



# Environmental, Social and Governance Report 2024

Publication  
September 2024,  
disclosures using  
version 2.0 of *The  
Sustainability  
Reporting Standard  
for Social Housing*





# Introduction

In the SLH Business Strategy 2020-25, the Board made a commitment to demonstrate performance via Environmental, Sustainability and Governance (ESG) reporting.

In 2023 SLH adopted and reported against 'The Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing' (SRS) and this is our 2<sup>nd</sup> report against the updated version 2 of the SRS.

We feel that it is integral to tell our story, and that of the social housing sector, through a consistent and comparable reporting framework

## Growing, Greening & Transforming (GGT)

Our business strategy objectives around *Growing*, *Greening* and *Transforming* is so closely aligned with the Standard that they go hand in glove, and where *GGT* meets *ESG*.

The underlying reporting data is a combination of data reported to the SLH Board, data reported to the Regulator of Social Housing and data which formed part of an independent assessment of our environmental performance by SHIFT Environment (Sustainable Homes for Tomorrow Index - SHIFT).



# About South Lakes Housing

SLH exists to improve the provision and quality of affordable homes in the South Cumbria and North Lancashire area and the service which customers receive.

We are pleased that the regulator continues to recognise the effective governance of South Lakes Housing retaining our G1 rating. Our G1 governance rating and the viability rating of V2 reflects that we are successfully managing increased risk to deliver our ambitious plans.

SLH provides good quality homes in one of the most beautiful and highly sought after areas in the country.

The organisation's SLICE values are;

- **Sustainability** - Reducing our impact on the environment and conduct our business in a socially responsible and ethical manner.
- **Learning** - Learn from our mistakes and successes. Seek and provide honest feedback. Open to personal change and continuous improvement.
- **Inclusivity** - Committed to creating an inclusive culture where we treat our customers, colleagues and stakeholders with respect, honesty, empathy and fairness.
- **Challenge** - Challenge what we do, seek out and test new approaches and ideas, collaborate with others and share our learning. Listen to our customers' needs and challenges.
- **Excellence** - What we do, we strive to do well, to deliver a great customer experience/outcome.





# SLH Business Strategy

The need for quality affordable homes has never been greater, with many working families unable to afford market homes. A rapidly ageing population, fuel poverty and flood prone areas provide the backdrop to our priorities for action.

Our purpose **Quality Homes, a platform for life** has been central to our planning for the future. We are ambitious about the lasting impact we will have on improving customer experience, their homes, neighbourhoods, energy efficiency, affordability and a new supply of quality homes. Like many social, community-based housing associations we are grappling with the challenges of meeting growing housing need,

De-carbonising an ageing housing stock and mitigating against the real risk of future flooding. This, in addition to the core expectations of keeping our homes safe and maintained to a good quality.

In setting the budgets for 2024-25 and revising the Long-Term Financial Plan the Board confirmed its commitment to the current business strategy these of **Growing, Greening** and **Transforming**.

With uncertainties around rent setting post 2025-26 constraining longer term thinking then the Board is considering extending the current strategy to 2026.

**Business Strategy 2020-2025**  
(Revised November 2022)

<b>Growing</b>	»»»	400 homes completed/on site 80% customer satisfaction	
<b>Greening</b>	»»»	All homes EPC C by 2025 High 'eco standard' new build	
<b>Transforming</b>	»»»	75% customers using 'My Account' Culture transformation – Lets Make it Happen	

The need for quality affordable homes has never been greater, with many working families unable to afford market homes.



# Our Behaviours

By living these behaviours every day, our colleagues, managers and senior managers are living our shared SLICE values and helping to deliver our vision of **‘Quality Homes, a platform for life’**.

- **Genuinely care** - Cares about delivering high quality services for our customers, colleagues and stakeholders.
- **Take responsibility** - Takes ownership for delivering high-quality outcomes.
- **Have respect** - Respects diversity; listens to and has empathy for colleagues and customers.
- **Be adaptable** - Responds flexibly to get things done.
- **Work together** - Works collaboratively across teams and services to deliver.
- **Be curious** - Curious about new approaches and ways of working.
- **Make it happen** - Prioritises work, uses initiative and is solutions focused.
- **Always improving** - Continually learning and always looking for ways to improve.



## Let's Make it Happen

Underpinning everything we do at South Lakes Housing is a culture change programme **‘Let's Make it Happen’**. The programme has provided all colleagues a set of tools to manage anything that comes their way at work and to communicate with customers and each other in a positive, solution-focused way. They will help to build confidence that we are all making a difference to customers every day.

The Learning Journey is based on a programme from MGI Learning known as the *Mindset, Language & Actions* Toolkit.



**The Optimal Mindset**  
Think & feel

1. Ownership & Responsibility
2. Optimistic
3. All feedback is invaluable
4. I make the difference

**The Red / Black Continuum**

'being in the Red'  
a negative place to be

'being in the Black'  
a positive place to be



# Sustainability Strategy

One of the Business Strategy challenges that we are aiming to achieve is for all our homes to be Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating Band C or above by 2025, which is in advance of the government target of 2030 (for 'fuel poor' homes).

To deliver our vision we are prioritising five key action areas that support our objectives and create the most impact in terms of maximising sustainability outcomes.

We will set interim targets and measure progress annually through the course of the strategy and at key strategic dates in 2025, 2030 and 2040 on our journey to Net Carbon Zero.

1. Engagement and Culture Change
2. Carbon Reduction & Energy Efficiency
3. Neighbourhoods and Biodiversity
4. Sustainable Resources
5. Sustainable Offices & Operations

## 2023/24 Progress update

- Energy Performance investments (£3.5M via grants) and retrofit assessments
- Carbon sequestration being considered in active asset management decisions
- Environmental performance assessed externally by SHIFT, enabling reporting of carbon emissions data
- Flood Code of Practice adopted, and surveyors trained. £60k per annum financial provision for flood resilience and resistance measures
- Improvement work specifications include dual-flush WCs and water saving showerheads
- LED lighting installed in Bridge Mills office
- SMART technology pilot
- Heat metering technology installed at two sheltered schemes
- EV charging points in new development schemes

**“The cavity wall insulation has made a big impact with keeping my home warmer.”**

Resident in Kendal

**“I only need to top up my payment card once a week now, instead of twice.”**

Resident in Ambleside

**“My home was much easier to get warm and keep warm this winter - I didn't have to have my central heating up as high to achieve a suitable temperature - also even during the winter months the solar panels helped reduce my outgoings.”**

Resident in Sedbergh



# Our Credentials

## PlaceShapers

We are a PlaceShaper, part of a national network of more than 100 place-based housing organisations. We are a collective of collaborators, change-makers and policy-shapers. We are a voice for our members and a voice for our communities because many voices can make a bigger difference than one. Together, we go beyond housing.

## Homes for Cathy

We are also members of the 'Homes for Cathy' Group which is a national alliance of housing associations across the UK helping to raise awareness of the needs of homeless people.

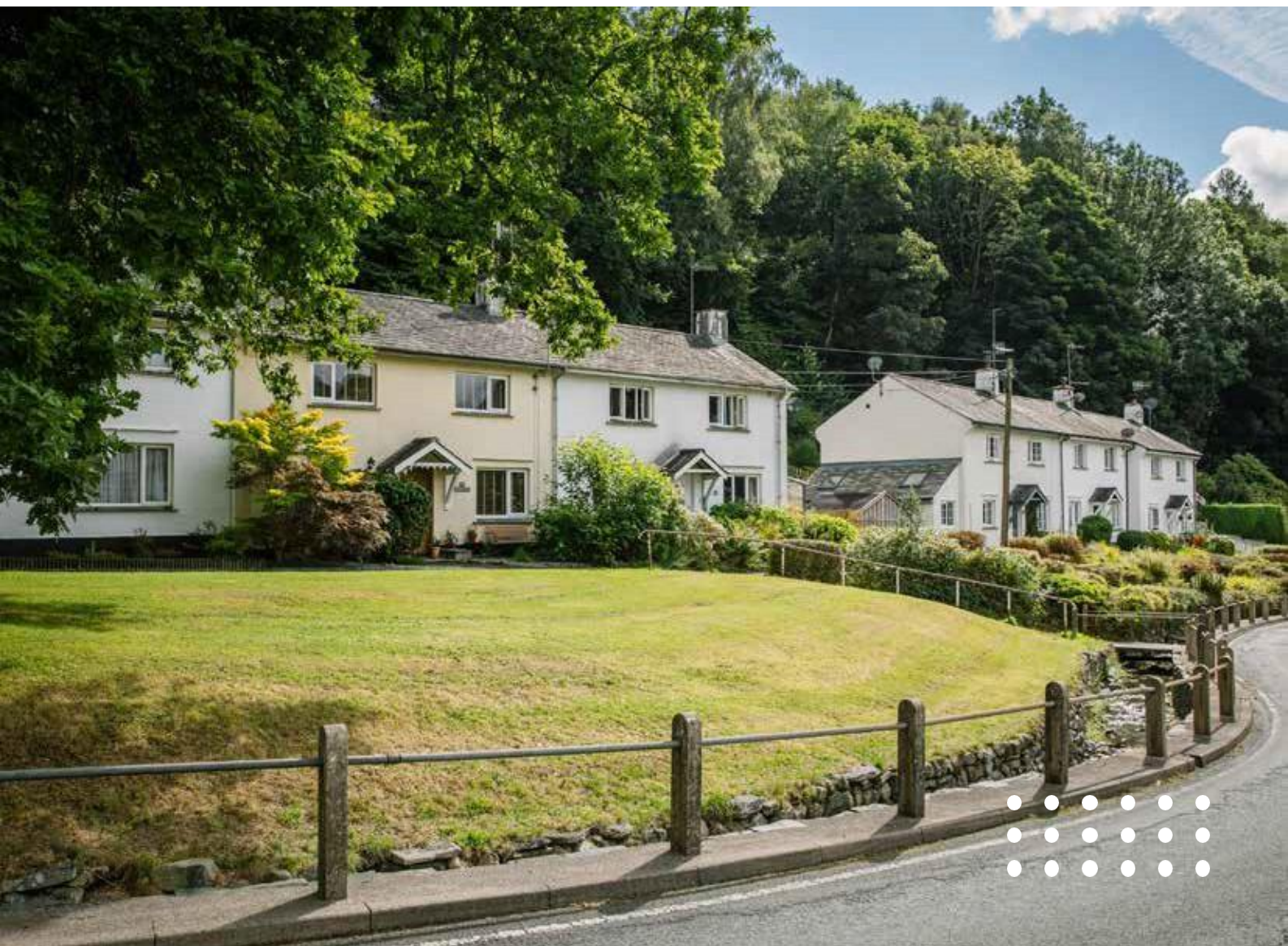


## Better Health at Work Award

Bronze Award

## Better Health at Work

We use this framework to improve health issues within the workplace, being awarded the 'bronze' category in 2023-24.





# 2023-24 in Numbers

## 3,383 homes

- 2,621 Social rented general needs homes
- 420 Social rented homes for older people
- 200 Affordable rented homes
- 15 Intermediate rented homes
- 127 Shared ownership homes (low-cost home ownership)

We also provide services to 276 Leaseholders as part of our freehold duties.

## £6.3M

Invested in improving customers' homes through major repairs.

## £1.19M

Spent on building safety.

## 95

New homes delivered, including 10 eco homes in Burton-in-Kendal.

## £4M

Spent on improving energy efficiency in homes, 367 homes in year 1 of the two-year 'warmer, greener' homes initiative.

## G1/V2

RSH regulatory gradings - G1 Governance and V2 Financial Viability - both compliant grades.

## 78.6%

Overall customer satisfaction with SLH as their landlord, with satisfaction of repairs at **79.5%** and satisfaction that homes are safe at **84.4%**.

## 128

Full Time Equivalent staff.

## 10

Board Members. We appointed a new Board Member and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee, and 3 independent members. There is also a new Resident Forum, with a direct link to the Board to ensure customer voice is heard.

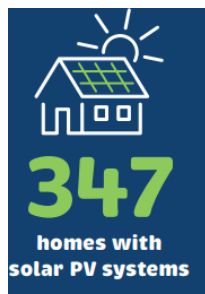


photo @Steven Barber



# UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Making a positive contribution to the communities in which we operate is embedded in our Purpose: **‘Quality Homes, a Platform for Life’**, our Values and Behaviours. It is also well embedded within our Business Strategy: Growing, Greening & Transforming 2020-2025 and *‘Let’s Make it Happen’* culture change programme.

This is further evidenced through our sustainability, social value and resident engagement work including welfare assistance, financial inclusion support and community activities. This work, coupled with building and maintaining good quality homes across tenures, built to modern specifications that support sustainability and the journey to net zero, aligns to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



# The Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing (SRS)

The remaining of this report outlines progress being made to comply with the SRS. The SRS is divided into 12 ESG themes, which have been aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

There are 46 criteria in total, with an 'enhanced reporting option' which providers are encouraged to complete.

ESG Area	Theme #	Theme Name	Description	UN SDG Goal	
Environmental	T1	Climate Change	Prevents & mitigates the risk of climate change	13	Climate Action
	T2	Ecology	Promotes ecological sustainability	15	Life on Land
	T3	Resource Management	Sustainable management of natural resources	12	Responsible Consumption & Reduction
Social	T4	Affordability and Security	Provides affordable and secure housing	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
				10	Reduce Inequality
	T5	Building Safety and Quality	Resident safety and building quality are well managed	11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
	T6	Resident Voice	Listens to residents' voice	11	
	T7	Resident Support	Supports residents, and the local community	11	
	T8	Placemaking	Supports residents and the wider local community through placeshaping	11	
	Governance	T9	Structure and Governance	Legal structure of the organisation and its approach to Governance	16
T10		Board and Trustees	High quality board of trustees		
T11		Staff Wellbeing	Supports employees	8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
T12		Supply Chain Management	Procures responsibly	12	Responsible Consumption and Production



# Statement of SLH compliance against The Social Housing Reporting Standard

SLH has self-assessed against version 2.0 of the SRS. The organisation is fully compliant with 39 (85%) of the criteria. Adopters of the SRS are required to report using a ‘comply or explain’ approach, describing the steps being taken, and expected date, that they will be able to do so.

For some of these areas we recognise that an organisation of our size and capacity will require strategic choices to be made around what areas we will target investment and where we can invest in controls assurance and data collection systems. Nevertheless, this will help drive intent and our social and environmental purpose.

ESG Area	Criteria	Action Plan	Lead Director	Timescale
<b>Environmental</b> - 11 criteria	<i>SLH certifies compliance with all criteria except for the following areas, which are rated as ‘partially compliant’:</i>			
	C3	A fully costed plan for net-zero is dependent upon significant public subsidy. SLH will prepare bids for funding.	Director of Homes	Dependent on Government
	C8	Strategy for managing and reducing use of pollutants will be considered as part of the review of the Sustainability Strategy	Director of Homes	March 2026
	C9	Measuring performance on materials sourced from responsible sources	Director of Homes	March 2026
	C10	Strategy for waste management and measuring % of materials that are recycled/diverted to landfill	Director of Homes	March 2026
	C11	Strategy for water management and measuring performance	Director of Homes	March 2026
<b>Social</b> - 13 criteria	<i>SLH certifies compliance with all criteria</i>			
<b>Governance</b> - 22 criteria	<i>SLH certifies compliance with all criteria except for the following areas which are rated ‘partially compliant’:</i>			
	C45	We will introduce a Social Value Register to record social value creation within the supply chain and via new procurement activity	Director of Business Improvement	March 2025
	C46	We will strengthen our sustainability to procuring goods and services by putting in places measures to monitor our supply chain	Director of Business Improvement	March 2025



# Environmental







## Theme 1: Climate Change

### Criteria 1.

Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year).

### SLH Evidence

EPC Rating	2023-24	2022-23
A	0.68%	0.47%
B	13.18%	6.02%
C	56.57%	49.12%
D	25.46%	39.13%
E	1.01%	1.40%
F	0.34%	0.37%
G	0.06%	0.12%
No data	1.75%	2.36%
Not applicable	0.95%	0.09%

N.B. Rented homes only – 70.4% EPC C or above.

4 homes that were rated C are part of the Passivhaus scheme. We recognise that the EPC assessment tool is not compatible with Passivhaus, which is a higher standard. We anticipate that this will improve once the revised EPC / SAP assessment criteria comes into play. Further information about this has been published by the Passivhaus Trust Guidance ([passivhaustrust.org.uk](https://passivhaustrust.org.uk))

N/A - 31 homes awaiting demolition for a new development scheme

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Average SAP rating of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year)

### SLH Evidence

The average SAP rating is 71.86, compared to 68.47 in 2022-23.

# Theme 1: Climate Change

**Enhanced Reporting Option**

Energy use intensity [Kwh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr] of existing homes (Kwh/m).

**SLH Evidence**

SLH does not have data collection systems for this measure and currently has no plans to do so.

**Criteria 2.**

Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes (those completed in the last financial year).

**SLH Evidence**

EPC Rating	2023-24	2022-23
A	7%	23.91%
B	93%	67.39%
C	0%	8.70%

**Enhanced Reporting Option**

Average SAP rating of new homes (those completed in the last financial year).

**SLH Evidence**

The average SAP rating is 85.02. The data was not collected previously.

**Enhanced Reporting Option**

Energy use intensity [Kwh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr] of new homes (Kwh/m).

**SLH Evidence**

SLH does not have data collection systems for this measure and currently has no plans to do so.





### Criteria 3.

Does the housing provider have a Net Zero target and strategy?

If so, what is it and when does the housing provider intend to be Net Zero by?

### SLH Evidence

Yes – commitment and ambition is there, with a fully costed plan to deliver energy efficiency works. Later phases are not fully costed and therefore reliant on public grants / subsidy.

Social housing accounts for a significant amount of the UK’s housing emissions and SLH owns over 3,300 homes, including 12 sheltered housing schemes with communal facilities, community centres and a fleet of vans and utilises a main office and two depots. We recognise that to be truly sustainable we need to think about the social, economic and environmental impact we create. One of the Business Strategy challenges that we are aiming to achieve is for all our homes to be Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating Band C or above by 2025, which is in advance of the government target of 2030 (for ‘fuel poor’ homes).

To deliver our vision we are prioritising five key action areas that support our objectives and create the most impact in terms of maximising sustainability outcomes. We will set interim targets and measure progress annually through the course of the strategy and at key strategic dates in 2025, 2030 and 2040 on our journey to Net Carbon Zero. The key focus areas within this strategy include improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing our carbon footprint through: Engagement and Culture Change, Carbon Reduction & Energy Efficiency, Neighbourhood and Biodiversity, Sustainable Resources & Sustainable Offices & Operations.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Is the housing provider's net zero commitment in line with the Science Based Target (SBT) initiative? [Yes/No]

Does the housing provider have a costed transition plan? [Yes/No]

### SLH Evidence

No. This is being evaluated as part of the plan to understand the steps the Association should take and the actions that partners, energy providers and the Government need to take towards longer term Net Zero targets.

No – the initial phase of our Sustainability Strategy and strategic objective around ‘Greening’ focus on our homes and assets (scope 1 emissions) where we can make maximum impact. The ‘near term’ target of EPC C by 2025 (except for a few hard-to-treat homes) is a demonstration of our commitment, 5 years ahead of the national target.



### Criteria 4.

What retrofit activities has the housing provider undertaken in the last 12 months in relation to its housing stock? How do these activities align with, and contribute towards, performance against the housing provider's Net Zero strategy and target?

### SLH Evidence

Retrofit activities can be included if they align with the UK Governments overall Net Zero Strategy (see C3).

Where planned/cyclical works result in an improvement in energy efficiency (or equivalent), these can be included. See examples of delivery during 2023-24 on page 8.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Number of homes that have been retrofitted in the last financial year[# homes]

### SLH Evidence

367 Homes have been through a PAS2035 retrofit process and have had an increase in their SAP score.

Homes that have been retrofitted in the last financial year as a percentage of the total homes the housing providers is aiming to retrofit [%]

11.4%





### Criteria 5.

Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Green House Gas emissions

### SLH Evidence

Data has been validated and produced by an independent source (SHIFT) and data shows:

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (kg of carbon dioxide equivalent)	2023-24 Kg
Scope 1 – direct emissions produced by SLH for its operations inc the housing stock	426816
Scope 2 - indirect emissions resulting from purchased energy	57908
Scope 3 – indirect emissions linked to the SLH supply chain	12173293
Scope 1, 2 & 3: Total kg CO2 equivalent	12658017

### Criteria 5.

Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Green House Gas emissions **per home**

### SLH Evidence

Data has been validated and produced by an independent source (SHIFT) and data shows:

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Per Home (Kg of carbon dioxide equivalent)	2023-24 Kg
Scope 1 – direct emissions produced by SLH for its operations inc the housing stock	132.51
Scope 2 - indirect emissions resulting from purchased energy	17.98
Scope 3 – indirect emissions linked to the SLH supply chain	3779.35
Scope 1, 2 & 3: Total kg CO2 equivalent	3929.84

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Does the housing provider qualify for SECR reporting? [Yes/No]

SECR Intensity Ratio for Total Emissions (Scope 1-3)  
[kg CO2e/m<sup>2</sup>]

### SLH Evidence

The UK's Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) policy requires 'large' organisations to share energy use and carbon emissions information in their annual reports. SLH is not a large organisation under the SECR definition (i.e. a turnover of £36 million or more, a balance sheet of £18 million or more, or 250 employees or more), and is not able to report on this data other than that covered in the above criteria. A link to this report is included within the 2023-24 accounts.



## Theme 2: Ecology

### Criteria 6

How has the housing provider mapped and assessed the climate risks to its homes and supply chain, such as increased flood, drought and overheating risks?

How is the housing provider mitigating these risks?

### SLH Evidence

#### Flooding

60 homes flooded in December 2015, all received flood resilience works since the flooding (c£460k).

The Environment Agency's £76M Kendal Flood Management Scheme is due to complete by the end of 2024, reducing flood risk by around a third.

Flood risk data is mapped on key systems and Power BI, and an investment programme of £60k per annum to target flood resilience and resistance measures using the flood risk data.

Surveyors trained in the Flood Code of Practice.

#### Overheating

SLH has over 10,000 trees within its neighbourhoods which naturally creates shade.

Through our environmental improvement works we will continue with planting trees and other natural mitigation around our homes to support the reduction in overheating.

As part of our suite of advice leaflets, we will look at the benefits of developing an advice leaflet for the reduction in overheating in our homes.





### Criteria 7.

Does the housing provider have a strategy to enhance green space and promote biodiversity on or near homes?

If yes, please describe with reference to targets in this area.

If no, are you planning on producing one in the next 12 months?

### SLH Evidence

In the last year we have developed our guiding principles for outdoor spaces. That has created a guidance document for all developments and management of our outdoor spaces. This includes benefitting nature, wildlife and increasing our biodiversity for the benefit of our residents and other members of the community.

We do not have specific Ecology strategy, but in the Sustainability strategy we aim to increase Bio-Diversity by 10% year on year. We hope to commission a basic habitat survey to get a good understanding of the green spaces. Their health and potential for carbon sequestration. This will then also give us a plan for developing and increasing our green spaces.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of new homes (those completed in the last financial year).

What is the housing provider's Biodiversity Net Gain target for new and existing homes?

Does this exceed minimum requirements?

### SLH Evidence

All new homes will be complying with achieving a minimum of 10% increase in BNG.

10%.

No.

### Criteria 8.

Does the housing provider have a strategy to identify, manage and reduce pollutants that could cause material harm?

If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?

### SLH Evidence

No, but planning to develop a strategy. To have a clear plan for the management of potential pollutants, removal of potential pollutants from our stock and the management of any accidental incidents that cause pollution.



## Theme 3: Resource Management

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### Criteria 9.

Does the housing provider have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building and repairs works?

If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?

### SLH Evidence

Yes.

From our Sustainability Strategy, we plan to use responsibly sourced materials at all possible times. We manage this through the companies and procurement frameworks that we use for purchasing these goods.

In our SHIFT assessment we report on how effective we have been at using responsibly resourced materials in our repairs and works.

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### Enhanced Reporting Option

% of materials from responsible sources

### SLH Evidence

No data. See action plan on page 11.



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### Criteria 10.

Does the housing provider have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?

If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?

### SLH Evidence

Yes.

From our Sustainability Strategy we plan to be responsible with our waste and divert as much from landfill as possible. This is measured in our SHIFT assessment.

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### Enhanced Reporting Option

% of materials that are recycled and/or diverted from landfill.

### SLH Evidence

No data. See action plan on page 11

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### Criteria 11.

Does the housing provider have a strategy for water management?

If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?

### SLH Evidence

Yes.

From our Sustainability Strategy, we have ambition to reduce our water wastage.

In our SHIFT assessment we are measured on what water saving fitting we have in place in our properties.





# Social





## Theme 4: Affordability and Security

### Criteria 12.

For properties that are subject to the rent regulation regime, report against one or more Affordability Metric:

- 1) Rent compared to Median private rental sector (PRS) rent across the Local Authority
- 2) Rent compared to Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Report against both Affordability Metrics

### SLH Evidence

Ensuring that rents are affordable is one of our key objectives to support our Growing Business Strategy theme. The Board receives assurance on this annually prior to setting rents. On average, rents are set much lower than the private sector and the local housing allowance (used to determine the maximum amount of housing benefit private tenants can receive in an area).

Comparison	2023-24	2022-23
Private Rented Sector	69.83%	68.45%
Local Housing Allowance	74.66%	68.76%

### Criteria 13.

Share, and number, of existing homes (owned and managed) completed before the last financial year allocated to:

- General needs (social rent)
- Intermediate rent
- Affordable rent
- Supported Housing
- Housing for older people
- Low-cost home ownership
- Care homes
- Private Rented Sector
- Other

### SLH Evidence

Stock type	Number	Share 2023-24	Share 2022-23
General needs social rent	2621	77.48%	79.61%
Intermediate rent	15	0.44%	0.45%
Affordable rent	200	5.91%	4.88%
Supported Housing	0	0.00%	0.00%
Housing for older people	420	12.42%	12.73%
Low cost home ownership	127	3.75%	2.33%
Care homes	0	0.00%	0.00%
Private rented sector	0	0.00%	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3383</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



### Criteria 14.

Share, and number, of new homes (owned and managed) that were completed in the last financial year, allocated to:

- General needs (social rent)
- Intermediate rent
- Affordable rent
- Supported Housing
- Housing for older people
- Low-cost home ownership
- Care homes
- Private Rented Sector
- Other

### SLH Evidence

Stock type	Number	Share 2023-24	Share 2022-23
General needs social rent	6	6.32%	16.46%
Intermediate rent	0	0.00%	0.00%
Affordable rent	38	40.00%	41.77%
Supported Housing	0	0.00%	0.00%
Housing for older people	0	0.00%	0.00%
Low cost home ownership	51	53.68%	41.77%
Care homes	0	0.00%	0.00%
Private rented sector	0	0.00%	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Number homes disposed of in the last 12 months, by tenure type

### SLH Evidence

There were no disposals in 2023-24, except for 11 sales to tenants under the Right to Buy. This compares to 3 disposals and 17 Right to Buy sales in 2022-23.

Number of homes acquired in the last 12 months, by tenure type

95 homes were acquired in 2023-24, including 6 general needs, 38 affordable rent and 51 low-cost home ownership. This compares to 79 acquisitions in 2022-23 (13 general needs, 33 affordable rent and 33 low-cost home ownership).





#### Criteria 15.

How is the housing provider trying to reduce the effect of high energy costs on its residents?

#### SLH Evidence

Addressing fuel poverty is a commitment within the SLH Sustainability Strategy 2022-27 and as part of the Long-Term Financial Plan. The main action to tackle fuel poverty is via the 'Warmer, Greener Homes' programme incorporating investments to improve energy efficiency performance, including fully drawing down the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant in year 1 (£1.36M).

As part of the Warmer, Greener Homes programme we are delivering energy advice assistance to residents. This will include a home energy advice visit from Cold to Cosy Homes to support residents in understanding how they can reduce their energy consumption and keep homes warmer.

SLH does not currently monitor levels of fuel poverty amongst its customers, although an assessment of affordability, including fuel costs, is undertaken when assessing customers suitability to rent our homes. This data quickly becomes obsolete as customers incomes and fuel prices change over time. The fuel poverty charity, National Energy Action (NEA), accept that fuel poverty is difficult for landlords to measure, with emphasis being placed on maximising SAP ratings and facilitating clients to maximise income which is exactly the focus at SLH.

#### Criteria 16.

How does the housing provider provide security of tenure for residents?

#### SLH Evidence

Security of tenure is a key differentiator between social housing and the private sector and evidence suggests this security makes a huge difference to people's lives and ability to find work, access informal and formal local support networks and services and build family lives. Good practice in the housing sector is now to offer long term tenancies to general needs residents where possible.

The vast majority of tenancy agreements are on long term agreements e.g. assured tenancies etc with 88% (93.7% last year). There are 332 (10.2%) new tenants on starter tenancies (200, 6.2% last year). The majority will convert on their anniversary. There are just two tenancies (0.1%) that are on a fixed term tenancy agreement, both on 5-year agreements (same as last year).

74% (77% last year) of current tenants have been in their homes for over 3 years.



## Theme 5: Building Safety and Quality

### Criteria 17.

Describe the condition of the housing provider's portfolio, with reference to:

% of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.

% of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.

% of homes for which all required electrical safety checks have been carried out.

### SLH Evidence

Building Safety Metric	2023-24	2022-23
Gas safety checks	100%	99.86%
Fire risk assessments carried out	100%	100%
Electrical safety checks	100%	100%

NB. Electrical safety checks – 99.78% within 5 years (99.2% in 22-23). 100% within 10 years.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

% of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.

% of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out.

% of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.

### SLH Evidence

Building Safety Metric	2023-24	2022-23
Asbestos management checks	100%	100%
Legionella checks	100%	100%
Lift safety checks	100%	100%



### Criteria 18.

What % of homes meet the national housing quality standard?

Of those which fail, what is the housing provider doing to address these failings?

### SLH Evidence

100% of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, apart from a small minority of properties (28 homes) where the current tenants have refused works. This is regularly reassessed with tenants and works completed if the property becomes empty.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

What is the target date for bringing homes that do not meet the standard into compliance?

### SLH Evidence

The annual major repairs investment programme ensures that all homes continue to meet the standard. Where works are refused by tenants, attempts are made to every year to speak with tenants to see if they would like them, or we refurb when the properties become vacant. 28 tenants refused works in the past year.

### Criteria 19.

How do you manage and mitigate the risk of damp and mould for your residents?

### SLH Evidence

SLH has a Damp & Mould Policy to manage the risk in homes <https://www.southlakeshousing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Damp-and-Mould-Policy.pdf>. This will be reviewed again following any changes required to comply with Awaab's Law. Information for residents is available on the SLH website <https://www.southlakeshousing.co.uk/your-home/healthy-home-damp-mould-and-condensation/>

### Enhanced Reporting Option

How many cases of damp and mould were reported in the period that required action?

### SLH Evidence

279 damp and mould cases were reported and required action. None are category 1 hazards. 101 had works completed with the average time to complete works at 59 days. 178 cases remain active and have been allocated contractors, including the inhouse team, for works to completed in the first part of 2024/25. All health-related concerns require a mould wash, were completed within 18 days of reporting.

What % of the housing providers portfolio do these homes account for?

The homes experiencing damp and mould were 9% of the 3256 rented stock.





## Theme 6: Resident Voice

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### Criteria 20.

What are the results of the housing provider's most recent tenant satisfaction survey?

How has the housing provider acted on these results?

### SLH Evidence

The proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from their landlord was 78.6%.

The survey approach was a single point in time, with the earliest survey responses received on 19th December 2023 and the latest survey response on the 9th February 2024. The survey was conducted externally by market search firm The Leadership Factor (TLF). No incentives were offered to tenants to complete the survey. From the sample survey, 683 responses were received with 525 by telephone and 158 via internet forms.

The Board received a presentation on the results and improvement projects in March 2024. This includes repairs customer experience project as a critical success factor for driving future customer satisfaction.

### Criteria 21.

What arrangements are in place to enable residents to hold management to account for the provision of services?

### SLH Evidence

There are a range of ways for residents to hold SLH to account. This includes the new Residents Forum whose remit is to scrutinise and challenge performance and complaints, reviewing compliance with the Regulator of Social Housings' Consumer Standards and Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. They also review and influence customer policies and strategies. They have a direct reporting line to the Board.

We have many different approaches for residents to engage with us including Tenant Scrutiny Groups, our online & telephone customer surveys, our annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, complaints and compliments, estate walkabouts / neighbourhood natters and at Board level. There are also online sessions and the community Facebook group and our published TSM performance on the SLH website.



### Criteria 22.

In the last 12 months, in how many complaints has the national Ombudsman determined that maladministration took place?

How have these complaints (or others) resulted in change of practice within the housing provider?

### SLH Evidence

The Housing Ombudsman determined 1 case of maladministration involving a complaint about our historic handling of an anti-social behaviour case. We have since met with the resident to apologise and listen to their concerns and paid compensation.

We have revised the policy and procedure and improved oversight by the manager, including access to specialist advice.



## Theme 7: Resident Support

### Criteria 23.

What are the key support services that the housing provider offers to its residents?

How successful are these services in improving outcomes?

### SLH Evidence

Information, support services and signposting to other services is available to customers on the SLH website via the Cost of Living Hub.

The Income Team continue to provide a customer centric service focused on supporting customers to maximise their income and pay their rent. This has included the introduction of Customer Support through a Hardship Fund, spending £9k and leveraging other benefits. Examples include;

- Purchasing of white goods and furnishings for new customers who are entering SLH tenancies with minimal resources
- Providing emergency utility support
- Help with school uniform costs
- Provide food and access to other wellbeing necessities
- Specific referrals for debt advice, food packages, food banks, kitchen starter packs etc
- 53 hours' worth of advice via Citizens Advice Bureau referrals
- 150 households have been supported
- Additionally, an assessment prior to allocation of new tenancies is completed to review, support and signpost new tenants to areas that they may be able to improve and possibly make savings. The aim of these assessments is to allow the Income Team to understand the circumstances of our incoming tenants and ensure that customers can both pay rent and be able to sustain their tenancy and associated costs.
- Supported 204 new tenancies with an income assessment to ensure that they can afford to pay their rent
- Supporting customers with applications for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This includes one example where the tenant was able to reduce their rent arrears by over £2k

Our Independent Living schemes offer specialist support to help older and vulnerable people to live independently for longer, do more of the things they love and to feel safe and connected.





## Theme 8: Placemaking

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### Criteria 24.

Describe the housing provider's community investment activities, and how the housing provider is contributing to positive neighbourhood outcomes for the communities in which its homes are located.

Provide examples or case studies of where the housing provider has been engaged in placemaking or placeshaping activities.

### SLH Evidence

The following community initiatives have been undertaken over the last 12 months;

- Completed Estate Walkabouts – quarterly with local residents and stakeholders.
- Delivery of Neighbourhood Plans, in consultation with residents and using feedback from walkabouts.
- Worked closely with the other stakeholders on delivering 8 'Neighbourhood Natters' events within our neighbourhoods to engage with residents and find out more about their views of the neighbourhoods.
- Numerous street safe events with the Police most recently on Chestnut Crescent undertaking door knocking, providing reassurance and asking for residents to report any issues and held joint drop-in sessions.
- Delivered environmental improvement schemes including remodelling parking areas and improving open spaces in terms of security and accessibility in a number of areas including Owlet Ash Fields, Pembroke Court and Dearden Close.

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### Enhanced Reporting Option

Social Value calculations (including monetisations) of placemaking activities [£]

### SLH Evidence

SLH does not currently have a mechanism to calculate this measure but is reviewing best practice in this area and will be maximising social value as part of preparations for the introduction of the new Procurement Act 2023.



# Governance





## Theme 9: Structure and Governance

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### Criteria 25.

Is the housing provider registered with the national regulator of social housing?

### SLH Evidence

Yes. SLH is a Registered Provider with the Regulator of Social Housing. Registration number 4686.

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### Criteria 26.

What is the most recent regulatory grading/status?

### SLH Evidence

Governance G1, Financial Viability V2 (November 2023, following the annual stability check). The most recent report is here Current regulatory judgement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-judgement-south-lakes-housing>

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### Criteria 27.

Which Code of Governance does the housing provider follow, if any?

### SLH Evidence

National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020. The Board assesses compliance annually as part of certifying compliance within the annual accounts. The Board last reviewed compliance in August 2024.

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### Criteria 28.

Is the housing provider Not-For-Profit?  
If not, who is the largest shareholder, what is their % of economic ownership and what % of voting rights do they control?

### SLH Evidence

Yes. SLH Rules states 'non-profit' and nothing is paid or transferred by way of profit to shareholders of the Association.





### Criteria 29.

Explain how the housing provider's board manages ESG risks.

Are ESG risks incorporated into the housing provider's risk register?

### SLH Evidence

In SLH Business Strategy 2020-25, the Board made a commitment to demonstrate performance via ESG reporting. ESG considerations are embedded within the risk register and internal audit plan.

The risk register includes a risk universe for 'environmental sustainability', 'governance', 'people and culture', 'health and safety' and 'reputation, trust and customer'.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

Is the housing provider required to report against TCFD? No

If yes, is the housing provider doing so?

### SLH Evidence

No, SLH is not a premium listed company and has less than 500 employees and less than £500M in turnover.

### Criteria 30.

Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches etc.) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?

### SLH Evidence

No. There have been no adverse regulatory findings in 2023/24. SLH self-referred a non-compliance Rent Standard matter to the RSH regarding a small number of properties. The RSH closed concluded the referral with no further action.

The Audit & Risk Committee reviews compliance at quarterly meetings. This includes data protection, bribery, anti-money laundering, fraud, health & safety data etc.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

If yes please describe.

### SLH Evidence

N/A.



## Theme 10: Board and Trustees

### Criteria 31.

How does the housing provider ensure it gets input from a diverse range of people, into the governance processes?

Does the housing provider consider resident voice at the board and senior management level?

Does the housing provider have policies that incorporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the recruitment and selection of board members and senior management?

Metric	Board Demographics		Household Demographics	
	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23
% residents	0%	8%	n/a	n/a
% women	45%	40%	63%	53%
% BAME	0%	0%	3.8%	3.5%
% with a disability	10%	10%	17.7%	19%
Average age (years)	56	56	55.0	55.5
Average tenure (years)	3.5	3.3		

There is a current data project underway to improve tenant profiling data, so care should be taken when comparing to previous years where confidence levels are low.

The Board agreed a Composition Statement in May 2024, setting out the ideal composition for the Board in accordance with the requirement of its Code of Governance. The Board will seek to reflect the communities it serves within its composition in terms of ethnicity and has a target of 10% ethnic minority representation. It also seeks to have a reasonable gender balance and has a target of 50:50. If the balance of gender falls outside of 60:40, then the Board will consider remedial action to move towards the desired target.

### Criteria 32.

What % of the housing provider's Board have turned over in the last two years?

What % of the housing provider's Senior Management Team have turned over in the last two years?

### SLH Evidence

Board turnover in the last 2 years - 6 / 12 (50%)  
Executive Leadership Team turnover in the last 2 years - 2 / 5 (40%). Overall - 8 / 17 = 47%

SLH adopted the NHF Code of Governance 2020 meaning that that board members usually retire after 6 years which reflects on the board turnover rate. The Executive Team was reorganised in 2021/22.



### Criteria 33.

Number of board members on the housing provider's Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience.

### SLH Evidence

There were 3 members of the Committee with relevant financial experience. This includes two qualified chartered accountants (one with housing sector experience), and an experienced former relationship manager for Barclays specialising in supporting social housing providers.

### Criteria 34.

What % of the housing provider's board are non-executive directors?

### SLH Evidence

100%

### Criteria 35.

Has a succession plan been provided to the housing provider's board in the last 12 months?

### SLH Evidence

Within the last year the Board have agreed to extend the appointment of the Chair for a further twelve months, appointed a Deputy Chair, recruited to a new Audit & Risk Committee Chair and made two independent appointments to the Development and Audit & Risk Committees. A Resident Forum was also established. The Board approved a Succession Plan in May 2024. Recruitment to vacant posts will be conducted in summer 2024 following the retirement of two Board Members after completing 6 years' service.

The board recruitment plan will target - a senior housing services professional, promoting female candidates and improving diversity to ethnicity and disability, consideration will also be given to skills appropriate to the Development Committee as the Chair is one of those retiring.

### Criteria 36.

For how many years has the housing provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?

### SLH Evidence

12 years, although a change in Audit Partner and Manager made in 2022/23 to ensure independence.

The Board will be asked to approve the appointment of new External Auditors at its meeting in August 2024 following a procurement exercise, with the incumbent stepping down after the completion of the 2023-24 audit plan.



### Criteria 37.

When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?

### SLH Evidence

David Tolson Partnership conducted an external board effectiveness review in May 2021 and the main actions arising have all been completed. These included;

- Establishing the role of a Senior Independent Director/ Deputy Chair.
- Amending the Committee Structure with the Remuneration and Governance Committee being disbanded.
- Defining the authority levels delegated to the Development Committee.
- Rules changed to remove any local authority nomination rights to the Board and Shareholding.

An internal audit on governance was conducted in 2022/23 by BDO. This resulted in a number of actions including the Board approval of the Board Governance Framework and Board, Committee, Resident Forum terms of reference (May 2024).

### Criteria 38.

How does the housing provider handle conflicts of interest at the board?

### SLH Evidence

Conflicts of interest are declared at the start of all Board meetings. There is a Board Member declarations register setting out any relationships and potential conflicts. The Board is asked to update this on an annual basis, and to declare any new conflicts prior to entering into a transaction/relationship/ partnership.

Any member with a close contact leaves the Board meeting during any relevant discussion/decision. If a conflict cannot be managed, then Board members will be asked to stand down.

There is a comprehensive policy framework in place and includes; Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Probity Policy, Gifts & Hospitality Policy and Code of Conduct. Compliance reporting is overseen by the Audit & Risk Committee.





## Theme 11: Staff Wellbeing

### Criteria 39.

Does the housing provider pay the Real Living Wage?

### SLH Evidence

Yes. SLH is registered on the Living Wage.org website.

### Criteria 40.

What is the housing provider's median gender pay gap?

### SLH Evidence

Gender Pay Gap	
2023-24	2022-23
-2.24%	0.8%

This is much better than the median UK 14.3% (TUC analysis February 2024). There are more men employed currently and are paid slightly higher overall than women.

### Criteria 41.

What is the housing provider's CEO: median-worker pay ratio?

### SLH Evidence

CEO Median Worker Pay Ratio	
2023-24	2022-23
3.7	3.57

TUC research shows median CEO pay at 109 times the median UK full-time worker in 2022.

### Criteria 42.

How is the housing provider ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is promoted across its staff?

### SLH Evidence

SLH has an EDI Policy and Action Plan in place to operationalise. A Director is Exec sponsor, with the Head of People & Culture as lead, with regular progress reporting to the Executive Team. Board receive an annual update on key achievements, any barriers and next steps. EDI is a consideration for all board and executive reporting. All colleagues have regular awareness training, and we have an E,D&I calendar so we mark annual days and key festivals. SLH are a Living Wage, Disability Confident & Mindful Employer and members of Housing Diversity Network & Women in Social Housing. We gained a Better Health at Work accreditation in 2024. There is an equality impact assessment process in place for any key business changes, strategies and policies. SLH submits EDI reporting to the NHF which benchmarks with the sector and population in which we operate.



### Criteria 43.

How does the housing provider support the physical and mental health of its staff?

### SLH Evidence

SLH operates a hybrid model of working which provides all colleagues with a healthy work life balance, which helps our people maintain good mental health. 7 colleagues have been trained as mental health first aiders across the business and have identified even more colleagues who want to take on this responsibility. In November 2023 SLH were recognised for the work done to improve workplace health and wellbeing via a Bronze *Better Health at Work Award*.

People policies and procedures, including attendance management practices, have been enhanced to better manager stress.

A health surveillance programme is in place for trade colleagues with annual checks covering respiratory, skin and hearing etc.

All colleagues also undertake mandatory mental health awareness training.

### Criteria 44.

How does the housing provider support the professional development of its staff?

### SLH Evidence

Over the last 12 months 3 colleagues have completed professional qualifications in areas which will improve staff wellbeing, covered a CIPD qualification and two colleagues completing the NEBOSH General Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety. 4 apprentices currently working towards their individual trade qualifications. 3 other colleagues who are working towards professional qualifications. Our Team Leader Repairs and one of our Surveyors are doing a Building Surveying Degree with UCLAN. Our Customer First Manager is doing a CIPD qualification.

An assessment has made been against the potential Housing qualification requirements arising from the Competence and Conduct Standard (if introduced by Government). 6 qualified, 2 part qualified and 10 to undertake the qualification.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

What % of employees have received qualification that are relevant for their professional development, within the last year?

- Split result by demographic.

### SLH Evidence

18% of colleagues have completed a relevant professional development qualification. This includes L3 Designated Safeguarding Leads, NEBOSH Health & Safety and CIPD.

25 colleagues – 72% female, 28% male. 96% White British, 4% Asian British. 8% disabled. Age range 27 to 69.



## Theme 12: Supply Chain Management

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### Criteria 45.

How is social value creation considered when procuring goods and services?

What measures are in place to monitor the delivery of this Social Value?

### SLH Evidence

SLH seeks to deliver Social Value through its procurement practices as we believe that this is essential to the local communities that we serve and operate within. Social Value is incorporated into all procurements over £100K with the aim of lowering this threshold figure over time. The SLH Procurement strategy seeks to deliver social value through;

- Creating job opportunities and local delivery
- Creating apprenticeships, training and work opportunities
- Embedding the local supply chain

The SLH Procurement Strategy is being reviewed in preparation for the implementation of The Procurement Act 2023. This will include the development of a Social Value Register to capture social value proposals at tender stage and monitoring them through to delivery as part of contract management. This will also incorporate social value metrics and data reporting.

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### Enhanced Reporting Option

What is the relative weighting of Social Value considerations in procurement policies?

How much Social Value has been delivered from the housing provider's supply chain in the last 12 months?

### SLH Evidence

Social value is incorporated into the Quality questions within tender specifications. A recent example from Internal Audit included a 5% weighting specifically for social value. The new Procurement Strategy will include minimum 5% for social value and sustainability, rising to 10% or higher for construction related tenders of over £100k in value. Social value examples from 2023-24 include;

- Retrofit partner Dyson Energy Services have opened a Kendal depot, recruited new staff and work with Kendal College to educate learners on energy efficiency
- Onboarding a range of new local SME's in the delivery or repairs and maintenance services
- Working with partners and the supplier chain to donate to a range of community projects including; winter warmth packs, energy saving week, garden competition etc



### Criteria 46.

How is sustainability considered when procuring goods and services?

What measures are in place to monitor the sustainability of your supply chain when procuring goods and services?

### SLH Evidence

The SLH Procurement Strategy 2022-24 includes a commitment to support initiatives that deliver a positive economic, social and environmental impact. At the start of the process a review of the market will be undertaken including an assessment of sustainable criteria (social, economic and environmental) which is approved by the relevant stakeholders and informs the procurement process. There is a clear commitment to 'limit any negative effect of our activities but bring changes and support initiatives that deliver a positive economic, social and environmental impact.'

The SLH Procurement Strategy is being reviewed in preparation for the implementation of The Procurement Act 2023. This will include a new process and possibly a new system for recording sustainability within the tender process, as part of contract management and monitoring of performance.

### Enhanced Reporting Option

What is the relative weighting of environmental impact considerations in procurement policies?

### SLH Evidence

Environmental impact and sustainability is incorporated into the Quality questions within tender specifications. A recent example from Internal Audit included a 5% weighting specifically for social value. The new Procurement Strategy will include minimum 5% for social value and sustainability, rising to 10% or higher for construction related tenders of over £100k in value.

The SLH Sustainability Strategy 2022-27 includes key actions around;

- Carbon Reduction & Energy Efficiency.
- Sustainable Offices & Operations.
- Sustainable Supply Chain.

How does the housing provider monitor supply chain risks, and what initiatives has the housing provider taken to drive higher sustainability performance across its supply chain?

There is a risk register for key suppliers. As mentioned above there is work ongoing to improve performance on sustainability across the SLH supply chain.





You can contact Customer Services at [customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk](mailto:customerservices@southlakeshousing.co.uk) or telephone **0300 303 8540** if you require any further information detailed in this annual report.

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