

# **Leaseholders Survey May 2013**

Draft headline report

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## **1. Introduction & purpose of report**

Brighton & Hove City Council is the landlord and leasehold manager for the leaseholders of over 2,000 residential flats. Most of these properties were originally purchased from the council under the Right to Buy legislation.

The Leasehold Manager commissioned this research. This is the fifth full Survey of our leaseholders: they have been undertaken in 1997-98, in 2004, 2007 and most recently in 2010.

In addition to creating an up to date profile of leaseholders, the survey also hoped to determine leaseholders' views of the council's performance across the different areas relating to leasehold management.

## **2. Methodology**

During May 2013 a postal questionnaire (including a pre-paid business response envelope) was sent to all leaseholders with properties in the city.

The survey contained questions relating to;

- Leasehold management
- Leasehold Team
- Service charges
- Making payments
- Repairs and works
- Cleaning and ground maintenance
- Housing Customer Services

A number of questions were the same as in a previous survey in 2010 to allow comparisons to be made.

## **3. Response and response rate**

Four hundred and six completed questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 19%. This can be considered a reasonable response rate for the type of methodology.

While the number of responses can be considered acceptable for drawing overall conclusions there will be confidence/error rate in the region of plus or minus 4 to 5 percent. However, the confidence/error rate will be higher for questions relating to the Leasehold Team and Housing Customer Service since not all respondents will have had contact.

A full profile of respondents can be found in section 7.

#### **4. Key findings**

Two thirds of respondents (68%) are satisfied with the council as their leasehold manager with a quarter (25%) dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the council as their leasehold manager has fallen slightly (4%) compared to 2010.

A key theme in how the council could improve the service was to be more proactive than reactive in the way the repairs and maintenance service is delivered

In general leaseholders over the age of 75 are much more likely to be positive about their property and the services they receive than are younger leaseholders.

Two third of respondents (67%) are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, three times more than those who are dissatisfied (21%). Satisfaction with their neighbourhood has fallen by 9% compared to 2010 while dissatisfaction has increased by 7%.

Two in five respondents (175 people, 43%) had contacted the Leasehold Team in the last 12 months. Over all, three out of five respondents (60%) were happy with the service provided by the Leasehold Team,

Three times more respondents (70%) were satisfied that the Interim Charge is set at a reasonable level to cover the normal level of cost occurred during the year, than were dissatisfied (21%). However there was less satisfaction (56%) that the actual service charge billed represents a reasonable charge for the work and services provided.

Respondent's views about the repair service are mixed. For all aspect of the service that respondents were asked about more leaseholders were satisfied than dissatisfied. However, two out of five leaseholders were dissatisfied with the 'general condition of the exterior, structure and common part of their building (42%)', 'the way council deals with keeping their building in repair' (41%) and the 'cost of repairs carried out' (41%).

#### **5. Results**

The results to all questions have been analysed by;

- How long respondents have been a leaseholder
- Type of leaseholder
- Full equalities

Where appropriate the results have been compared to the leaseholder survey undertaken in 2010.

In many of the cases the number of responses is very small making it difficult to make robust conclusions.

**Where there is a notable difference this will be included in these results if there is no difference no mention will be made.**

## **5.1 Leasehold management**

Two thirds of respondents (68%) are satisfied with the council as their leasehold manager with a quarter (25%) dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the council as their leasehold manager has fallen slightly (4%) compared to 2010.

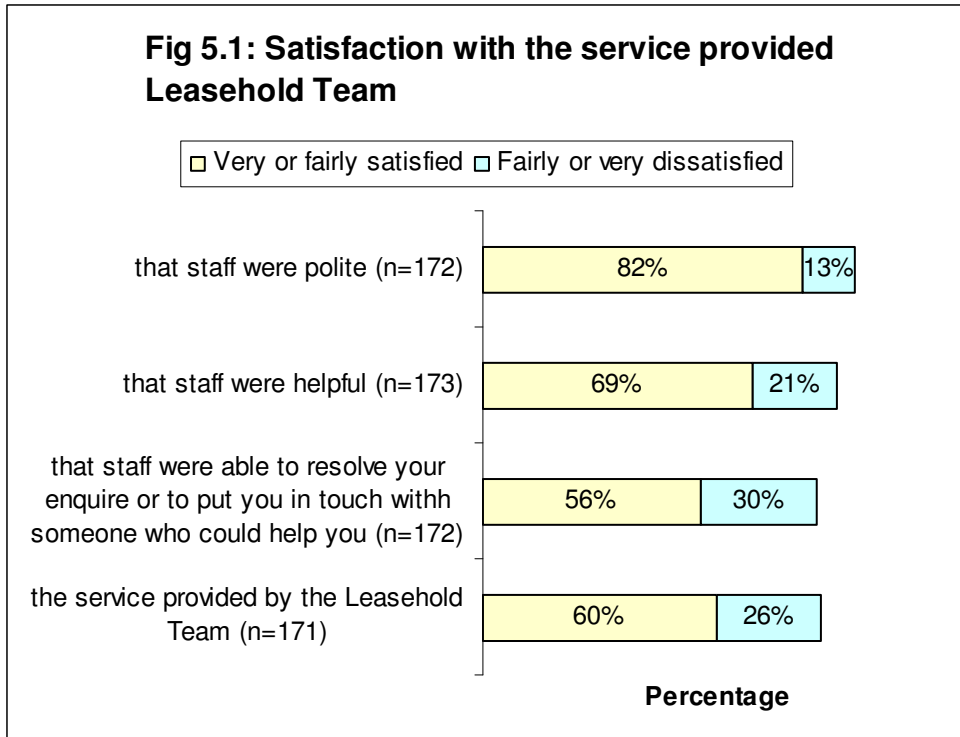
When asked to rate the council as their leasehold manager out of ten; twice as many respondents (38%) gave a score of 8 to 10 (excellent) as gave a score 1 to 3 (17%).

Respondents were asked how the council could make them score the council ten out of ten. Responses were both varied and often specific. Key themes are highlighted below.

- **Maintenance of buildings**
  - Interior, exterior and common areas
  - More frequent / promptly / quicker
  - Be pro active rather than reactive
  - Provide and or evidence value for money
  - Higher standards
  
- **Communications (Housing and Mears)**
  - Respond to enquiries / complaints
  - Provide feedback on ongoing works or issues
  - Particular issue around major maintenance projects
  - Detailed and accurate costing of bills and how money raised is spent
  
- The provision, location, maintenance and cleaning of bin and recycling areas

## **5.2 Leasehold Team**

Two in five respondents (175 people, 43%) had contacted the Leasehold Team in the last 12 months. Respondents who had contacted the Leasehold Team were asked about how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the service they received. Fig 5.1 below summaries their responses.



**Base: All respondents who answered the individual questions.**

Overall three out of five respondents (60%) were happy with the service provided by the Leasehold Team, more than twice those who were dissatisfied. Four out of five respondents (82%) were satisfied that staff had been polite with two thirds (69%) also satisfied that staff had also been helpful. There was less satisfaction (56%) that staff were able to resolve the enquiry or to be put in touch with someone who could help.

### Comparison with the 2010 Leaseholders survey

Overall fewer respondents were satisfied with the service provided by the Leasehold Team in 2013 (60%) when compared to 2010 (68%). Similarly satisfaction that staff had been polite has fallen by 8%; been helpful by 12% and able to resolve the issue by 13%.

### 5.3 Service charges

Four out of five respondents (80%) were satisfied that the cost in the Interim Charge they receive in March was set out in a way that was easy to understand and three quarters (76%) were satisfied that the costs in the Certificate of Expenditure are also easy to understand. Four out of five respondents (81%) were also satisfied that the information included to explain service charges was helpful.

Three times more respondents (70%) were satisfied that the Interim Charge is set at a reasonable level to cover the normal level of cost occurred during the year, than were dissatisfied (21%). However there was less satisfaction (56%) that the actual service charge billed represents a reasonable charge for the work and services provided. A third of respondents were dissatisfied.

There was mixed opinion over the idea of introducing a sinking fund for future major works with 45% of respondents supportive and 37% opposed.

### **Comparison with the 2010 Leaseholders survey**

Although still high compared to 2010, satisfaction that the Interim Charge and the Certificate of Expenditure are easy to understand have both fallen by 9% and 11% respectively. Satisfaction that the information included to explain the service charges was easy to understand has fallen by 4%.

Satisfaction that the Interim Charge is set at a reasonable level to cover the normal level of costs occurred during the year shows a small fall of 2% compared to 2010, while satisfaction with the actual service charged billed remains the same at 56%.

Support for the introduction of a sink fund has strengthened with the proportion supporting the introduction increasing from 32% to 45% with those opposed falling from 50% to 37%.

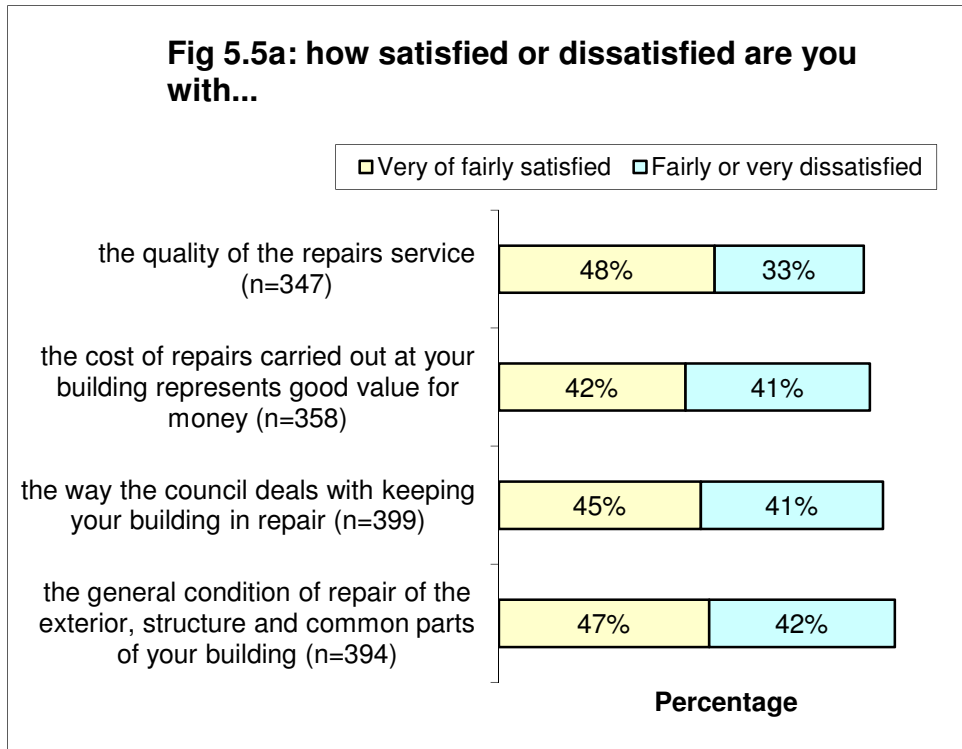
### **5.4 Making payments**

Although satisfaction with available arrangement for paying and overall service have fallen slightly compared to 2010, there is still a high level of satisfaction that the available payment arrangements are suitable (85%) and with the overall service received when paying the service charge (80%). Nine times more respondents are satisfied with the service they received than are dissatisfied (9%).

### **5.5 Repairs and works**

Respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with different aspects of the repairs and works service provided. Fig 5.5a below summaries their responses.

Respondent's views about the repair service are mixed. For all aspect of the service that respondents were asked about more leaseholders were satisfied than dissatisfied. However, two out of five leaseholders were dissatisfied with the 'general condition of the exterior, structure and common part of their building (42%), 'the way council deals with keeping their building in repair' (41%) and the 'cost of repairs carried out' (41%).



Base: All respondents who answered the individual questions.

### Comparison with the 2010 Leaseholders survey

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with repairs and works are broadly similar to what was seen in 2010 (fig 5.5b below).

Fig 5.5b: Comparison between satisfaction and dissatisfaction with repairs and works

	Satisfaction		Dissatisfaction	
	2013	2010	2013	2010
The cost of repairs carried out at your building represents good value for money	42%	40%	41%	40%
The way the council deals with keeping your building in repair	45%	49%	41%	40%
The general condition of repair of the exterior, structure and common parts of your building	47%	47%	42%	45%

### 5.6 Cleaning and ground maintenance

Two third of respondents (67%) are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live, three times more than those who are dissatisfied (21%).



Satisfaction with their neighbourhood has fallen by 9% compared to 2010 while dissatisfaction has increased by 7%.

Three out of five respondents are satisfied with the general cleanliness and tidiness of the common areas of their building (57%) and with the cleaning service provided by the council (61%). However, less than a half (47%) are satisfied that the service charge paid for cleaning their building represents value for money. A third are dissatisfied (38%), with nearly one in five (18%) very dissatisfied.

Among those leaseholders who pay for ground maintenance to be carried out, nearly two thirds of respondents (63%) are satisfied with the grass cutting carried out. However, only a half (49%) are satisfied that the service charge for ground maintenance represents good value for money with nearly a third (31%) dissatisfied.

## **5.7 Housing Customer Services**

A third of respondents (128 people, 33%) had contacted Housing Customer Services in the past six months. Of these, nearly three quarters (72%) were satisfied that staff were polite, helpful and professional. This is four times more than were dissatisfied (17%). However, only a half of respondents (49%) were satisfied that the reason for contacting the Housing Customer Services was dealt with effectively and in a reasonable time scale. Two out of five respondents (42%) were dissatisfied with one in five very dissatisfied (21%).

## **6. Differences by equality group and type of leaseholder**

Care need to be taken when interpreting these results as number of respondents is often small and may not be mutually exclusive to one group.

### **6.1 By equality group**

#### **6.1.1 Age**

In general leaseholders over the age of 75 are much more likely to be positive about their property and the services they receive than are younger leaseholders. In particular they are;

- Three times more likely to be satisfied with the council as their leasehold manager
- Twice as likely to think that staff in the Leasehold Team are helpful
- Twice as likely to be satisfied with the level of the Interim Charge issued in March as well as thinking the actual service charge paid represent value for money.

- Twice as likely to be satisfied with the general condition of repair of the exterior structure and common parts of their building, the way the council deals with keeping their building in repair and the quality of the repair service.
- Twice as likely to be satisfied with the cleanliness and tidiness of common areas of their building and the cleaning service that the council provides.

### **6.1.2 Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB)**

Although numbers are small (particularly for questions relating to service), LGB leaseholders are generally (but not always) less positive about their property and the services they receive than are heterosexual leaseholders. In particular they are;

- Almost twice as dissatisfied with the council as their leasehold manager
- Three times as likely to be dissatisfied that staff in the Leasehold Team are polite and almost twice as likely to be dissatisfied that staff are able to resolve their enquiry or put them in touch with someone who could.
- More than a half are dissatisfied with the general condition of repair of the exterior structure and common parts of their building, the way the council deals with keeping their building in repair and that the cost of repairs represent good value for money. This compares to a third of heterosexual leaseholders.

### **6.1.3 Carers**

Although numbers are small (15 people), leaseholders who are carers are generally (but not always) less positive about their property and the services they receive than are leaseholders without caring responsibilities.

In particular they are generally less satisfied with the service they have received from the Leasehold Team. Seven out of 15 carers (47%) are dissatisfied with the overall service provided compared to only 17% of other users. Carers are also more than twice as likely to be dissatisfied with how polite staff are, how helpful they are and with their ability to resolve their enquiry.

### **6.1.4 Health problem or disability**

Seven out of 31 leaseholders (23%) with a health problem or disability were dissatisfied with how polite staff in the Leaseholder Team were, this compares to only 9% of all other leaseholders

## 6.2 Type of leaseholders

Generally the views of leaseholders were similar regardless of how long they had been leaseholders.

When comparing responses from different types of leaseholder the main difference relates to cleaning and ground maintenance. Mindful of the small numbers (17 respondents) landlords (excluding HA) are less like to be dissatisfied with cleaning and ground maintenance.

- Only one landlord who receives a service (6%) is dissatisfied with the grass cutting compared to 26% of all other leaseholders.
- Around twice as many leaseholders who are not landlord are dissatisfied with the cleaning service that the council provides and with the charge providing value for money than are leaseholders who are landlords

## 7. Respondents profile

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
<b>How long have you been a leaseholder</b>		
Under 1 year	20	5%
1 to 5 years	60	15%
5 to 10 years	80	20%
10 to 15 years	94	24%
Over 15 years	143	36%
Total	397	100%
No response	9	
<b>Type of building</b>		
High rise	81	20%
Medium rise	155	39%
Low rise	121	30%
House conversion	14	4%
2 flat duplex	31	8%
<b>Type of leaseholder</b>		
Resident	321	80%
Non resident – sub letting	50	13%
Non resident – other	8	2%
Property company or landlord	21	5%
Housing association	1	0.2%
Total	401	100%
No response	5	

<b>Flat purchase</b>			
	Right to buy	158	40%
	Open market	209	53%
	Inherited	17	4%
	Other	13	3%
	Total	37	100%
	No response	15	
<b>Gender</b>			
	Male	171	48%
	Female	184	52%
	Total	355	100%
	No response	51	
<b>Age</b>			
	23 to 44	92	30%
	45 to 64	91	30%
	65 to 74	59	19%
	75 and over	66	21%
	Total	308	100%
	No response	98	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
	White UK / British	323	89%
	White Irish	3	1%
	White other	15	4%
	BME	24	7%
	Total	365	100%
	No response	41	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>			
	Heterosexual / Straight	289	92%
	Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual	27	8%
	Total	316	100%
	No response	90	
<b>Disability - Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?</b>			
	Yes	88	25%
	No	258	75%
	Total	346	100%
	No response	60	
<b>Carer - look after or give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either; long term physical or mental ill health, a disability or a problem related to age.</b>			
	Yes	33	13%
	No	227	87%
	Total	260	100%
	No response	146	