



Customer Engagement Project Social Housing Stigma And feeling safe

Report July 2025

Background and approach



Background

- Many tenants of social housing landlords like Housing Plus Group have previously identified that they feel “stigmatised” just because they are tenants of social housing landlords. Social housing stigma was the issue that was most raised in a series of post Grenfell Ministerial tenant roadshows held in 2017.
- By exploring stigma and how it makes people feel as a Housing Plus Group tenant we can improve our services and help create more respectful and supportive communities.
- Social housing stigma includes:
 - Drawing conclusions about someone based on their home
 - Negative assumptions about tenants’ circumstances, behaviours, or abilities
 - Undervaluing tenants’ ability to contribute to decisions affecting their lives
 - Treating social housing neighbourhoods as inferior
 - Showing a lack of respect, empathy, or trust towards tenants.

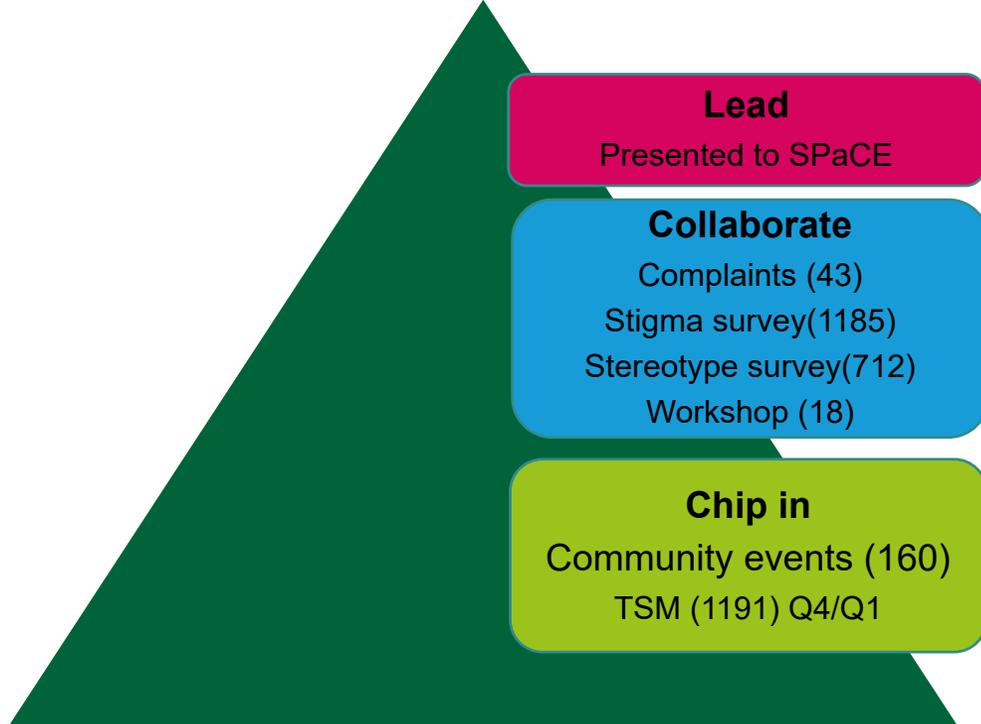
Approach

- An all tenant survey was sent to customers in December/January 2024/25 and May/June 2025 exploring various aspects of stigma, stereotyping and services.
- Themes of dissatisfaction and feedback from complaints and comments via the Tenant Satisfaction survey(TSM) were looked at. Including learning outcomes and closure reasons.
- A customer workshop exploring themes of stigma was held in July 25 and hosted by an external expert Kai Jackson.
- A respect engagement board was used at community and tenant events.



Background and approach

Engagement pyramid



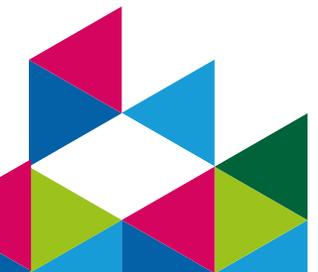
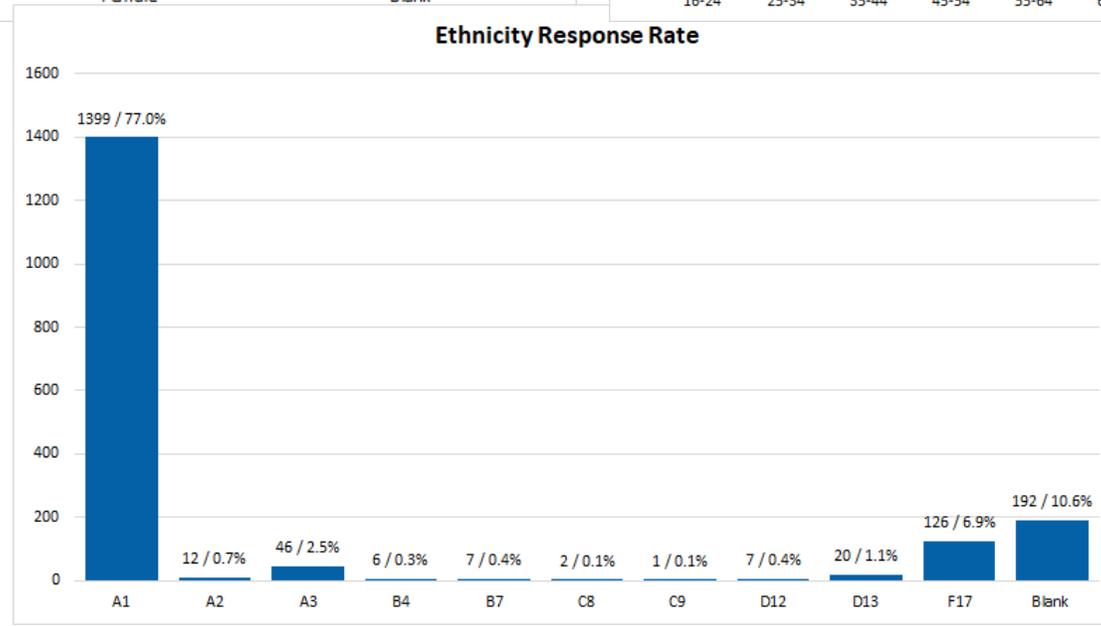
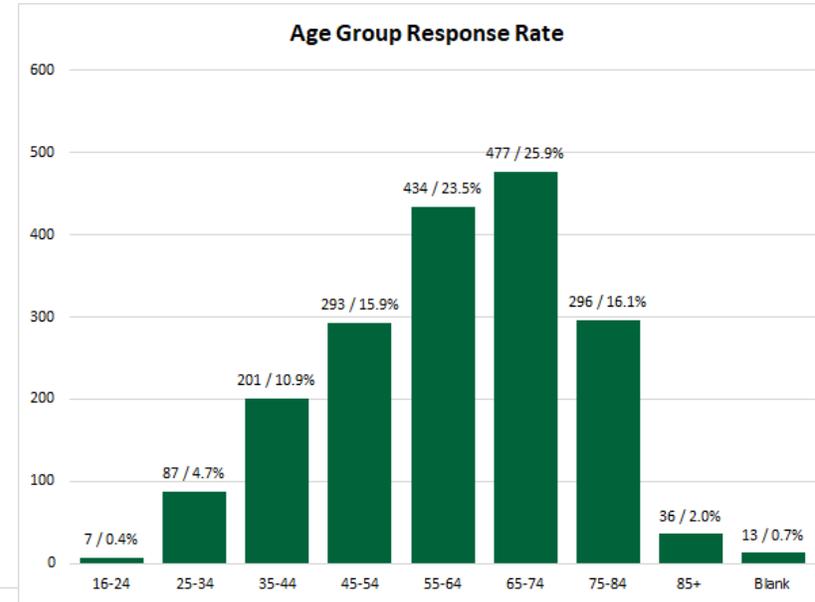
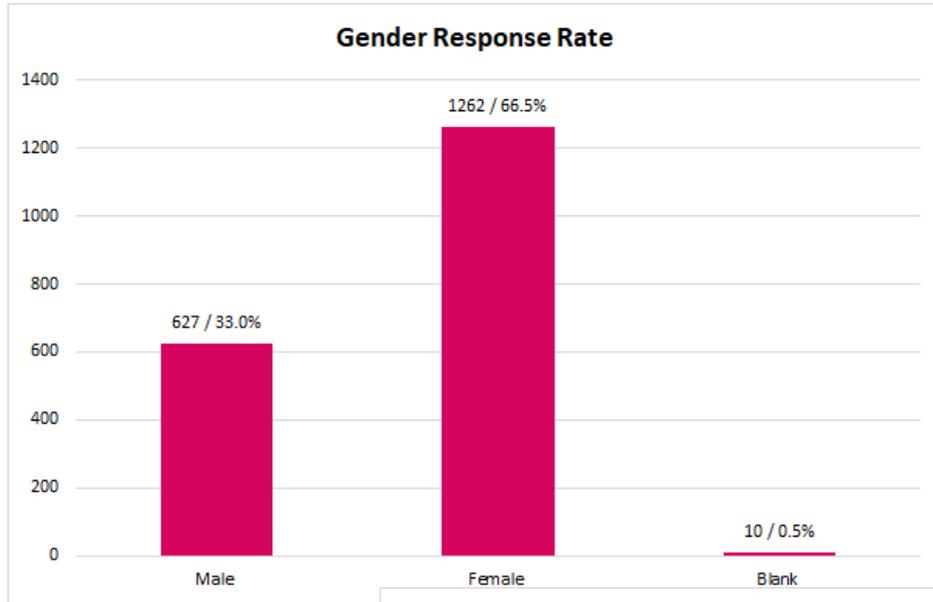
The majority of views are through an all tenant survey which featured both open and closed comments exploring social housing stigma and stereotyping.

Chip in views although from a well responded survey are less significant in this engagement. There was also an opportunity to discuss feeling safe at community and tenant events.



Findings

Customer survey response charts

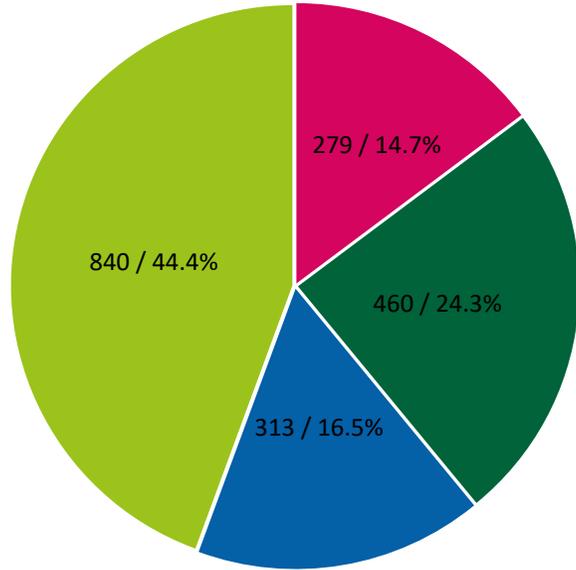


Findings

Customer survey

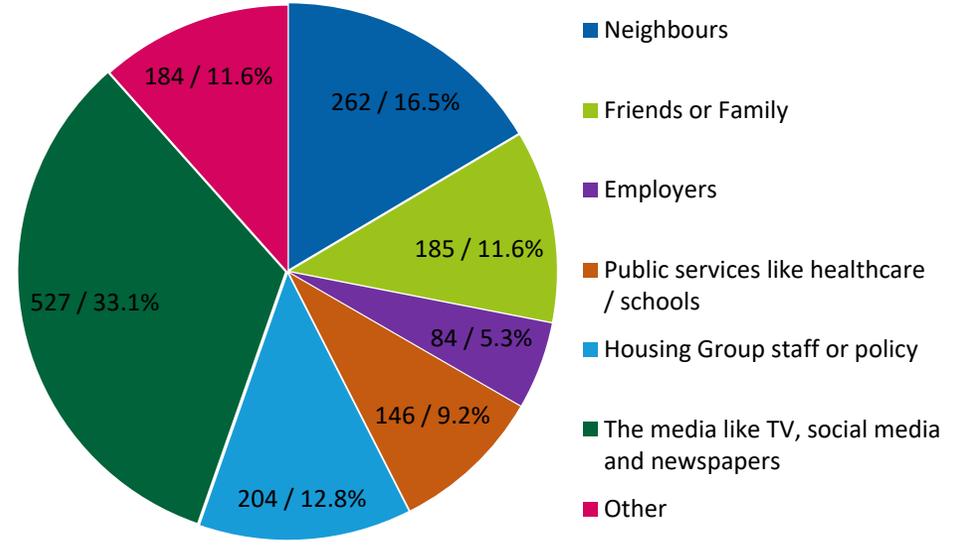


Feel stigmatised/stereotyped as a social housing tenant



■ Yes, Frequently
 ■ Yes, Sometimes
 ■ Rarely
 ■ No, Never

Where do our customers feel stigma/stereotyping comes from most?



In the survey to customers 56% of respondents reported feeling stigmatised or stereotyped for living in social housing.

When asked where the stigma or stereotyping comes from the media for example; tv and social media are a top contributor to making people feel stigmatised or promoting social housing stigma. Customers also reported feeling stigmatised by housing group staff and policy

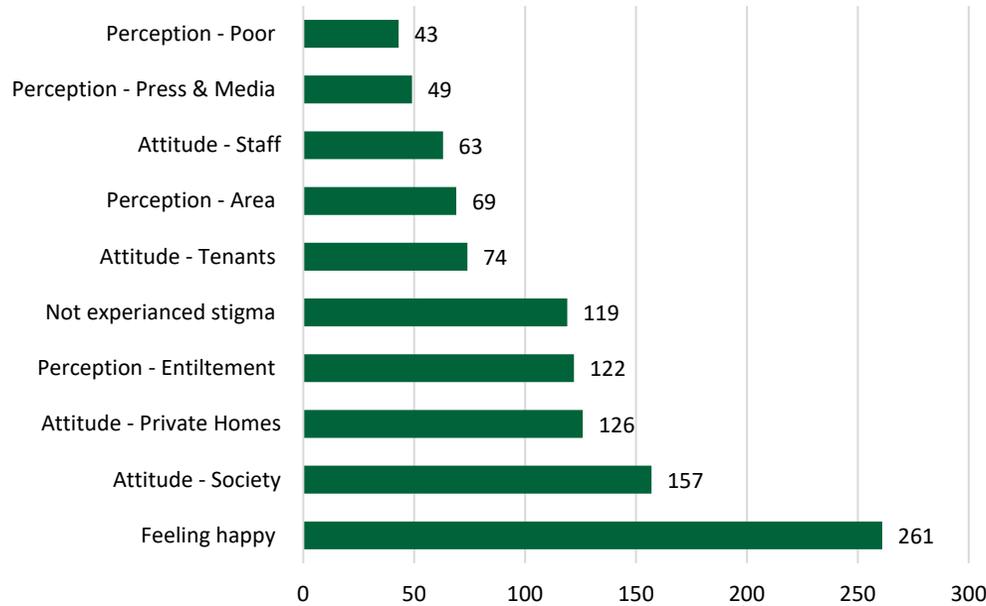
The results above are from the combined results of two all tenant surveys from both legacy organisations. The Wrekin Housing Group survey closed in January 2025 and Homes Plus June 2025. The Wrekin survey used the terminology stigma while the Homes Plus survey used stereotyping. Individual reports are included as appendices to this report.



Findings

Experience of stigma

Stigma Experience top 10 comment themes



“There is a presumption that tenants don’t look after their property or value the home they live in, and because of their economical situation that they have low intelligence- which isn’t true. I overheard a conversation between some neighbours saying that social housing tenants were scum.”

“I discovered on this estate, the owners of the houses have numbers on house, our house has them on the doors.”

Question: If you feel or have ever felt stigmatised/ stereotyped because of where you live, please tell us a bit more here.

The survey comments paint a picture of the variety of ways that stigma affects our tenants. Experience is varied and although there are some common themes there are many aspects to each individual experience. The chart shows the more common themes that are referenced in the comments. Some comments will raise multiple themes.

Stigma arises from various areas of society, and while there is some evidence that Housing Plus Group staff and policies may contribute to feelings of stigma, other key factors include the opinions of tenants’ neighbours, friends, and broader perceptions of those living in social housing. As well as more general societal attitudes many spoke of behaviours from their private neighbours were they felt to be treated differently from other neighbours.

Comments also picked up positive theme of customers feeling happy with their home and the organisations service.

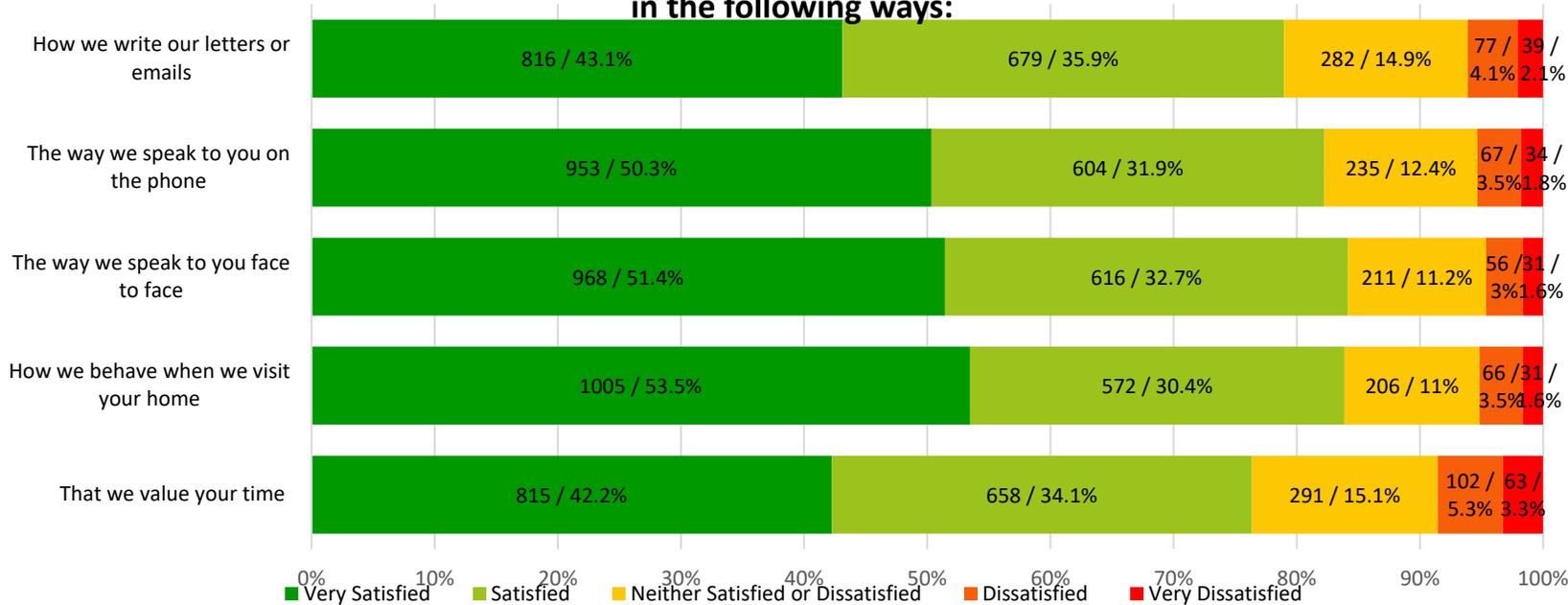


Findings

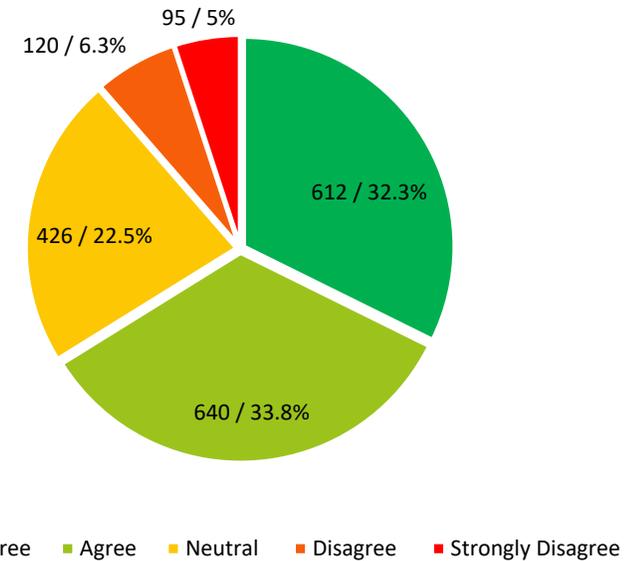
Experience of being treated respectfully



How satisfied are you that HPG staff treat you respectfully when interacting with you in the following ways:



How much would you say you agree with the following statement: "I trust Housing Plus Group"?



Question: How satisfied are you that staff treat you respectfully when interacting with you in the following ways:

Experience of Housing Plus Group services is largely positive with customers being over 76% satisfied or very satisfied with each area. How we value or customers time scores slightly lower which could be a reflection of less flexibility of appointment times.

66% of customers agree that they trust Housing Plus group.

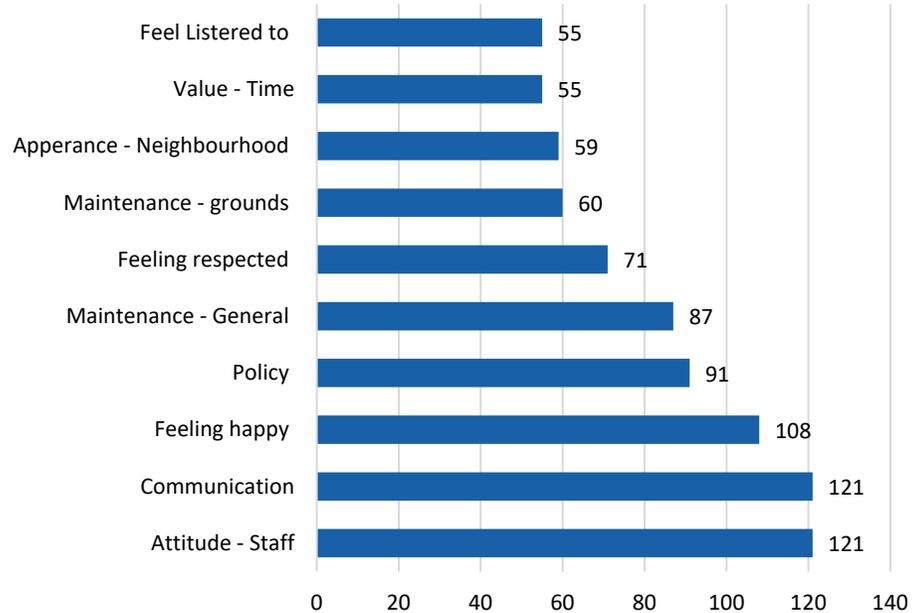


Findings

Improving perceptions and addressing challenges



Top 10 comment themes



“The exteriors and landscaping around our homes gives a real impression of neglect, shows years of neglect, and is the opposite of something to be proud of!”

“Do the jobs how you would if you were a ‘paying’ customer not a dodge and scarper”

Question: Is there anything that we could do differently to help improve perceptions and address challenges relating to where you live?

Although the themes appear negative the answers are suggestions as to how we can improve as an organisation and the experience of our customers.

Frequently mentioned themes include how we communicate, the attitude of staff and the appearance of neighbourhoods.

Customers would also like to see positive representation of social housing in the media and feel that the group can support this with positive communications and community initiatives.

Customers would like to see visible improvements in the standard of landscaping and external maintenance of homes. Design stigma with new homes where social homes are visually distinguishable on estates was mentioned and reflected in the policy theme.

Customers can feel judged or disrespected by operatives; examples include lack of shoe coverings and condescending behaviour and language.

Its also important to note that many comments said there was nothing we could do or how they are happy.



Customer Workshop Exploring Social Housing Stigma With Kai Jackson July 2025

Solution Focused Ideas



- Always wear shoe coverings indoors.
- Make communications friendly, respectful, and functional (e.g., working online tools).
- Offer flexible appointment times, including evenings/weekends.
- Ensure spec and design of new builds match private homes, especially for Section 106 housing.
- Align procurement processes with organisational values - only use respectful contractors.

Communication Preferences



- Prefer person-centred, respectful contact — especially email and phone.
- Want clear, accurate, and responsive messaging (e.g., correct links, names, and answers).
- Value first-contact resolution: frontline staff should be empowered to help.
- Like surveys, but some feel survey fatigue.
- Managers should communicate without belittling tone.
- Want their preferred communication methods respected (email, phone, post, etc.).



Themes

Staff, Contractors,
New build homes,
Neighbourhoods,
Policy and Society

18
customers
took part in
person and
online

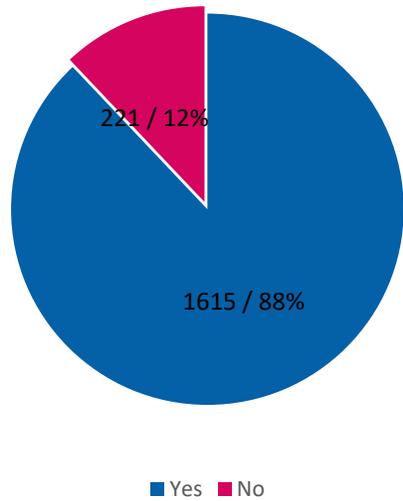


Findings

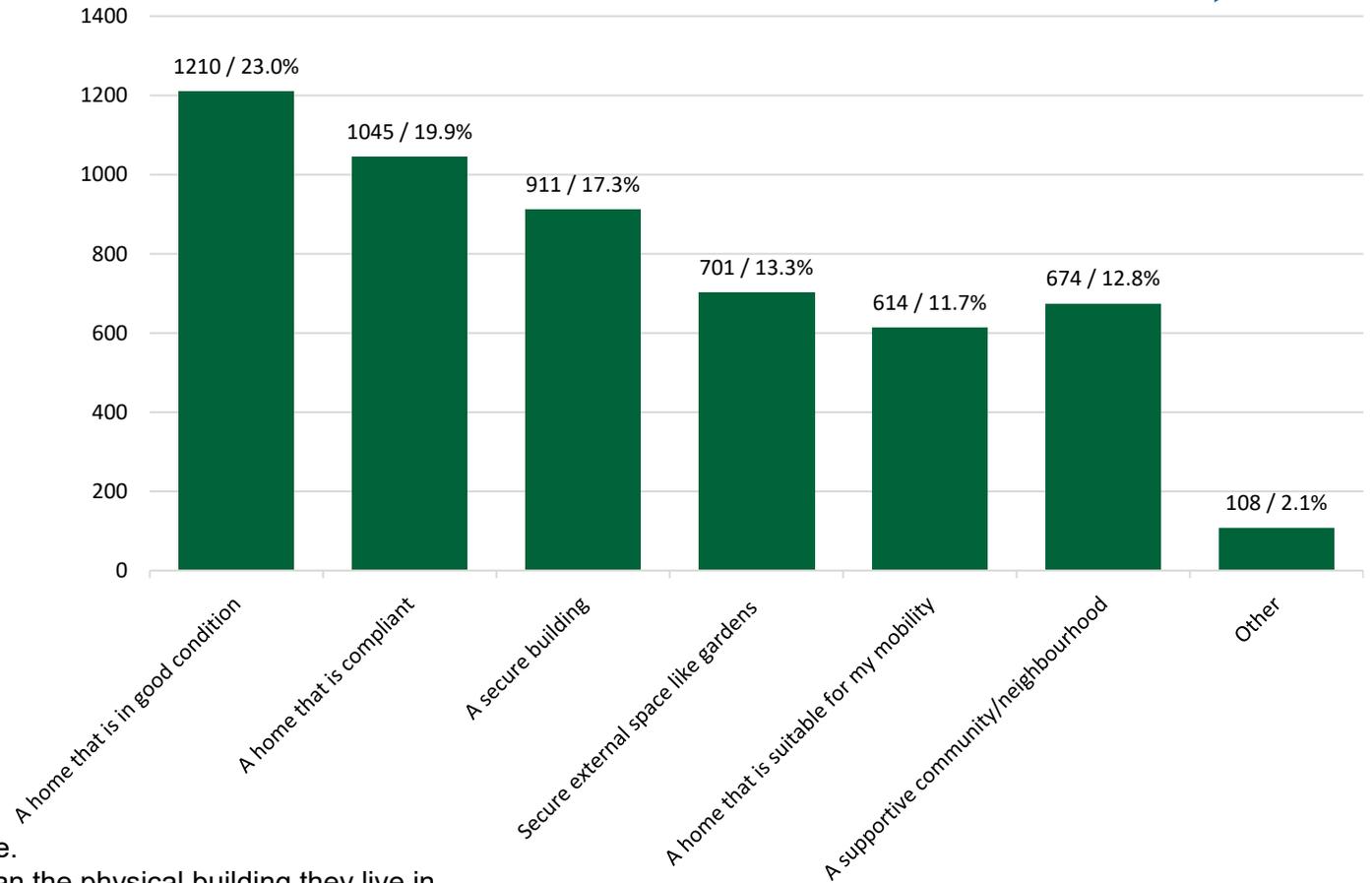
Feeling Safe in Your Home



Do you feel safe in your home?



What does feeling safe in your home mean to you?



88% of customers state that they feel safe in their home.
Feeling safe for our customers means more to them than the physical building they live in.

Feeling safe in the community, their outside space and how suitable a home is for their needs is just as important and the survey reflects how this varies for our customers.

We took a feeling safe board to community events and comments reflected the survey feedback.



Findings

Respect and feeling safe board at community events



To promote conversations about respect and feeling safe we took boards to community events to capture comments from our customers and the local community. Common themes are captured in the word clouds.



Findings

Case studies - experience



Experience of social housing stigma

One of the first couples to move into a new Housing Plus group home were featured on social media.

Many comments highlighted the perception of the audience and who should have access to housing. The comments reflected a perception that only immigrants can access housing association properties.

The couple said, “We were upset when we first read all of the comments. We soon realised that it wasn’t important to us and that the improved safety and security of our new bungalow was what mattered and the way that it would enhance our lives and health. “

Unfortunately, the couple went on to explain that they have since felt stigmatised by their neighbours on the new estate. “ We were out walking our dog with grandchildren and got talking to one of our neighbours. During the conversation a green van went past, the neighbour said; “ Why are those vans coming on here? I bet its that lot down the bottom (in relation to the social housing tenants being different to other neighbours in the area.) We did say, well actually we rent our home from there and we are proud of it!.”

This highlights the need to continue tackling stigma around social housing at both a community and societal level and that no customer should feel stigmatised because of where they live or who they rent from. Despite the comments and community challenges, the couple remain positive about their new home they are proud of their tenancy.



Feeling Safe in your home

One of our customers, a single lady living in one of our apartment blocks, completed the survey and made comments about how she doesn’t feel safe living where she is with her daughter.

She referenced issues relating to ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour), a void property, fly tipping, unsecure outbuildings and some building safety issues. We let the individual know that we would escalate them to the relevant departments and make sure that the issues are being dealt with.

The Lettings team investigated the void property and provided a thorough update of both the process and what had happened. By working closely with the Estate Impact Officer and the Neighbourhoods team, discussed issues of fly tipping with the individual and are working on a solution to resolve the issue with the unsecure outbuildings. Simultaneously, the Neighbourhoods team worked with Ground Maintenance to ensure that all the hedges and trees were cut back enough to ensure that all signs are visible and streetlights are not covered to increase security.

The Director of Compliance reached out to the individual directly about the building safety issues raised. They have been keeping in regular contact as further inspections and a programme of works is developed to ensure the building is as safe as it can be.

The individual is really pleased that these issues are being proactively dealt with and looking forward to the difference it will make to herself, her daughter and everyone else who lives there.

Findings

Complaints and TSMs Jan 2025 – June 2025



Tenant satisfaction measures Q4 and Q1

The question: Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is safe.

85% safe in home in the TSM

The question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that your landlord treats you fairly and with respect.

83% Fairness and respect TSM

The question:
“Is there anything else you would like to say about your home and/or the services the Wrekin Housing Group provides? If you are dissatisfied with anything, please tell us here:”

Seven comments are themed negatively as feeling valued. Tenants also reflected positively that they are generally with service and their homes– Comments related to feeling victimised over poor decoration, cost saving, time to deliver a repair and staffing on a scheme. Two comments reflected a sense of apathy in responding.

Complaints Q4/Q1

Over the last 6 months 68 complaints related to social housing stigma with closure reasons including lack of respect, rude behaviour and language, making customers feel uncomfortable and poor attitude from staff and contractors.

Example complaints:

The assumption that customers don't have work commitments - *“Tenant has advised that he arrived at 7.10pm and sat outside until 7.30pm then told her that he finishes at 8 and sort of blamed her for the lateness of him as she could not be there until 5pm”*

Poor communication regarding customers home and needs - *“Tenant is unhappy with the communication and attitude of a contractor surveyor regarding the use of his kitchen, should the replacement go ahead. During the discussion with the contractor surveyor, the tenant queried what use he would have during the installation, which was met with a negative response.”*

The language we use - *“ I was particularly upset at your response to me bringing the issue of my neighbour continually causing problems for me. You mentioned that my neighbour had already contacted you and as this was, your words, **'now a tit for tat situation'**, we should go to mediation. I was shocked and feel you belittled the effects of this ongoing antisocial behaviour has caused to myself and my son”*

Showing lack of respect for a customer's home - *“trades today working and have broken a photo frame off the wall and not told tenant.”*



Findings

Opportunities for improvement



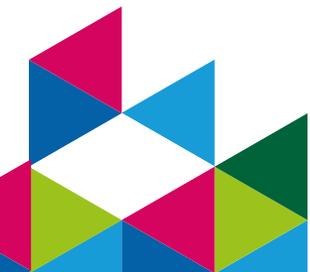
- Over half of our customers have felt stigmatised or stereotyped at some point about where they live.
- Customer experience of being treated respectfully is generally positive across the organisation.
- 66% of customers agree that they trust The Housing Plus Group.
- Customers feel that the organisation can help improve societal social housing stigma and break down barriers by promoting positive stories, acting swiftly on Anti Social Behaviour, challenging design stigma and improving the look of properties and neighbourhoods in general.
- Staff and contractor attitudes can make our customers feel stigmatised in their own homes.
- 88% of customers state that they feel safe in their home (stigma/Stereotyping survey)



Findings

Recommendations

Recommendation	Action	Impact/aim	Timescale	Lead
Explore staff understanding of social housing stigma and unconscious bias.	Recruitment, training, on boarding, workshops to get staff to really think about the impact of actions build knowledge and understanding. Housing meeting with Kai?	Monitor and measure satisfaction of staff attitude and respect of customers' homes.	2025/2026	Sophie Jones
Join the Stop Social Housing Stigma campaign and support the campaign.	Joined Stop Social Housing as an organisation. Liaise with the group to share best practise across nationally. Promote their research and surveys with customers and staff.	Drives positive change and generates positive stories to counterbalance negative media coverage.	On going	Kathryn Holmes Caz
Ensure sharing across the organisation of neighbourhood knowledge and ensure customers can feel proud of where they live.	Foster community relationships. Improve local knowledge and react quickly to antisocial behaviour etc. Links to locality boards and joint/partnership working Monitor the appearance of estates.	Customers having a stronger trust in the organisation. Generate positive stories and shows that we are actively listening.	On going	Nick Grubb Sam Allcott Kev Davies Phil Heywood



Findings

Recommendations



Recommendation	Action	Impact/aim	Timescale	Lead
Maintenance and repair of homes is of good quality.	<p>Ensuring repairs and maintenance is completed to a high standard.</p> <p>The specification of parts and finish is good quality not just good enough.</p>	<p>Homes that require fewer repairs and repeat works.</p> <p>Less complaints.</p> <p>Customers feel proud of their home.</p>	On going	<p>Emma Humphries</p> <p>Lyndon George</p>
Ensure customer involvement throughout procurement and review of contractors.	To liaise with departments to build customer relationships and improve services.	<p>Ensure contractors values align to that of our organisation and customers' expectations.</p> <p>Ensure respect of customers in their home.</p>	On going	<p>David Lewis</p> <p>Karen Bushell</p> <p>Joe Scurr</p> <p>Matt Akers</p>
To share learning with Development team to ensure customers are involved in the design specification process.	To be aware of and challenge design details that may be of difference to private homes.	Reduce design stigma with new homes where social homes are visually distinguishable on estates.	<p>Review December 2025</p> <p>On going</p>	<p>Simon Thompson</p> <p>Kerry Bolister</p>

