

Chester
Annual Report
to Residents 2019

2019



Welcome from William Hogg

The Chester and District Committee, has again been involved in lots of work on behalf of Sanctuary residents over the past year. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, and every resident, involved with us for their support, commitment and contribution over the last 12 months. Together, we have continued to help shape Sanctuary's services locally, to implement improved processes alongside the National Residents Scrutiny Panel (NRSP) and to ensure that a strong two-way relationship between Sanctuary and Chester residents is maintained.

Sanctuary's approach to resident engagement was recently accredited by the Housing Quality Network 'Residents Challenge'.

Their assessment examines engagement with residents and how that leads to improvements in services. It was particularly positive about how Sanctuary deals with complaints.

Chester and District Sub Committees. The residents on the Chester and District Committee and sub committees have been working closely with local operational managers to maintain and improve the services provided locally.

These groups continue to grow and are vital to help us ensure the quality standards of services and homes. Our People and Welfare Sub Committee is helping to shape next year's community investment plan, which supports initiatives benefitting all residents living in Sanctuary communities, as well as monitoring the performance of our income team and the management of antisocial behaviour. Our Improving Homes and Neighbourhoods Sub Committee worked with local managers to ensure that residents were kept informed and involved throughout Sanctuary's £4.1m reinvestment programme, providing new kitchens, bathrooms and other improvements to your homes.

Communities of Interest
A new national 'community of interest' group focusing on fire safety and led by NRSP member Peter Hedges has been set up in response to the 'Building a Safer Future – Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety' (known as the Hackitt review and published in May 2018) which focuses on high-rise residential buildings of 10 storeys or more.

This group represents residents from high-rise residential blocks across the country, piloting an approach

to resident engagement strategies that can be used nationally. I am delighted that one of the high-rise blocks in Chester has been chosen to take part in this pilot, ensuring that our residents have the opportunity to inform and shape this crucial work. The pilot will be supported by staff from across Sanctuary Group. Peter will be using Voice as an important means of updating all residents with progress. The pilot will be completed by the end of 2019 and we hope to see the roll-out of the national programme in 2020.

A conversation with Sanctuary The next year will be key as we work with Sanctuary to review their homes and services. We want to make sure we listen to as many residents as possible about what you think Sanctuary is good at and where they need to do better. You will be hearing more about this in the coming months. Over the next 12 months your Committee will remain firmly focused on how we can help Sanctuary to continuously improve the services they provide. If you would like to find out more about the opportunities to get involved and have your say, turn to page 18.



Introduction from Craig Moule

I began in post as Sanctuary's Group Chief Executive in January this year and this is my first annual report to you. Over the last ten months, I have been out and about meeting residents, listening to you and listening to our staff.

What has struck me most of all is the need to listen to residents and make positive use of the information you give us.

I want us to make sure that we are listening and acting on what you tell us. My goal is that we get to a position where our homes and services have improved because of the feedback you've given us.

With this goal in mind we have started a conversation about our standards and services and you will see lots more about this over the coming months. Please do get involved if you can.

Our annual report to you describes how we are doing. Residents have told us that the report is meaningless unless we are honest with you. You will notice that this year while our overall results remain positive, in some cases we need to do better, so we have been honest about why our performance is what it is and how we will improve it.

I thank all our residents who have been involved in shaping and scrutinising our services and it's been a pleasure to meet some of you this year. You have made a huge difference and the HQN 'Residents' Challenge' award, which William mentions, is recognition of this.

As William says, our Chester and District Committee and National Resident Scrutiny Panel continues to lead our approach to resident engagement. They provide real challenge to our senior staff in the

delivery of our service standards. In addition to our sub-committees in Chester, it is great to see there are more than 500 residents now involved in our 'communities of interest'.

Carrying on the theme of resident involvement, we have signed up to be an early adopter of the National Housing Federation's (NHF) 'Together with Tenants' plan, which aims to re-balance the relationship between tenants and landlords. This means we will be one of the first organisations to put the plan into action and will share our experiences of it with residents and other housing associations.

Please do read this report and let us know what you think of it, by emailing contactus@sanctuary-housing.co.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Craig Moule'.

Regulation and our Local Offers

Sanctuary Housing Association is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The RSH makes sure that we are doing what we say we will, against two sets of standards: economic and consumer (read more about them below). Our Local Offers, mentioned throughout this report, demonstrate our commitment to meet these standards.

Economic standards

- Governance – how we manage risk, plan for the future, comply with laws and deliver the right services.
- Financial viability – how we are managing our money short and long term.
- Value for money – if we offer good value for money.

The RSH rates all organisations like us. We are rated 'G1' and 'V1' for governance and financial viability. These are the highest ratings.

Did you know?

As well as the Chester and District Committee (CDC) there is a National Homeowners Forum to make sure that all shared owners and leaseholders can also influence our services. If you would like to find out more about the Homeowners Forum email scrutiny@sanctuary-housing.co.uk

Consumer standards

- Tenant involvement and empowerment - how well our residents are involved in our services and how we respond to their diverse needs.
- Home – the quality of your home and whether it is safe and well-maintained.
- Tenancy – how homes are allocated, including what type of tenancy.
- Neighbourhood and community – how we manage our neighbourhoods and respond to antisocial behaviour.

The regulations cover services to the tenants who rent their home from us, as well as shared owners.

Our Local Offers 2017-2020

Our Local Offers describe the service you can expect from us.

Did you know? We worked with over 1,800 housing, supported living and retirement living residents across the country to develop these offers and they will be reviewed again in 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 time 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 to shape and scrutinise the services we provide.

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2017/2018	2018/2019
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within 24 hours	90%	93%
Percentage of residents who said we gave a date of the next repair if we couldn't complete it first time	88%	86%
Homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard	100%	100%
Percentage of residents who said they were satisfied with the repair service overall	94%	93%

We completed almost 400,000 repairs nationally in the last year. More than nine out of ten of our residents were satisfied with the quality of service. Whilst this has reduced slightly, we remain in the top quartile of similar sized landlords. We completed more than 92 per cent of all repairs within the target time, and our aim is for this to be at least 95 per cent in the year

ahead through improved planning of jobs and increasing further the use of our internal maintenance service instead of external contractors. In the last quarter of 2018/2019, about 85 per cent of all repairs were completed by our internal service, which has a proven track record of providing better resident satisfaction at a lower cost. In the last year, we spent almost £27 million

on planned maintenance improving our homes. Work is underway on more than 6,000 new homes across the country. We understand we can improve. We have started a conversation with residents about the standards of our homes. As we have said, we will be reviewing our service standards in the next year which will shape our longer-term investment plans.

We have invested in, recruited and trained an in-house fire safety team, made up of 57 staff. This is because we consider resident safety to be our number one priority. We've committed £11m to fire safety which includes the installation of sprinklers in all our 14 highest buildings, along with some other buildings that we consider to be higher risk. Following resident feedback, our Group Board has approved substantial funding for a new planned lift replacement programme over the next five years. The programme will see more than £8 million additional ring-fenced funding to replace 248 lifts in social housing across England, with a further 57 across our supported living schemes. Our website now has a communal repairs page where you can check the status of an outstanding repair by entering your full postcode: www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk/communal-repair-updates. If your search returns no results, you can contact us in the usual way to check on progress or to report a non-urgent repair by using the online contact form.

Improving homes and neighbourhoods

The Improving Homes and Neighbourhoods Sub Committee work with local teams to monitor the progress of the planned reinvestment works as well as prioritising and agreeing the delivery of improvement projects that make a difference to the communities in which we work. This year, these included replacement fencing to improve the appearance and

security of some of our homes, installation of additional lighting and resurfacing of an alley on one of our estates to discourage antisocial behaviour and improve access for all local people, and the installation of new flooring in ten blocks of flats in Kingsway to give the communal areas a more modern, clean and welcoming appearance.

The sub committee have also been involved in developing the Frequently Asked Questions documents, which will be used to inform and update residents on the sprinkler installations in our nine high rise blocks in Chester, and were kept updated on the progress of the plans to deliver this project.

Did you know?

The Decent Homes Standard is set by the Government. To meet the Decent Homes Standard, a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities.

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2017/2018	2018/2019
Percentage of residents who found it easy to contact us	92%	86%
Percentage of residents who said we provide staff who are knowledgeable and treat you as a valued customer	96%	93%
Percentage of residents who said if we cannot resolve your query immediately, we will explain the process and the timescale for resolution to you	89%	91%
Percentage of residents who said we keep you informed regularly of how we are dealing with your query or complaint	73%	67%
Number of complaints received	2,572	2,137
Number of complaints per 1,000 properties	38	32
Percentage of complaints upheld	71%	63%

We are committed to making it easy to contact us. We again answered more than one million calls nationally in the last 12 months. On average, each call takes between one and two minutes to answer. We are a member of the Customer Service Excellence Group – benchmarking for customer service teams in housing. For customer satisfaction, we are second best in that group, and one of only three landlords that offer a 24 hours a day, seven days a week service.

In the last two years, more than 100 residents have independently reviewed how our staff deal with these calls, particularly looking at when repairs are reported. They have been impressed with the call handling but made recommendations about when residents are 'put on hold', making sure a job reference for the repair is always offered, and residents always know what happens next. NRSP and CDC continues to work with the Head of Customer Services to ensure these changes are made.

However, we recognise that we sometimes get things wrong. When this happens, we need to put it right, so it's important that you tell us if you feel one of our services has let you down. Last year we received 2,137 complaints, equivalent to 32 per thousand properties. Of these, 63 per cent were upheld.

When a complaint is reported to us, we aim to contact you within two working days to acknowledge your complaint and discuss your concerns if necessary. We will then respond within a maximum of 10 working days to let you know how we intend to put things right.



Local Offers - Customer Service



1,439 (80%) of complaints were successfully resolved at Front Line Resolution



606 complaints were resolved at the second Investigation stage



Over 90% of complaints were responded to within target at each stage



103 resident and peer reviews were completed



Over 150 staff received bespoke training on handling complaints



42 policies and procedures were reviewed



87 enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman Service relating to complaints

Only 9 cases of maladministration

Did you know?

Front Line Resolution is the first stage of our complaints process and aims to make sure that we put things right as soon as possible.

For example, if a complaint is about a missed repair appointment, at Front Line Resolution we would apologise for the mistake, rebook the appointment at a convenient time, and make sure the repair gets done.

During the year we have really focussed on making sure that residents know to tell us if they are unhappy with our services, and to make sure that our complaints process is readily available. As part of this, we worked with the Complaints Sub Committee in Chester to redesign our complaints leaflet and the online complaints form. We wanted to make sure that we made it as easy as possible for residents to make a complaint, and be aware of what we will do at each stage of our process for you.

We have also reflected on how we learn from complaints to make sure that where possible, we fix problems efficiently to resolve complaints and also make improvements to our overall service. To support this,

we have started asking residents who had their complaint upheld to share with us how they think the reason for the complaint could have been prevented and how they think we could improve our services. We regularly review this feedback, and where possible we will follow residents' suggestions about how our service could be better.

We are always looking for opportunities to grow and improve our services to residents. Part of this involves reviewing complaints and wider customer feedback and changing how we work to make sure that we deliver the best service that we can. During this year, we have made several changes to our services.

Communication about Communal Repairs

There are times that we need to do repairs to the communal areas across our schemes and we noticed that when works were needed, residents often called us to tell us about problems that had already been reported by their neighbours. This meant that we received a lot of calls about one issue and this in turn meant that other

residents found it harder to get through to our Customer Service Centre. Some residents told us that they would find it helpful to check if a repair had already been reported before they called us about the problem so we created an online communal repairs checker which you can access on our website.

Providing helpful information about temporary heaters

We recognise how important heating is to all of our residents and our gas team work very hard to fix problems as quickly as possible so that we keep this up and running. However, there may be times that parts are needed or we need to arrange for a specialist technician to inspect the problem. If this is the case, we provide temporary heaters which can be used until the heating is fully restored.

We noticed that there were times that residents were concerned about using the heaters; either because they did not know how they worked or because they were worried about the cost of using them. In response, we are working with residents to create a new leaflet that will be given to residents whenever temporary heating is provided.

How we performed

Statistics	2017/2018	2018/2019
Percentage of residents who said we make it clear what to do if they experience antisocial behaviour	84%	78%
Percentage of residents who said they received a response within one working day of reporting a serious incident of antisocial behaviour	80%	77%
Percentage of residents satisfied their neighbourhood is well maintained	86%	85%

You will notice that this year's results listed in the table above are down on the previous year. We are working with the NRSP to find out what we can do from your perspective to improve. The nature of antisocial behaviour cases can make it difficult for those involved to be completely satisfied with the outcome. We try and make it clear what to do if you experience

antisocial behaviour and have information available on our website and social media, in our newsletters, and our Housing Officers have gained formal qualifications in addressing antisocial behaviour.

In many cases we work with partners such as the Local Authority and police where we cannot respond to issues alone. Across the country our staff regularly carry out estate

inspections with residents looking at the condition of local estates and suggesting improvements where necessary, with each estate getting a red, amber or green rating. We ensured that any follow-up actions were completed, such as quickly removing fly-tipped rubbish and ensuring communal gardens are well kept.

Did you know? Our resident inspectors carried out 99 inspections in Chester last year

Working together for a better neighbourhood

Our dedicated team of trained and experienced resident inspectors were out again across Chester this year. They inspected a sample of work completed by contractors alongside Sanctuary staff, ensuring that residents were satisfied with the way in which the work was carried out. Reporting their findings to the Repairs Sub Committee, the inspectors also review our caretaking and cleaning service within communal areas, as well as the ground maintenance carried out in our neighbourhoods.

Some of the resident inspectors also joined our Estate Walkabouts

which provide a great opportunity for residents to get to know their Housing Officer and each other, as well as identify any areas that require action, such as communal repairs, and help keep our neighbourhoods a place people are proud to live. During their monthly meetings, the inspectors, monitored actions from the 62 walkabouts that took place last year to ensure progress is made and residents are kept up to date and informed.

During 2018/2019 Sanctuary's Chester residents spent more than 1,000 hours working with us to improve and shape the

services we deliver locally. That's equivalent to 145 working days or just over 29 working weeks. This doesn't include the time local residents have spent delivering activities to tackle social isolation and loneliness in our communities. Examples of events are Purple Day and other sociable, fun activities run by Gosh Enterprises.



How we performed

Statistics	2017/2018	2018/2019
Number of residents registered with HomeSwapper	6,187	6,089
Number of successful swaps on HomeSwapper	519	474

In the last year, there were again about 4,600 new tenancies started in our homes nationally. When our properties become available, we understand the importance of making sure they are empty for as short a time as possible.

With the creation of one team to manage the letting of our homes, performance improved significantly through making sure there was an even more consistent approach across the country and new residents were identified and offered the available homes quickly, supported by our maintenance team making sure homes meet our letting standard before a new resident moved in.

We reduced the time from a home becoming available and a new tenancy starting by five days this year. Typically, throughout the year, there were only 275

homes available to let, which is about 0.4% per cent of our total stock. This is consistently the lowest it has ever been.

Our homes in Chester are let through a choice based lettings scheme called West Cheshire Homes (www.westcheshirehomes.co.uk). We also have a list of properties on our website in the 'available properties' section which are immediately available to rent from us.

We offer the HomeSwapper service if you are thinking of moving. This service enables you to swap your property (a 'mutual exchange') with other residents registered with the service anywhere in the country, from Sanctuary or other landlords. There are about half a million residents in total currently registered. This is a free service which our residents can register with to find out what properties are currently available to swap.

Help with moving home

Residents concerned about the impact of welfare reform work alongside the Chester Neighbourhood team, with support of Chester West and Cheshire Council, to help people to move home.

The regular Thursday morning drop-in sessions have been run by volunteer Sanctuary residents for the past four years and offer an innovative and unique service. Anyone, irrespective of tenure or landlord, can visit the surgeries and be supported by the volunteers to register online with West Cheshire Homes for a place on the housing register.

The volunteers also help residents to search for and bid on properties and register with HomeSwapper, the national online service for people wishing to swap their social housing home.

As well as providing a service to an average of 200 visitors a year from right across the city, the volunteers benefit from increased confidence and refreshed customer service skills which can help getting into work. Training covers equality and diversity, data protection and customer service as well as the more technical aspects of the online application and bidding system.



Barbara Owen (left), Group Housing Committee and Chester and District Committee Member, with other volunteers at a Move-it surgery

How we performed

Local Offers Indicators	2017/2018	2018/2019
Percentage of residents who said their rent provides value for money	89%	90%
Standard and Poor's credit rating	A+	A+

Value for Money is about making the best use of every pound to deliver social housing, improve existing homes and better serve our customers.

The delivery of Value for Money is essential to our success in building affordable homes and sustainable communities where people choose to live. It builds on our values of ambition, diversity,

integrity, quality and sustainability and delivers the resources required to achieve the Group's mission. Our development team continued to drive forward with an active development programme of 6,002 units as part of our aspiration to deliver 15,000 new homes nationally, with about 1,700 plots to start on-site in the next year.

Our Value for Money principles are:



Economy

Achieving the best value from our inputs, that is, when items were purchased did we get them for the best possible value?



Efficiency

Maximising the outputs for a given level of inputs, that is, how good are we at creating the output?



Effectiveness

Ensuring the outputs deliver the desired outcome, that is, was what we delivered at the correct standard and did it achieve the desired outcome?



Equity

Ensuring the distribution of resources is equitable, that is, are our services equally available to, and did they reach, all the people that they are intended for?

We remain financially strong. Our compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing requirements is once again confirmed by keeping the highest G1 and V1 ratings for governance and financial viability. Our credit ratings are also once again rated as A2 with Moody's and A+ with Standard and Poor's. As a not-for-profit organisation, we reinvest any surplus we make back into our housing and services.

It is good to see that residents' satisfaction with the value for money we offer has continued to improve.

The average cost to carry out each responsive repair has increased from £115 to £119 this year, but repairs are subject to inflationary pressures around both the cost of wages and materials. We continue to reduce our reliance on external contractors by increasing use of our internal maintenance teams, with nearly nine out of ten jobs now carried out by these teams, at a much lower cost and better quality than using contractors.

Getting involved with us

There are many examples throughout this report showing the significant real difference residents have made in getting involved with improving our services for you. We thank every resident who has given up time and engaged with us.

As we develop our longer-term investment plans and review our Local Offers, the next year will be vital in listening to you. We will be starting a 'Conversation with Sanctuary' about what you think we do well and what we need to do better. We want to hear from as many residents as we can and will be using a whole host of different ways to do this. You will hear a lot more about this in the coming months.

Our approach to resident engagement has been recognised with the Housing Quality Network's 'Resident Challenge' award.

We mentioned our communities of interest earlier. These are groups of residents who have experience of a service and want to work with us to improve it. Currently more than 500 residents are involved, and the number is growing all the time. Taking part in a community of interest is a great way of doing practical scrutiny work with services. At the moment, there are communities of interest that cover:

- Estate inspections - Reviewing of the condition of housing estates with staff and recommending any improvements. More than 400 were completed last year.
- Resident inspectors/service reviews – In the last 12 months this has included reviewing how calls are handled by the repairs call centre. There were more than 50 residents involved in this work, and the feedback was that the level of customer service was very good. There were specific improvements identified which the National Head of Customer Service is working on. This review will be repeated in late 2019 to see how the improvements have influenced performance.



Local Offers - Get Involved

- Family and Friends tests - Visits to about 20 Retirement Living and Supported Living services to consider whether the member of the group visiting would want a family member or friend to live there, if they were in need of a similar service. Any improvements identified during these visits were completed promptly, sometimes within 24 hours. There are 20 more visits planned for the year ahead.
- Procurement - Work with the Group's Procurement team on the tenders for waste contractors and replacement kitchens. Your feedback was invaluable to identify the priorities the tenders need to cover for price, quality and the responsiveness.
- Homeownership – a specific group of Homeowners/ Shared owners whose work over the last year has included supporting the Head of Homeownership reviewing how service charge information is presented.
- Complaints reviews – most recently, this group has focussed on identifying the learning from complaints to do with the repairs and gas service in our London and South East region.

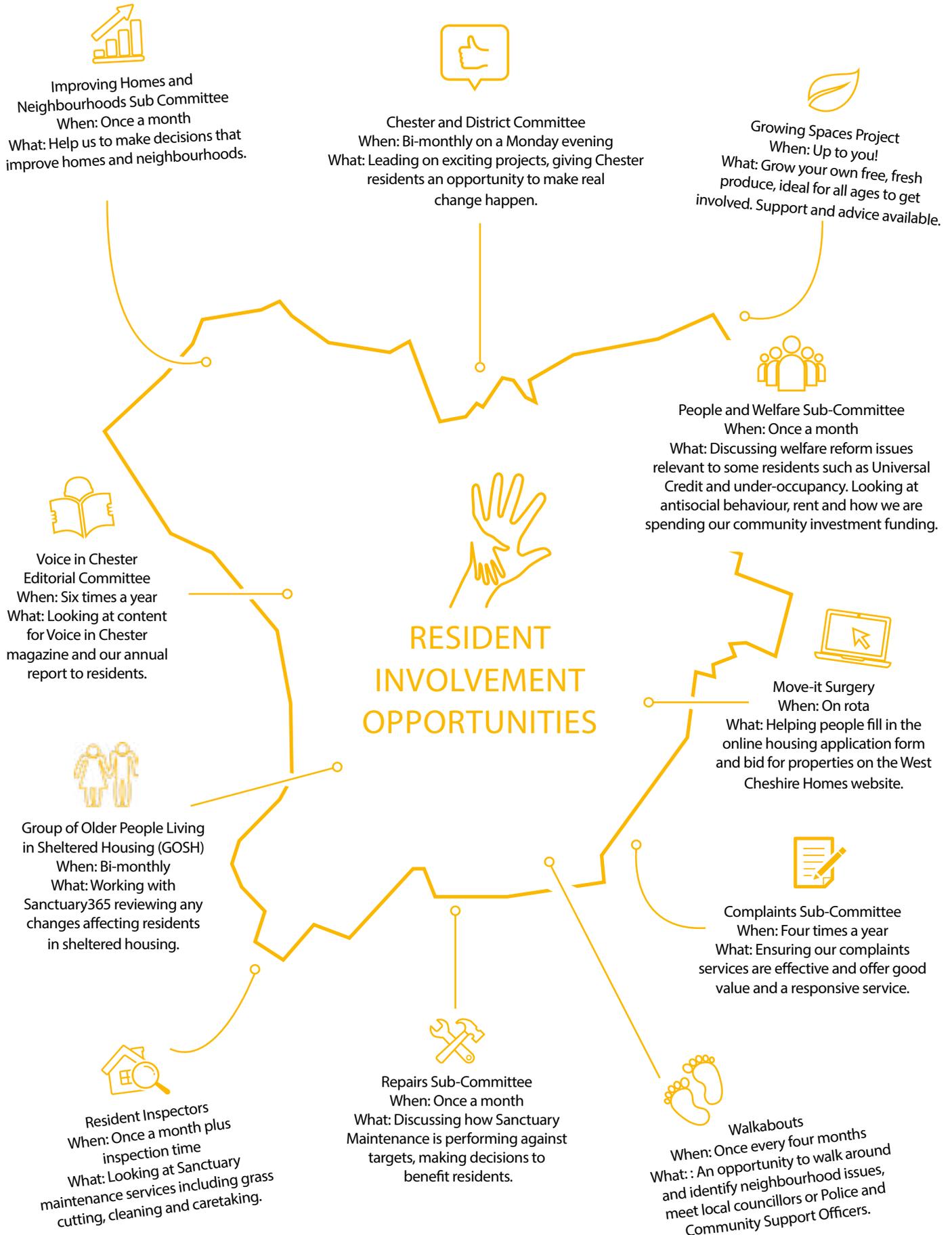
Did you know?

We are setting up a new community of interest for fire safety which will work on how information that is shared with residents is presented. This will be rolled out over the next 18 months.

If you would like to get involved in any of this work, or have ideas about how we should engage, please email us at scrutiny@sanctuary-housing.co.uk or call us on 0800 131 3348 (0300 123 3511 from a mobile).

In addition, if you would like to get involved locally, take a look at the opportunities on page 15.





For more information about getting involved, contact consult.chester@sanctuary-housing.co.uk or call 0800 131 3348 (landline) or 0300 123 3511 (mobile).

