

Accent

**Annual Report 2023/24**  
*for Customers*

**2023** ▲ **2024**

# Contents

▶ <b>Welcome from Sarah Ireland</b>	<i>03</i>
▶ <b>Welcome from Julie Wittich</b>	<i>04</i>
▶ <b>About us</b>	<i>05</i>
▶ <b>Snapshot: Our year in review</b>	<i>06</i>
▶ <b>How are we performing?</b>	<i>12</i>
▶ <b>Introducing Accent's new Customer Champions</b>	<i>20</i>
▶ <b>Tackling ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) in our communities: A new approach</b>	<i>21</i>
▶ <b>Working with you to build inclusive communities and personalised services</b>	<i>22</i>
▶ <b>Introducing our new Corporate Strategy</b>	<i>23</i>
▶ <b>Meet our new Customer Relations Director</b>	<i>24</i>
▶ <b>Recruiting now: Regional Customer Groups</b>	<i>24</i>
▶ <b>Key information</b>	<i>25</i>
▶ <b>Coming soon</b>	<i>27</i>

## 2023/24 – The Year in Review

# *Welcome to our Annual Performance Report for the financial year 2023/24.*

**Inside, we share information about how we perform as your housing provider, and how we are working to meet our commitment to provide you with safe, warm and affordable homes which you can feel proud to live in.**

Through your response to our first Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) survey in autumn 2023, and your continued feedback, we have listened carefully to you and worked hard to improve the service areas you said we need to focus most on.

I am pleased to be able to report that we have made some great progress in these key areas. You can see how we are performing on pages 12 – 19, alongside information on some of our current and future improvement projects.

The financial year 2024/25 will be an exciting one and we look forward to sharing our progress through the year.



**Sarah Ireland,**  
*Interim Chief  
Executive Officer*

# Looking Forward

As we *look ahead* to the coming year, we have lots of exciting work and projects in the pipeline which will continue to keep us focussed on improving your *satisfaction*.

**We will launch our new Customer Engagement Strategy, which will work to amplify our customers' voice to influence our work.**

As part of that strategy, we will work closely with our new Customer Champions and Regional Customer Groups, and work hard to engage more customers, to create a tailored service which responds to our customers' needs. This renewed focus will continue to grow over the coming year.

I am proud to work for an organisation which wants to continue to build strong relationships in our communities, and I will be joined by all Accent colleagues in November when we repeat the Big Conversation engagement event. More information about this can be found on page 10.

There has never been a more important time for you to have your say. Our door is always open for you to share your views, through your Housing Partner, Specialist Housing Partner or Leasehold and Homeownership Partner. You can also contact us on 0345 678 0555 or email [customerservices@accentgroup.org](mailto:customerservices@accentgroup.org) at any time.

However you share your views, please be assured that we are listening and acting on what you say, and that your feedback will continue to directly improve the homes and services all our customers receive, now and in the future.



**Julie Wittich,**  
*Chief Operating  
Officer*

# About Us

*We are Team Accent.*  
We were formed in 1966 and have grown since then to deliver housing and services to over 41,000 customers across the north, east and south of the country.

**We are driven by the belief that helping to solve the housing crisis will provide people with stability, a foundation for better living and contribute to the nation's wider objectives for local and national growth.**

We are clear on the impact we can make across the areas we work, and we are motivated by our values, strong vision and core purpose of providing high quality homes and services for our customers.

We know that we have a large part to play in helping to overcome the difficulties that households on lower incomes face, and it is important for us to deliver our core services to the best standard possible so that all of our customers feel that it is 'good to be home'.

At Accent we care, we are inclusive, smart and driven and we work in partnership with others to ensure our customers and communities are heard and supported to grow and thrive. Our customers' voice drives our decision making and we are investing in our colleagues to deliver the best outcomes, ensuring that together, we create moments that matter.



## Our Year *in Review*

We are committed to working with all customers to continually improve the services we deliver; to growing our community partnerships to build happy communities with a variety of support services for those who need it; and to develop new homes and invest in our current ones to play our part in addressing the housing crisis.

### **Here are some highlights of the work delivered over the past 12 months:**

# APRIL 2023

A major restructuring in April 2023 – developed on feedback from customers who rent their home from us – marked a new and revitalised housing management service for Accent customers.

Customers who rent their home from us told us increasing the presence of our teams on site and having a central point of contact for all tenancy related queries was important. Now, our dedicated Housing Partners manage a smaller ‘patch’ of no more than 350 homes each, which allows them to oversee all the elements of a customer’s tenancy, except for repairs which are managed by our dedicated technical hub. Having a trained, specialised function to respond to repairs enables our Housing Partners to be more visible in our communities and help our customers with the other everyday matters of managing a tenancy.

The structure supports our ability to grow meaningful relationships with the aim of delivering strong performance and satisfaction, built on the benefit of true collaboration and trust.

Our commitment to this began early with customers joining the recruiting panel of key management appointments within the new structure.

We invested in and rolled out organisation-wide customer care training by renowned Mary Gober International. This has allowed us to align our collective approach to customer service and improve how we manage customer interactions.

At this time, we also announced we would be building a brand new Community Development and Inclusion team whose purpose is to support and enhance ‘on the ground’ engagement with customers and communities to ensure that customers are able to influence decision making at a local and national level. In addition, the team provides digital and financial inclusion support. This team was launched in summer 2023.

# MAY 2023

In May and June, we hit the road with a planned maintenance roadshow across our north and east regions. The aim was to talk with customers about our kitchen and bathroom planned works and understand their preferences on the samples we could offer. This feedback has directly impacted our specifications for the next five years. The events were well attended, and customers were positive with the options presented.

A customer benefitting from a new kitchen emailed us to give her feedback:

“I just wanted to send this email to say that yesterday 10th January 2024, my cupboards were finally fitted, and I am beyond pleased, I am so happy with them, there are literally no words... The contractors were also brilliant, very professional, polite, friendly, very tidy and took all the rubbish with them, and even hoovered the floor!”

#### Did you know:

Last year we invested over £26m in our planned works programme. As part of this, we carried out over 4,000 different property investments, including the replacement of 200 heating systems, 750 boilers, 640 kitchens, 645 bathrooms and 800 windows and doors!

#### Case Study

**We want to ensure we keep our homes to a good standard. Part of this work includes improving the energy efficiency of all our homes, ensuring that we keep running costs for customers as low as possible and that we meet our responsibilities to minimise our environmental footprint.**

Retrofit works have been undertaken to improve the energy efficiency of six homes in Brighouse, West Yorkshire. The social rented homes have received external wall insulation and they have had their roofs replaced including new loft insulation and new thermally efficient windows and doors. All these measures will help to retain warmth and improve thermal comfort, reducing the energy required to heat the home. This not only provides savings on customers' energy bills but also reduces the carbon emitted from the houses by up to 1.8 carbon tonnes per year – the equivalent of running two small cars!

One customer benefitting from this work, said:

*“My home is very warm compared to before. I hardly have my heating on now and I am making a saving on my bills.”*

The scheme has been part funded by a grant from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This funding is helping us to carry out work like this in other areas across England.

#### Did you know:

82% of our homes already perform at EPC C or above! This level of EPC makes energy bills more affordable for customers.

For more information about our retrofit work, visit our website: [www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/brighouse-homes-retrofitted-to-improve-energy-efficiency](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/brighouse-homes-retrofitted-to-improve-energy-efficiency).

#### Did you know:

We co-funded a project, utilising a grant from West Yorkshire Combined Authority (under the Mayor's Fund), to improve 99 homes with either loft and/or cavity wall insulation. We exceeded the original target, improving 106 homes. The homes also received low energy lighting, ventilation upgrades and draught-proofing, where required.

We are also in the early stages of delivering another retrofit programme, including 64 homes in the East region.

# Helping to Tackle *Fuel Poverty*

Through the current cost of living crisis, we are working hard to *support customers* who may be at risk of falling into *fuel poverty*.



As we work to physically tackle fuel poverty in our homes, by building new, highly energy efficient homes and investing in our current homes to improve their thermal efficiency, we are using the information we collect about our customers to identify anyone who may be at risk.

Considering the home's energy performance rating alongside information we hold on the household, such as occupancy, arrears, receipt of benefits and capped gas supplies, we can come up with a 'risk score' of that household falling into fuel poverty. Having this information available means we can reach out to customers who may be at risk of fuel poverty, or are already facing it, with the help and support they need.

We are dedicated to ensuring we create lasting, positive impacts on our homes, our customers and the communities we serve.

We have already completed three retrofit thermal insulation projects in our Yorkshire and South of England regions. We have a further project taking place to retrofit 64 Accent customer homes with more insulation, solar panels and heat decarbonisation works in the East of England, which will mean that these customers will be able to benefit from savings in their fuel bills.

#### **Did you know:**

Our newly launched Community Development and Inclusion team have been working with partners and support agencies to deliver advice and support to help people keep the running costs of their homes as low as possible.

# JUNE 2023

## Estate Walkabouts

We know that grounds maintenance services are especially important to our customers and our performance tells us we need to take action to improve in this area.

In June, we rolled out a new inspection process. The new 'My Estate Walkabout' initiative will provide customers who rent their home from us with an opportunity to join us on a visit to their estate and discuss any issues and consider how we can improve services. On the back of this, customers have been happy to join us on these events and we have already been able to pick up on issues such as fly-tipping, estate services, community safety and on other issues which we are working closely with customers to resolve.



We are committed to using customer feedback from across lots of different customer groups to enhance services.

In the summer, we introduced an enhanced void standard, based on what our new customers told us would have made their lives easier when they moved into their Accent home.

We have introduced carpeting in bedrooms of our General Needs properties where there is no flooring, and Specialist Housing Schemes will be carpeted throughout. Where the homes have not already been redecorated, we are offering decoration vouchers to all our customers moving into one of our homes.

In addition, we now fit humidity sensors called hygrometers at every void (empty) property to help to understand the humidity levels within homes. They also help us to proactively manage damp and mould.

# AUGUST 2023

## The Big Conversation



We knocked on  
*9,136*  
doors



had conversations with  
*1,597* people

In December 2023, we hosted one of the biggest-ever events to engage customers in the results of our first TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) survey.

Knowing everyone at Accent is responsible for delivering positive customer experiences is the reason we brought together close to 200 colleagues from north to south to visit our communities and speak to as many of our customers as possible over two days.

One story told by a Housing Partner shows the power of our increased presence in communities:

“During the Big Conversation event, I managed to speak to a customer who had been too afraid to engage and ask for help before. Seeing our commitment that day to building personal, strong relationships with customers gave him the confidence to open up and ask for help with low level hoarding. I visited the following week and worked with him to get on top of the problems he was experiencing. He could not have been more grateful. The new structure, with smaller patch sizes allows for this personal intervention to support people when needed to live happily in their homes.”

**We will carry out our next TSMs survey from Mon 2 September and a second Big Conversation event on Fri 1 November and Mon 4 November 2024.**

We launched our National Independent Living Service Tenant Group. So far, members of the group, who live in our specialist housing schemes, have influenced our new specialist housing service, attended various customer engagement events and influenced new customer communications. The group is now looking at how we can better engage with more customers in our specialist housing schemes and how customers can make their voices heard and hold us to account in acting on their feedback.

Read on to page 24 to learn about more opportunities to get involved.

# APRIL 2024



## In April, we launched our first good neighbour awards.

This initiative was piloted in our North East region and focused on two areas, one of which has had high incidences of severe anti-social behaviour. Working alongside customers to build strong communities was at the heart of this initiative.

Lots of people took part in the pilot and we invited one of our involved customers from our East region to sit on the judging panel.

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Chief Executive Paul Dolan left Accent to become Riverside Housing's new Chief Executive. Sarah Ireland, Executive Director of Strategy and Growth, is currently acting as Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) until a new CEO is appointed. We also appointed James Anderson as our new Chief Information Officer (CIO). James is looking at how we can improve our systems, processes and ways of working to respond better to your needs and make it easier for you to do business with us.



# How are we performing?

The *Tenant Satisfaction Measures* (TSMs) are designed by the Government to hold housing associations like us, and local councils, to account for the quality of homes and services provided. They are in place to provide customers with the knowledge and understanding of how we are performing as a business.

**The TSMs cover low-cost home ownership (LCHO) which are Accent's shared owners and low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA) owned by the housing provider (including general needs, affordable rent, independent living, supported housing, intermediate rent and temporary social housing).**

There are 22 TSMs in total (some with subcategories), and they are split into two parts:

- 10 Management Information Measures (MIMs) - we measure these directly through information we hold on our systems.
- 12 Tenant Perception Measures (TPMs) - we measure these through an annual tenant perception survey.

(Please note that not all the measures are applicable to homeownership customers due to the services they receive.)

In September 2023, our shared ownership customers and tenants who rent their home from us had the opportunity to take part in the satisfaction survey. We were pleased that over 5,800 people took part, which represents over 34% of our customers! Thank you to everyone who took part.

In addition to these survey results, we have also collected our annual management performance data for the financial year 2023/24.

This insight has given us a clear understanding of what customers think of the services we provide and highlighted where we must focus more attention to improve.

In the following pages, you can read our performance figures and what we have put in place to improve them.



# Overall Satisfaction

# 62.6%

of customers living in rental homes said they are 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the overall service provided by Accent.

# 32.8%

of customers living in a shared ownership home said they are 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the overall service provided by Accent.

## Your Home

### Your satisfaction results:

- 62.1% of customers living in rental homes were satisfied with the overall repairs service they received over the last 12 months.
- 58% of customers living in rental homes were satisfied with the time it took to complete their most recent repair.
- 62.6% of customers living in rental homes are satisfied their home is well maintained.

*\*To learn more about the Decent Homes Standard, visit: [www.housing.org.uk/our-work/quality/decent-homes-standard/](http://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/quality/decent-homes-standard/)*

### Our performance data:

	Customers who rent their home from us	Homeownership Customers
Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard*	0.0	Don't collect for homeownership customers
Proportion of non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale. (We aim to resolve any issues within 28 days)	80.4 %	Don't collect for homeownership customers
Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale. (We aim to attend emergency repairs within 24 hours)	89.4%	Don't collect for homeownership customers

An important part of providing affordable and comfortable homes is the ability to deliver a reliable and cost-effective repairs and maintenance service. We have done lots of work to improve these scores, including:

- **Remodelling how we work and bringing in new, skilled teams to deliver our services.**
- **Improving our processes for preventing damp and mould.** For example, did you know when a property becomes empty, we are now fitting hygrometers to measure the level of moisture in the air. These help to keep track of the humidity level in the home and are extremely useful when trying to reduce or prevent mould and damp.
- **Increasing our investment in our planned maintenance programme.** This is more effective than repairing things when they go wrong, and alleviates pressure on our responsive repairs service ensuring customers can get the attention they need quicker.

# Your Safety

More than anything else, we are committed to maintaining *safe homes*. From complying with the latest regulations and legislation, to employing specialist teams and using the latest technology, we invest and constantly evolve to make sure all our *customers* live in a *home which is safe*.

## Your satisfaction results:

# 68.1%

of customers who rent their home from us and 47.6% of homeownership customers are satisfied that we provide a home which is safe.

## Our performance results:

(These are combined scores for customers who rent their homes from us and homeownership customers.)

	2023/24
Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.	99.3%

# Listening to You

## Your satisfaction results:

# 64.8%

of customers who rent their home from us and 37.4% of homeownership customers said they are treated fairly and with respect.

# 60.9%

of customers who rent their home from us and 37.7% of homeownership customers said they were satisfied that they are kept informed about the things that matter to them.

# 52%

of customers who rent their home from us and 22.7% of homeownership customers said they are satisfied that we listen to their views and act on them.

## Acting on your feedback is a top priority for us, and we want this score to be much higher. To move us in the right direction we have:

- Recruited more customers to our Customer Experience Committee to make sure customers' views are heard and acted on at the highest level within Accent. One of our newest committee members is a shared ownership customer.
- Launched our 'Customer Champions'. Three of our Customer Experience Committee members who are also Accent customers have taken up a new role to monitor three service areas you have told us need the most attention – read more about this on page 20 or by visiting [www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/meet-our-customer-champions/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/meet-our-customer-champions/)
- Created a new, senior leadership position – Director of Customer Relations – to ensure we provide more ways for you to engage with us and use what you tell us to continue to improve our services.
- Undertaken work to develop a new customer engagement strategy which will see more opportunities for customers to get involved. In the meantime, we have made some key changes to improve our services to you. Over the past 12 months we have involved customers to work alongside us to improve our work. Some examples include:
  - The recruitment of key, senior roles across Accent
  - The review, procurement and development of our new website (which launches in October 2024)
  - Shaping our service charge communications (we approached a selection of customers who had expressed dissatisfaction to collaborate on a new way forward)
  - Formed a national specialist housing panel and building up regional resident panels
- Based on your feedback, our Housing Partners now manage a much smaller patch size so they can be out and about more and provide a more personalised service.
- Reshaped our specialist housing service to deliver a more visible service.
- Launched our local 'In the Loop' newsletter to customers who rent their home from us after customers told us they wanted to hear information relevant to their own communities.
- A resident member of our Customer Experience Committee has been involved with the procurement of new contractors

# Your Schemes & Neighbourhoods

## Your satisfaction results:

# 57.1%

of customers who rent their home from us and 33.7% of homeownership customers are satisfied we keep communal areas clean and well maintained.

# 49.6%

of customers who rent their home from us and 21% of homeownership customers are satisfied we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods.

# 51.2%

of customers who rent their home from us and 23.5% of homeownership customers are satisfied with how we tackle anti-social behaviour.

## Our performance results:

(These are combined scores for customers who rent their homes from us and homeownership customers.)

	2023/24
Number of anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 homes.	34.2
Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents opened per 1,000 homes.	1.1

We know the importance of living in a strong, vibrant and happy community, and we work hard to make sure customers feel happy and safe at home. We know we have more to do, but we have made strong progress this year to increase satisfaction scores in this area.

- We launched 'My Estate Walkabout' – a new inspection process which involves customers and colleagues visiting estates and working together to highlight issues and discuss practical solutions.
- Our newly formed anti-social behaviour (ASB) task group is reviewing our policies to understand more about how improvements can be made in the year ahead.
- Our new community development and inclusion team is working to identify opportunities and initiatives to grow community partnerships and find projects that bring people together to shape our neighbourhoods for the better.

# Complaints

## Your satisfaction results:

# 26%

of customers who rent their home from us and 8.4% of homeownership customers are happy with how we respond to complaints.

## Our performance results:

	Customers who rent their home from us	Homeownership Customers
Number of stage one complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes.	52.1	37.6
Proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	57.5%	64%
Number of stage two complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes.	7.6	9
Proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	75.9%	75%

**How we respond to complaints is a top priority. There is clearly a lot of work to be done, but we have made some improvements already:**

- We have updated our systems to improve our handling of complaints.
- We are providing new training for staff, so they have the skills they need to manage complaints effectively and to communicate better with customers.
- We are developing new policies to make sure customers can access the help they need.
- We have increased the number of people working in our complaints resolution team.

You can read about how we are improving our complaints service in our annual complaints performance and improvement report below: <https://accntgrp.org/svm>

For updates on how we are performing, please visit: [www.accentgroup.org/about-us/how-are-we-performing/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/how-are-we-performing/)



Complaints Customer Champion, Stacy Hartley will be scrutinising our complaints performance and as a member of our Customer Experience Committee, will be advocating for customers at the highest level of our governance framework to drive improvements.

**Speaking of the role, Stacy comments:**

“Accent provides *good quality homes* and their whole values are aligned to *servicing the customer* but sometimes, it may not feel like that and that’s where *customer champions* come in. We can help bridge the gap and give the customer perspective to help shape things going forward. The important thing is getting to a place where every time something does go wrong, it gets corrected in a manner where the customer feels *listened to* and *respected* and the outcome is *good for all*.”

**Stacy Hartley**

Complaints Customer Champion and Customer Experience Committee Member



These TSMs scores are disappointing to us, and we know we have considerable work to do, but we are hopeful that the plans we have already developed, and those we are continuing to work on, will improve the services we provide to all our customers.

**As well as providing homes and services to our current customers, we also develop new homes to help address the housing crisis.**

According to the National Housing Federation right now, there are 8.5 million people in England who cannot access the housing they need. This includes two million children in England living in overcrowded, unaffordable or unsuitable homes.

Last year, we completed the build of 431 new homes in areas of high housing need, which could provide up to 1,664 people with a place to call home.

**Did you know?**

We are committed to building energy efficient homes and last year just under half of our completed homes achieved an EPC (Energy Performance Certificates) A rating. Of our homes currently on site and in delivery, 79% are set to achieve EPC A.

Case Study

## Trelowen Way, Peterborough

*“We’ve been on the housing waiting list for 6 years, and this is the first home that has been suitable for my daughter’s needs. This will be life-changing for our family.”*

I could work all the hours in the world but I’d never be able to afford a property with the adaptations we need. It feels so homely too, not just a property with adaptations, with lots of storage to hide away all the equipment. Everything has been thought through – wide parking spaces, an accessible garden and all the little things needed to help my daughter lead a more independent life.”

A family of 3 moved into one of the four specially adapted bungalows at Trelowen Way in November 2023.

Trelowen Way in Peterborough is a scheme of 75 homes and is a flagship development for Accent. With innovation, inclusivity and sustainability at its core, this development represents a step forward in creating vibrant, accessible communities for all.

We worked closely with Peterborough City Council to ensure we met local housing need. Out of the initial allocations of the 75 homes, 40 families were either registered as homeless or came from temporary accommodation. A further 23 were categorised as the highest level of priority on the housing register and 4 families were referred due to medical need.

Our focus on developing in areas with the most pressing housing needs underscores our mission to make a meaningful impact on communities. Since customers moved in last year, our newly formed Community Development and Inclusion Team has worked hard to build a neighbourhood from scratch.

Significant partnership working with local charities has enabled signposting to much-needed services such as furniture recycling, NHS support and sporting collaborations to boost engagement. A community fun day was held over Easter where 10 local partners attended to provide help and support to families, plus free activities. Customer feedback has been extremely positive.



# Introducing our new *Customer Champions*

**Collaborating with our customers to improve our services is fundamental to providing high-quality services and places where customers can feel ‘good to be home.’**

That is why we are excited to share the launch of our new ‘Customer Champions’ to help drive improvements to our services.

Our new Champions are long-standing Accent customers who are already members of our Customer Experience Committee and have responsibility for reviewing how we perform across all our housing and customer-facing services.

To find out more visit:  
[www.accentgroup.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-committees/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-committees/)

Our Champions will work with us to help drive improvements in areas where customers have said we need to do better. In our TSMs (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) survey, customers expressed dissatisfaction with the way we manage anti-social behaviour, how we deal with complaints, and how we provide estate services, such as cleaning of communal areas and grounds maintenance.

The Champions will review customer feedback in these three key areas, assess and scrutinise our performance and, most importantly, drive opportunities for change to improve services for customers, based on customers’ feedback.

The Champions have started their new roles and will be reporting on their progress over the coming months. We have introduced our new Champions because it is important that customers genuinely have a voice at the highest level at Accent.

The Champions will help to make sure that customers’ voices are not only heard but are integral to shaping and improving service delivery and our decision-making processes. We want our Champions to help make things better for our customers by helping us to think about things a bit differently and through a different lens, so we can improve how we do things, and be better for our customers. At times, our Champions may work with customers directly in response to issues raised.

## Meet our Customer Champions:



**Jackie Best,**  
*ASB Customer Champion*

Jackie Best has been an Accent customer since 2020. In her day job, she works with young offenders to support them with education, training and employment. Jackie has been a member of our Customer Experience Committee for just over one year and, as a new Customer Champion, she will be focusing on how we manage anti-social behaviour.



**Stacy Hartley,**  
*Complaints Customer Champion*

Stacy Hartley has been an Accent customer for over 20 years and works full time running a beauty salon. She has also been a member of our Customer Experience Committee for over a year. As a Customer Champion, Stacy will continue sitting on the Committee but will focus on how we manage customer complaints.



**Helen Hutchinson,**  
*Estate Services Customer Champion*

Helen Hutchinson has been an Accent customer since 1996. Helen has been a member of Accent’s Customer Experience Committee for two years and, as a Customer Champion, she will be reviewing how we deliver our estate services, looking for opportunities for improvement in line with what our customers have told us.

# Tackling ASB in our communities: *A new approach*

## *Everyone has the right to feel safe where they live.*



**National surveys (YouGov) tell us that anti-social behaviour (ASB) and hate crime is drastically under-reported. The second biggest reason for this is that people do not know what to do, or where to report it, when it happens. This leads to victims of ASB and hate crime feeling even more isolated.**

Not all ASB is deliberate, but it can have a devastating impact on individuals and communities, and we often see a spike in some types of ASB in the summer when the weather is better and the days longer.

We know that how we manage reports about ASB and hate crime is a priority and we have listened to what customers have told us.

**How we manage ASB reports and concerns about ASB and hate crime is changing.**

When customers talk to us about ASB or a hate crime, how we respond will be centred on the individual and the impact this behaviour is having. Our processes are being revamped so that they are simpler and quicker.

Over the next 12 months, we will be talking a lot more about this and providing information on what ASB and hate crime is, how to report it, and how we can help. Sometimes behaviour is not ASB, but it can still cause distress. In those cases, we can help to find a way forward with our good neighbourhood management policy.

**To find out more about our policies visit:**

<https://accntgrp.org/509>

[www.accentgroup.org/asb](http://www.accentgroup.org/asb)

# Working with you to build inclusive *communities and personalised services*

We want our services to meet the needs and expectations of *all our customers* from the moment we hand you the keys to your *new home* and throughout your *time with us*.



**To do this well, we need to ensure that the information we have about everyone in your household is accurate and up to date.**

This information will help us to ensure we can better tailor our services to meet your needs and respond to any issues raised in a way that truly works for you. Your data will be held safely and securely and only accessible to colleagues that need the information to deliver services to you. More information about how we use and hold your information can be read here: [www.accentgroup.org/how-we-use-your-information/](http://www.accentgroup.org/how-we-use-your-information/)

As we work to improve our website, towards the end of the year, we will also be refreshing our customer online services, so in future, you will be able to update your own information as and when things change.

Alongside the TSM survey, we will also be running a data collection project, to update our records which, together with continually improving our services, will enable us to better understand and know all our customers, helping to build stronger relationships based on insight and understanding.

So, when this year's TSM survey starts on 2 September you will be hearing a lot from us about how you can have your say on what works, and where we need to further improve our services, along with an opportunity to ensure the information we have is completely up to date.

Our communities are wonderfully diverse. We want to capture that diversity, build inclusivity, and be the trusted housing provider you deserve. We look forward to working with you.

# Introducing our new Corporate Strategy

**Our new corporate strategy, 'Building on Strong Foundations,' has recently launched and covers the period 2024-2027. It builds upon the achievements from our previous strategy 'Building Better Futures 2021-2024' and focuses on four key objectives:**

**To read more about our corporate strategy, visit:**

[www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/building-on-strong-foundations-our-new-corporate-strategy-2024-2027/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-news/building-on-strong-foundations-our-new-corporate-strategy-2024-2027/)

“As a customer for many years, I am feeling *excited, positive, and optimistic* about the future. Hearing that there is an intention for Accent to reach out to, *involve and collaborate* with customers cannot have come at a better time. It cannot be ignored that for many families the struggle is real, battling with daily challenges, managing day to day, and overcoming hurdles is something many of us have had to get to grips with. Knowing that Accent will be *hearing customers' voices*, taking the time to truly *understand their issues*, and *personalising their responses* can and will alleviate some of that strain, at a time when it is *truly needed*.”

**Emma Raven, Camberley Customer**

1.

## Quality homes for the future

We will make sure our new and existing homes are fit for the future and both environmentally and financially sustainable, of high quality and are loved and affordable for our customers to run.

2.

## Driving excellence *through customer -influenced services*

We want our services to meet the needs and the expectations of our customers and believe the best way to achieve that is to involve them as much as possible. We want to promote a more customer-led approach to improving services, based on feedback, co-design, and a deep understanding of customer needs. We will do this through authentic engagement - by listening, understanding, and acting responsively to the needs, aspirations, and challenges of our customers.

3.

## Investing for success

We will build an environment where everyone is valued, respected, and appreciated for who they are and what they bring. We will create 'moments that matter' for our internal and external customers and colleagues every day.

4.

## Lasting change

Our national footprint provides us with a unique perspective to talk to and evidence the fallout of the housing crisis. As an organisation with a strong commitment to continued growth, we will work with our stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for our customers by adding our voice to sector-wide lobbying activity. We will align with the key messages of our sector whilst presenting our own insight and expertise, utilising our customers' lived experience to support our calls for long term, lasting change.

# Meet our new Customer Relations Director

At Accent, we are committed to providing all customers with a first-class customer service and we want every part of your journey with us to be a positive one. To help us achieve that we have recently recruited John Place into a brand-new role of Director of Customer Relations, who will work with teams across Accent to keep customers engaged and informed, and making sure we use what customers tell us to help shape and improve our services.

John will manage our housing and technical hubs, our community development and inclusion team and a new 'customer resolution team' to make sure complaints are dealt with effectively and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

I am pleased and proud to take up this new role. I have worked closely with customers for many years and my passion is to make sure Accent delivers the absolute best service it can. I look forward to speaking and meeting with as many of our customers as possible and I will continue to ask for feedback so we can be sure we are listening closely to customers and acting on feedback to improve our services.



## We Need You!

*You are at the heart of everything we do at Accent.*

### *Customer Focus Groups*

**We want to make sure you have every opportunity to express your views, that we listen to what you say and that we act on what you tell us. To help us do this, we are setting up new regional resident engagement groups.**

These groups will present your feedback to our managers. Members will scrutinise our performance and how we operate to help improve the customer experience. To make sure we contribute to your neighbourhoods and local communities, each group will also 'approve' a new system of grants. Local organisations will be able to apply to us for a grant to deliver services that have a positive impact on our neighbourhoods, and which directly benefit our customers.

As a member of one of these groups, you will also be able to share your own ideas of how we can improve our local communities and estates.

This is a great opportunity to influence what happens in your neighbourhood. If you are interested in joining one of our Regional Engagement Groups, please speak with your Housing or Homeownership Partner.

# Key Information

Part of our *commitment to our customers* is providing everyone with the information needed to hold us to account for the *services we deliver*. On the following pages we have detailed some information we hope will be useful.

## Who we are

Did you know we are a 'registered social landlord' governed by the Regulator for Social Housing? That means we are accountable for your services and the homes you have with us. To find out more about us, visit our website: [www.accentgroup.org/about-us/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/)

On our website you can learn more about our Board, executive team and our committees who oversee our work.

## Our Policies

Our policies govern us and outline how we provide our services to you and what you can expect from us. Visit our publications page on our website to find out more about our policies or contact us to request a copy of any of the policies we have available. [www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-publications/](http://www.accentgroup.org/about-us/our-publications/)

## Reporting a Repair & Repairs Responsibilities

In this section, you can find information on repair responsibilities and how to report a repair.

You can visit our website where we have worked to provide you clarity around what your responsibility is to fix as a tenant, and what our team will repair for you. [www.accentgroup.org/who-repairs-what/](http://www.accentgroup.org/who-repairs-what/)

If you are unsure about a repair responsibility or need assistance, please contact our dedicated technical hub team on 0345 678 0555.

The repairs we are responsible for if you are a homeowner vary dependant on your agreement with us (your lease or property title). Please check your agreement with us before reporting a repair to ensure that it is covered, and you are not re-charged.

The most convenient way to report a repair is via MyAccount. It only takes a few seconds to create an account, once you have registered, you will be able to report a repair 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also check your repairs history and stay updated on the status of any repairs you have reported.

- If you have an urgent repair, call our technical hub team on 0345 678 0555.
- Alternatively, if your repair is not urgent, you can fill out the form online by visiting [www.accentgroup.org/contact-us/](http://www.accentgroup.org/contact-us/)

**Please note, we have recently reviewed our repairs responsibilities in relation to glazing repairs, and have updated our guidance to customers. This is available on our website. If you need further advice or any clarification with issues around this please contact us and we'll be happy to help.**

## Compliments and Complaints

**Everyone at Accent is responsible for providing an excellent customer experience. But, even with the best intentions, things can go wrong.**

It is important you know how to raise a complaint and the actions we will take to address any concerns.

You can find all the details you need on our dedicated webpage here:  
[www.accentgroup.org/comments-complaints-and-compensation/](http://www.accentgroup.org/comments-complaints-and-compensation/)

You can make a complaint, or provide feedback to us in the following ways:

- Use our **online form**
- **Call us** on 0345 678 0555.
- **Tell a member** of Accent staff.
- **Email us** at [customerservices@accentgroup.org](mailto:customerservices@accentgroup.org)
- **Write to us:** 3rd Floor, Scorex House, 1 Bolton Road, Bradford, BD1 4AS

The Housing Ombudsman Service is available to support you with any complaints you may have. You can contact the Ombudsman for advice during the complaints process, and if you are still dissatisfied after our stage 2 response you can ask the Ombudsman to review your complaint.

Find out more here:  
[www.housingombudsman.org.uk/residents/](http://www.housingombudsman.org.uk/residents/)

## Housing Ombudsman Service: Complaint Handling Code

Following the launch of the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code on 1 April 2024, we have completed our self-assessment and reviewed our Complaints and Compensation Policy. We have also launched our new Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

Under the new Code, we are required to publish an annual performance and service improvement report for customers. This allows you to see the work we are doing to improve our complaints service. This is available on our website using the link below. We can also provide a copy on request and make the document available in other formats.

For more information visit:  
[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/)

## Housing Ombudsman Determination

On 19th March 2024, we received our first determination of severe maladministration from the Housing Ombudsman Service. This determination was about our handling of window repairs. In this case there was also a finding of maladministration in relation to our handling of the complaint.

We know on this occasion that we failed to provide the level of service our customers expect and deserve. We have unreservedly apologised to the customer at the centre of this case, and we are actively contacting any other customers who have experienced similar issues to redress any service failures.

To read our learning report and our ongoing assurance, please visit our website:  
[www.accentgroup.org/media/6012/learning-report.pdf](http://www.accentgroup.org/media/6012/learning-report.pdf)

We have updated our repairs responsibilities leaflet and website in relation to window glazing. Please read the updated information here:  
[www.accentgroup.org/who-repairs-what/](http://www.accentgroup.org/who-repairs-what/)





## Coming soon:

- **TSMs survey.** We will be launching our annual census satisfaction survey on 2 September, and it will be open for 6 weeks. This is a great time for you to tell us what you think of the services we provide. There will be one survey issued per household. Please respond to the survey when you are contacted - it will help us to understand how you are feeling, what we do well and what we need to do to improve. When the survey is available, we will contact you via SMS or email, or with a phone call to let you know. Please look out for any contact from Accent and our contracted agency, CX. We will aim to use the method of contact you prefer.
- **New Customer Engagement Strategy.** This sets out our commitment to gathering and acting on the thoughts of our customers to drive service improvements. Look out for more information and how to get involved.
- **New website launch.** Coming October 2024! The new website, designed alongside a selection of customers, will make your online experience with us much better ensuring you have easier access to the information you need.
- **Big Conversation.** Following the success of this in 2023, we will be out in our neighbourhoods again to share the results of our latest TSMs perception survey on Fri 1 November and Mon 4 November 2024. More details to follow soon.

**For translation, Braille, large print or audio, please contact us on 0345 678 0555, and select option 2 for the Housing Hub and option 3 to access a member of our team who will be pleased to help you.**



 **0345 678 0555**

 **[customerservices@accentgroup.org](mailto:customerservices@accentgroup.org)**