SPRING 2025 SPRING 2025 SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER



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welcome

to Grapevine



Hi, I'm Ray. I've been living at **Emmanuel Court** for nearly a decade, and I'm also part of the Residents First Group!

Since the beginning of the Residents First Group, I've been proud to be part of something that truly gives residents a voice in the decision-making process at Brunelcare. It's been a really positive experience for me, one where I've felt heard, involved, and empowered to contribute.

What I enjoy most about being part of the group is

the opportunity to shape real change. We've been involved in a number of meaningful projects, where we've had the freedom to suggest new ideas and challenge existing ones. It's refreshing to be in a space where we can say what we really think, not just what people assume we want to say. Times have changed; residents today are living longer, are better educated, and most importantly, want to feel listened to, not simply told what's going to happen.

I'd encourage other residents to get involved too. The more voices we have from different sites, the more diverse our ideas will be, and that can only make Brunelcare a better place for everyone. I speak for myself, not on behalf of any one site, and I believe a broader mix of input would be incredibly valuable.

At my own site, and all of the other sheltered housing sites too, we've recently had Alertacall installed, which is a really smart move. The old system had run its course, and this new technology is a much-needed, modern solution, practical and future-

One idea raised during the group's meetings was to have more resident involvement in things like Grapevine, and here we are, my first contribution!

Enjoy the issue!

Best wishes, Ray Bray

Resident at Emmanuel Court

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2025: The Results

Thank you to everyone who completed this year's Customer **Satisfaction Survey! We** had an overall response rate of 49% across our sheltered housing and extra care housing, up from 46% last year.

The survey is a crucial way of receiving feedback from you on the services we deliver and more importantly, how we can improve them.

In the table to the right, you can see a summary of our performance against the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures.



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES	2024 RESULT (%) Sheltered & Extra Care Housing Tenants	2025 RESULT (%) Sheltered & Extra Care Housing Tenants
Overall satisfaction	83	86
My home is safe	87	91
My home is well maintained	87	86
Communal areas are clean and maintained	83	87
Overall satisfaction with repairs service	85	90 👚
Time taken to complete last repair	84	88
Brunelcare listens to my views and acts on them	68	69 👚
Brunelcare keeps me informed	80	79
Brunelcare treats me fairly and with respect	81	86
Brunelcare's approach to handling complaints	52	57
Brunelcare makes a positive contribution to my neighbourhood	65	64
Brunelcare's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	64	67

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2025: The Results

In 2022, Brunelcare's Board of Trustees worked with residents to develop a series of Outcome Measures, designed to help us understand the difference that the services and support Brunelcare provides makes to your lives.

We have monitored these measures for the last three years – and you can see the latest results in the table below

Outcome Measure	2024 RESULT (%) Sheltered & Extra Care Housing Tenants	2025 RESULT (%) Sheltered & Extra Care Housing Tenants
I have a place to live I am proud to call my home	86	88
I have a home in which I feel safe and secure	88	90 👚
I have a home that gives me long term stability	90	92 👚
I feel financially comfortable living in a Brunelcare property	76	78 👚
I have a home where I am warm and comfortable	91	92 1
Brunelcare helps me to feel safe and welcome in my local community	71	73 👚
Living in a Brunelcare property enables me to have the social life I want	74	75
I feel reassured knowing there is always support & assistance when I need it	75	80 1



We will now analyse the survey results and work with residents to decide on the actions that should be taken to address the issues you have raised. We will keep you updated on how you can get involved in this process.



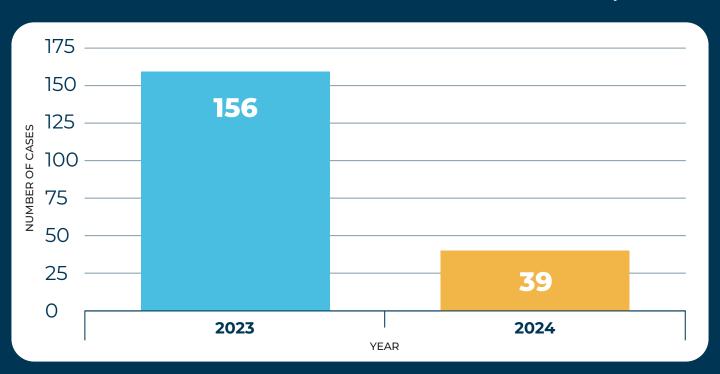
Performance Update

We monitor our performance on a quarterly basis and over the next few pages, you can see how we are doing against some of our key measures in the 12 months from 1 January to 31 December 2024.



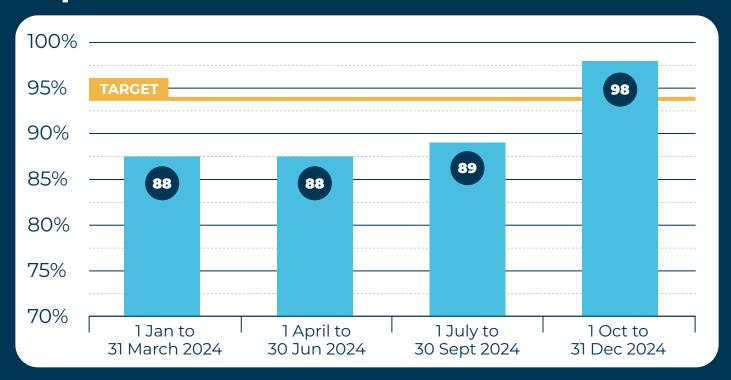
Antisocial behaviour

Number of ASB cases opened



The number of antisocial behaviour cases has reduced significantly over the last 12 months compared to previous years. We believe this is partly due to increased visibility of staff on our sites, which is enabling them to deal with concerns earlier before they escalate.

Repairs | % of repairs completed on first visit



The table above shows a continuing improvement in the number of repairs completed first time. In the period between 1 October to 31 December, our internal target of 94% was exceeded and we aim to continue this level of service.

Damp & Mould

Cases reported and resolved and cases outstanding at end of quarter

	Damp & mould cases reported in the quarter	Damp & mould cases resolved in the quarter	Damp & mould cases outstanding at end of quarter
1 June to 30 Sept 2024	21	16	5
1 Oct to 31 Dec 2024	30	28	8

What We Are Doing

Given the potential impact on health, it is important that residents report any damp and mould issues as soon as they notice them. To help our residents identify and try to prevent damp and mould occurring in their homes, we have issued an advice leaflet which also provides information about how to report an issue.

Note: Data only available for the last 2 quarters of 2024







For more information about our performance, you can visit our website

www.brunelcare.org.uk/ about-us/our-performance/ourperformance-reports/

Coming Soon: New Tenants Handbook!

For the last few months, we have been hard at work preparing a new **Tenants Handbook** and it is almost complete.

We hope the new handbook will help you better understand the services we provide and how we can support you.

Members of our Residents First Group have overseen the development of the handbook. Thank you to David, Rosemary, Pat, Suzanne and Janet for your input and feedback, which has really helped make sure the handbook reflects our residents' priorities.

What will be included in the Handbook?

The new Handbook is designed to be a resource that you can refer to throughout your tenancy with Brunelcare, including information such as:

- How to report a repair and how quickly we aim to respond to different categories of repair requests
- Brunelcare's approach to tackling antisocial behaviour

- Your rights and responsibilities as a Brunelcare resident
- Important health and safety information for your home

How residents can get involved in shaping and improving Brunelcare's

WHEN WILL IT **ARRIVE?**

We are finalising the new Handbook and are hoping to send it to all residents in the summer.

You will receive a hard copy of the Handbook, but a digital version will also be available on the Brunelcare website - and will be regularly updated.



alertacal (:

Over the last few months, we have been installing electronic tablet devices in all our sheltered housing properties, as part of a new service provided by Alertacall.

Alertacall has

developed a portable touchscreen device which can be plugged into the mains electricity in your home and has a number of different features.



How to use your new device



Keep Customers Informed

You can use your device to message us directly, and we can also keep you up to date by sending you information about your property or site.

Report a Repair or Antisocial Behaviour

Your device will give you another way of logging any requests for a repair or reporting antisocial behaviour. Just click these buttons and type in the details of your request, then it will be sent to Brunelcare so that we can respond.

YOUR NEW DEVICE

'Ok Each Day'

You have the option of regular contact from a friendly team 365 days a year. You have the choice to press an OKEachDay® button in your own time or otherwise receive a call from the team. This means you are always guaranteed someone to speak to which can help prevent people from becoming isolated or feeling lonely.

The
demonstration
was very
clear and the
unit is very simple
to use.

David - resident at St Barnabas Close

Access our new Customer Portal

There is a button on the screen of your device which will allow you to log in to Brunelcare's new Customer Portal. The portal allows you to check the balance of your rent account, make a payment and update any personal or contact details if you need to.

Frequently Asked Questions...

Why are we installing these new devices?

At the moment, all of our sheltered and extra care housing properties are fitted with alarm call systems. However, the government has advised that all analogue alarm systems need to be switched to a new digital system by January 2027, and this will mean our current call systems are unusable. We have been investigating alternatives, which will move us away from hardwired systems, and have chosen this service provided by Alertacall.

I'm struggling to use my new device. Is there support available?

All residents will have received some basic training from the Alertacall team when your device was first installed. If you need more support, please contact the Customer Service team who can arrange for a colleague from the Housing Team to visit you to go through how to use the device

I live in a sheltered housing property, but I haven't had Alertacall installed...

All of our sheltered housing properties should have had a device installed by Friday 11th April. If you have not yet had a device installed in your home, we have a list of those tenants missed on the first round and there will be follow up with Alertacall.

So don't worry, we will be back!

I live in Extra Care Housing. Will I get Alertacall?

At present, we have installed these new devices in our sheltered housing properties only. Looking ahead, we hope to be able to consider Alertacall for our extra care housing sites too. We will keep residents updated on our progress.

Investment in Vour homes



A central part of Brunelcare's Strategy over the next five years is to ensure that we have 'great homes which are fit for the future'.

We want all our homes to be warm, comfortable, safe and of a high quality. We know that some of our homes need improvement in order to meet the energy performance standard that all social housing has to achieve by 2030, as well as the government's 'Decent Homes Standard'.

We have identified three of our sheltered housing sites - Lilac Close, Longmead Croft and Lea Croft – that require significant investment to achieve those standards, but which also have potential to provide additional new homes.

We are engaging with residents who live on these sites to talk about what they would like to see in any new homes that are developed.

Planning new development is a long process and it's likely to be a couple of years before we can build anything, but we are committed to involving customers in the process and including their ideas in designs.



WARMER HOMES Home Retrofit Project

Our first Retrofit Project is currently underway at Maple Close in Stockwood.

The work being undertaken includes a new insulated roof. the installation of solar panels, new windows, new heaters, LED lighting and the installation of ventilation to each address on the site.

Work is progressing well, and we are on track to see the new roof and solar panels installed by the summer.

We are also pleased to announce we have been awarded a further £1.7 million from the

Government, which, combined with Brunelcare's own contribution of £4m, means we will be able to improve a further 200 homes over the next four years. This will also help us achieve the government's target to see all social housing properties reach an Energy Performance Certificate of at least 'C' by 2030.



WE ARE SPENDING ALMOST

5 milli

TO IMPROVE A FURTHER 200 HOMES.

LED LIGHTING PROJECT

We have recently completed LED lighting upgrades at a number of our sheltered housing sites.

They are:

- Cote Paddock
- Longmead Croft
- Garden Close
- Eglin Croft

- Spinney Croft
- Good Shepherd Close
- Linden Close
- **Chestnut Close**

The lighting upgrade includes changing bulbs to LED lights and enabling residents to have greater control of the lights themselves. Motion sensors have also been installed so lights aren't left on which would incur greater communal costs.



SOLAR PANELS

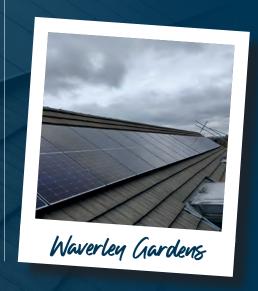
As part of our commitment to sustainability, we have successfully installed solar panels at Waverley Gardens and **Colliers Gardens** extra care housing sites, with the **ABC** Centre set for completion in the next financial year.

In addition, we have installed solar panels at three of our care homes - Glastonbury, Deerhurst and Robinson House. We have been impressed with the quality of work and professionalism from JoJu, the solar company behind these projects.

The impact is already clear. Since its commissioning in September '24, Glastonbury's solar panels have generated an impressive 26.06MWh of energy and offset 5 tonnes of CO2, the equivalent of planting 306 trees! Financially, this has already saved us approximately £2,900, all during the darker months. Similarly, with Deerhurst Care home (commissioned in October '24). a total of 18.30MWh has been produced, offsetting 4 tonnes of CO2 and saving us £2,880 so far. With longer, sunnier days ahead, we anticipate even greater savings.

In Bristol we have worked closely with BEC (Bristol Energy Cooperative) and their contractors each with varying levels of payback and estimated financial benefits. We chose BEC not only for their expertise but also because, as a not-forprofit Bristol-based organisation, they reinvest their earnings into

community initiatives, aligning with our values. BEC has funded the installation of the panels and the equipment, and we purchase the generated electricity back through a power purchase agreement. This benefits us long-term because we didn't have to heavily invest in the panels, and we will still buy the green energy at a reduced rate.









Glastonbury Care Home

£2,900

Deerhurst Care Home

*Costs are approximate

Understanding Your RENT & SERVICE CHARGES

2025/26

All residents will have recently received a letter saying how much you will pay in rent and service charges from April 2025 to March 2026.

Here are some key facts about this year's service charges:

- Residents will see an average reduction (based on a double 1 bed property) of 23.5% to their personal heat and light costs.
- There is a new charge for all sheltered housing residents for Alertacall, a new housing management service.

 Alertacall electronic devices have been installed in all sheltered homes (see pages 8-9 for more information).
- Although the underlying Housing charge is increasing, this is partly offset by reductions to personal charges, meaning on average, residents will see a total increase of around £3 per week to their service charge.

Please note: This is an average figure and will vary between different sites.



How is your rent and service charge calculated?

- RENT: For the majority of our sheltered housing residents, your rent will have risen by 2.7% in April. Rent increases for social housing residents follow a formula set by the Government. This is the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which measures inflation as of September '24 plus 1%. (CPI was 1.7% in Sept '24). For tenants living in shared ownership or market rented properties specific details will have been included in your letter.
- SERVICE CHARGES: Your service charges are based on what we expect to spend in 2025/26 on the services you receive as part of your tenancy. These are set out in the service charge schedule sent to you in March 2025.

Remember: the amount of rent and service charge you pay is specific to your type of tenure and other factors, such as your site or the size of your property.

Please refer to the rent and service charge letter you received in March – which will detail the specific charges that you are required to pay.



Communication about rent and service charges

This year, we had to reissue rent and service charge letters for some residents and we apologise for any confusion this caused. We know service charges can be complicated, so we want to help you understand them:

- We have updated our Glossary of Terms document which includes information about the different charges, so you can better understand what is included in your service charge.
- We worked with the Residents First Group to review the content of the Glossary and letters and make sure they were informative and clear.
- We always appreciate your feedback on what information we could include in future. If you have a suggestion, let us know.

COMPLAINTS

Brunelcare would like to say



PARTIALLY UPHELD

WERE NOT

Brunelcare would like to say a big 'thank you' to all our residents and their families who have made a complaint over the last year.

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 69 of you have taken the time to let us know when things are not going well across our housing and extra care housing sites. It's essential we hear from you so we find out where we might be getting it wrong, and your feedback enables us to continuously improve the service we offer.

In Sheltered Housing, where Brunelcare has 916 properties, we received 56 Stage 1 complaints, and of those 6 were escalated to Stage 2. In ECH and our retirement village, where Brunelcare has 290 properties, we received 13 complaints, and one of these was escalated to Stage 2.

32 COMPLAINTS WERE UPHELD

- this means the investigation identified that Brunelcare was at fault.

27 COMPLAINTS WERE PARTIALLY UPHELD – this

means that Brunelcare was found to be at fault in relation to some of the issues raised, but not all.

10 COMPLAINTS WERE NOT

UPHELD – because it was found that Brunelcare was not at fault in relation to the issues raised.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Please remember, you can also contact the Housing **Ombudsman Service** about your complaint at any time. The Ombudsman will offer you general advice, further support and guidance regarding your complaint.

Here is a reminder of how to make a complaint:

Via the website:

brunelcare.org.uk/contactus/make-a-complaint

Via email:

complaints@ brunelcare.org.uk

By phone/text:

0117 914 4214

By letter:

Complaints Brunelcare Saffron Gardens Prospect Place Whitehall Bristol, BS5 9FF

In person

You can also contact us if you would like to raise a concern.

You said, We did

Your feedback is vital to help improve our services and to better support you and maintain your homes.

Here are some examples of the key issues you have raised with us and how we have responded to them...

YOU SAID:

You wanted improved security & CCTV introduced on some sites (Source: **Customer Satisfaction Survey 2024)**

WE DID:



CCTV has been installed across 5 sheltered housing sites - Longmead Croft, Eglin Croft, Linden Close, Cote Paddock and Good Shepherd Close. In addition, two sheltered housing sites have had their CCTV systems upgraded.

All Brunelcare's extra care housing schemes have been offered CCTV installation, with residents at two schemes wishing to take up the offer. The installation took place over the last year.

Future update: We are looking to upgrade security where there are door entry systems in place. This will be carried out over a phased period.

YOU SAID:

You would like more staff presence on-site

WE DID:



We have recruited 5 additional colleagues across our sheltered housing sites. These are 2 Estate Services Officers, 2 Compliance Officers and 1 Fire Door inspector.

We have also improved office layout at Waverley Gardens to make it easier for residents to speak to dedicated colleagues.

YOU SAID:

You wanted to see improvements to communal areas on sites

WE DID:



We have fitted new carpets in communal lounges at the majority of sheltered housing sites, with more sites due to be completed in the comina year. New carpets were also fitted in communal corridors across 8 sites (Blagdon Close, Sycamore Court, Good Shepherd Close, St Michael's Close, St John's Court, Whitebeam Court, Emmanuel Court and Willow Bank).

YOU SAID:

Residents on several sites told us their signs were out of date or in a poor condition and you'd like them to be replaced

WE DID:



We have started a project to replace and upgrade the main signage across all sheltered and extra care housing sites and our retirement village. The new signage reflects Brunelcare's up to date branding. Our housing team is working with residents to understand what signage is needed for your site and whether entrance signs need to be moved to make them more visible and useful - so please do get in touch with suggestions. We are aiming to update signage across all our sites over the next year.





HELP WHEN 484 NEED IT



In 2024, Bristol City Council made the decision to reduce its funding for **Brunelcare's Help** When You Need It (HWYNI) programme by £200,000. The **HWYNI** service offers flexible. tailored support to **Bristol residents** facing various challenges.

The decision was part of wider measures taken by the Council to address a significant £22 million overspend, which threatened it with effective bankruptcy.

Since this decision, the Council has extended the existing contract until the end of June 2025, therefore we will continue to provide this service as we have been until then.

The Council published tender documents for the HWYNI Service for Older People in the Community earlier this year. This will replace existing contracts. We submitted a bid to continue to offer the service and are expecting to find out how we have done any day now.

We will inform all users of this service of the outcome of the tender and any impact this will have on the support service you receive

> Extended the existing contract





Since the last update in the Autumn edition of Grapevine, the group has met three times.

The Residents First Group continues to meet on a six-weekly basis, helping to ensure that residents are actively involved in shaping the services Brunelcare provides and its future.

NOVEMBER 2024

A key focus for the group since it launched has been how residents can be engaged in the service charges process, so they better understand the charges and, where possible, how they can influence them. At the November meeting, the group discussed the timeline for communication around service charges and it was agreed that improvements should be made - particularly to review what information is shared with residents and at what point. The group also suggested that if there is a gap in service provision which impacts on service charge costs, either positively or negatively, this should be communicated to affected residents.

This linked into a discussion around how residents are engaged in Brunelcare's procurement and contract management procedures. Members of the group felt there should be more opportunities for residents to be involved, particularly in relation to contracts which impact on their service charges. The group suggested that engagement should happen earlier in this process, so that residents have the opportunity to influence the scope and specification of contracts when they are first being considered...

DECEMBER 2024

It is really important that the voice of our customers runs through our governance arrangements. At this meeting, the group focussed on a Governance Review being carried out by external consultant Mark Sweeny. In particular, Mark is advising the Board of Trustees on how residents' views and priorities can be included in setting our plans and investments and in all major decision making, so it was vital for him to speak with residents' and hear their experiences.

Mark spent time with the group, without Brunelcare colleagues in the room, to understand how the RFG is working and whether

from the group will form a key part of the review, and the final made to the Board of Trustees

Group member Barney Smith also attended December's Board meeting to update the Trustees on the work of the Residents First Group. The Board welcomed Barney's feedback about the development of the group.

FEBRUARY 2025

Ahead of rent and service charge letters being sent to all residents in the Spring, the draft communications were reviewed by the group. Members made several suggestions for changes to the wording and structure of those letters, which were incorporated to make them clearer and more accessible. The group's feedback on the Glossary of Terms document, which accompanied the letters, also led to changes to make it easier to see which charges might apply to different residents (for example, some are only applicable to leaseholders).

The group also continued its work to support the development of a new procurement and contract management policy and procedure. Several members of the group who formed a subgroup to focus on this issue had met to further discuss how the current process can be improved. Their suggestions included for all new contractors to be shown around sites by a Brunelcare representative on their first visit as a matter of course.

Engagement

Our Together with **Customers Charter** details Brunelcare's commitment to putting our customers at the centre of its values, culture and ethos.

We want to maximise the opportunities for you to participate and engage with us, allowing you to influence and shape the services you use and how we deliver them.

There are a number of ways you can get involved. Joining a group like our Residents First Group isn't the only way you can make a difference at Brunelcare.

There are a number of ways you can engage with us:

- Reviewing new policies or ones which are being updated.
- Helping us draw up the specifications for contracts which affect residents and helping us select new contractors.
- Joining a focus group to look at a particular project or issue – for example, developing our new Tenants Handbook.
- Attending site meetings which are held every three months.

HOW TO CONTACT US

If you are interested in getting involved with Brunelcare in any way, please contact the Engagement Team

Email: together@ brunelcare.org.uk

Purchasing Our Next Energy Contracts

Brunelcare is in the process of buying our next fixed energy contracts, which we purchase on behalf of residents. The new contracts will cover period from April 2026 onwards. We aim to

fix our contracts in advance to give both you and us stable future prices, which means that we can all plan our energy costs and remove the risk of big price hikes over the period of the contract due to world events.

We are involving members of the Residents First Group and Net Zero Group to gather feedback on our proposed new contracts.

If you would like to find out more about this process please contact

together@ brunelcare.org.uk

> and we can provide more information.

HOW BU CAN GET INVOLVED

HAVE YOUR SAY

Have you got a story to tell?

We would love to include news and stories from our residents in publications such as Grapevine.

Congratulations to Kate Payne from Cote Paddock.

On Saturday March 22nd, she completed a 24-hour sleep out in a tent to raise money for the GREAT TOMMY SLEEP OUT. This is a charity helping ex-service personnel who are homeless. Kate raised



£350 and the whole event raised just over £1 million. Well done Kate for your contribution!

Submitted by: Cheryl Phillips (Cote Paddock).

Grapevine Sub Editorial Board

Would you like to influence what Grapevine looks like?

Interested in becoming a Resident Sub-Editor for Grapevine?

Become part of a group to suggest and review content for Grapevine magazine!

If you're interested in becoming part of the Resident Sub-Editorial Team, or have any queries contact the Marketing, Engagement and Communications Team.

How your help will help us shape the future of Grapevine

- 1. Better reflect what the residents want to read
- 2. Better inform our Brunelcare customers about what's happening across the Charity
- 3. Allow us to make Grapevine an inclusive magazine that residents want to read!

If you have any queries, please contact the . Marketing, Engagement and Communications Team: together@brunelcare.org.uk



How to Contact Us

Write to us:

Head Office Brunelcare Saffron Gardens Prospect Place Whitehall Bristol BS5 9FF

Email us:

Email: info@brunelcare.org.uk

Visit our website:

www.brunelcare.org.uk







Housing Customer Services Team:

0117 914 4257 (8:30am - 4:30pm)

Careium Out of Hours:

0800 0241 310 (4:30pm - 8:30am and weekends / bank holidays)



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

We invest in people Standard

Registered as a charity (201555) and Regulator of Social Housing (LH0269)

