are made) to ensure we keep meeting the Housing Ombudsman's Code
- We make sure our Complaints Policy is accessible - just ask us for a copy or head to the customer portal. You can also ask for a copy of our Equality Impact Assessment
- We know not everyone can exercise their right to raise concerns or complain, so we've got a Reasonable Adjustments Policy to address this too
- We work with our customers to put things right. Our Complaints Panel is made up of a group of customers and independent members of the community who help review stage 2 complaints. We're always looking for new members, if you'd like to find out more or apply, email the team at customerrelations@abri.co.uk or give us a call.



Supporting you with the cost of living

We know so many people are struggling with the cost of living right now, but there's plenty of help available. Here's a list of support we've compiled with our customers to help if you're struggling.

Abri support

Cost of Living Hub:

<https://costoflivinghub.abri.co.uk> for information on support available, tips to help your finances go further and ways to prevent damp and mould

Benefits and budgeting calculator: A quick and easy way to check you're receiving everything you're eligible for. Visit it here <https://bit.ly/better-off>

Our Tenancy Support Service can help with:

- **Budgeting and money advice**
- **Benefits advice to ensure you're receiving what you're entitled to**
- **Signposting to specialist agencies and local support**
- **Tenancy-related advice and guidance**

Get in touch with us through your My Abri customer portal account or giving us a call on 0300 123 1567 (south) or 0300 330 9434 (south west)

Employment support: our Employment Services can help you find a job, access training, apprenticeships and more. If you're in Hampshire (including Portsmouth and Southampton), Berkshire, West Sussex, Wiltshire, or Bournemouth email estsupport@abri.co.uk or call 0800 432 0570. If you're in South Somerset or Weymouth, email nicky.boyd@abri.co.uk or call 07900 260463.

Community pantries: customers can access food for a fraction of the cost and help reduce waste at one of our pantries, including those at Round About Café, Mansbridge and Café 1759 in Whitehill and Bordon. Get in touch with us to find the nearest pantry to you.

Other organisations

Help for Households: The Government's website lists all cost of living support available through the Government and includes hints and tips to reduce bills. <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>

Too Good to Go: save waste and money by getting bags of unsold food at discounted prices www.toogoodtogo.co.uk

Olio: share or collect unwanted food from your neighbourhood and items to borrow from neighbours like hovers, tables, chairs <https://olioex.com>

Citizens Advice: provide free confidential advice by calling 0800 144 8848 or visiting www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Your local authority: speak to your local council to find a warm space or local foodbank in your area

Looking after your pet: if you're struggling to feed or look after your pet speak to RSPCA on 0300 123 0650 or PDSA on 0800 917 2509 for help accessing food or paying vet bills.

Help with energy bills

Contact your energy supplier, some have hardship schemes for those in debt

Charis Grants: was launched to support those struggling with energy bills. Visit <https://charisgrants.com> or call 01733 421 021

Energy Saving Trust: offer hints and tips on cutting down your energy use and information on savings and grants available. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk>

Energy Helpline: advice and tips on switching suppliers and what options are available to you. www.energyhelpline.com or 01204 916 135

National Energy Action: a charity working to end fuel poverty. www.nea.org.uk or 0800 304 7159

Simple Energy Advice: impartial and independent advice service. <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/> or 0800 098 7950

Other ways to save

Sign up to **supermarket loyalty cards** to get discounts on every day items

Subscriptions: whether it's coffee or music, there's a subscription for most things. Make use of free trials, change your plans and share with your friends and family

Discount counts: search for discount counts before making online purchases

Insurance: Use comparison websites to make sure you're getting the best price for your home, pet or car insurance

Health care: If you visit an NHS dentist or pay for repeat prescription medication you may be entitled to free support. Visit www.gov.uk/help-nhs-costs or speak to your provider.

You, your home and community

Have you considered a mutual exchange? Downsizing your home if you don't need all that space can help reduce your bills. Visit Homeswapper (www.homeswapper.co.uk) to find somewhere near you

Reporting crime: unfortunately, with the cost of living increasing we're seeing more cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB). Contact Abri to report ASB or share information about a crime 100% anonymously with Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Your mental health: worries about your finances can affect your mental health, you can get support through Mind on 0300 123 3393 or the Samaritans on 116 123

If you would like this report shared in a different language or format please get in touch.

@abrigroup

www.myabri.co.uk



Creating communities,
empowering lives