



## Value for Money statement 2017

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# 1 Summary and operating environment

- 1.1** EHSL was established in 2012 and is a voluntary organisation, meaning that it carries on its activities for reasons other than profit. EHSL uses any surpluses generated in furtherance of its objects, rather than distributing it to other parties. This position is preserved in EHSL's articles of association, which also sets out that there are no shareholders or owners. EHSL is governed by a board of six directors. EHSL has two board positions available.
- 1.2** EHSL's objective is to provide quality supported housing accommodation and associated services to a range of different client groups for whom suitable alternative accommodation is not available. This includes people with learning disabilities, mental health issues, autism, acquired brain injuries, and other support needs.
- 1.3** EHSL provides supported housing accommodation in conjunction with various nominated care providers, who provide EHSL's tenants with social care services funded by Adult Social Care departments, the NHS, and via personal budgets.
- 1.4** The provision of supported housing accommodation is funded predominantly via government funding streams, including Housing Benefit and in a limited number of cases, via Local Authority Adult Social Care budgets. EHSL recognises that it has a responsibility to ensure that it is using public funds in an appropriate manner.
- 1.5** EHSL operates mostly in London and surrounding counties. EHSL also operates accommodation in the Midlands. A range of accommodation types are offered, including shared houses, self-contained flats, purpose designed schemes with self-contained areas and communal spaces, and ordinary properties which have been secured to meet the needs of a specific tenant. EHSL intends to expand the number of locations that it operates in order to deliver services to a wider number of people.
- 1.6** EHSL relies on the private rented sector to secure property, by leasing properties from private landlords. EHSL also leases properties from care providers. EHSL does not currently own any property.
- 1.7** The provision of supported housing accommodation has a wider social impact than solely on the tenants of that housing. By providing supported housing, local authorities are able to save money against the cost of providing alternative accommodation such as in residential care homes, long stay hospitals, or in homelessness services and hostels. By ensuring that tenants are accessing accommodation and services that are suitable for their needs, local authorities can save money or make more expensive services available to people who need it more.
- 1.8** In 2016, EHSL submitted an application to the Homes and Communities Agency to register as a provider of social housing. EHSL believes that this will bring benefits in the form of regulatory oversight, access to funding, increased profile, and protections for its tenants that are associated with having a landlord that operates within a regulated sector
- 1.9** EHSL is committed to achieving value for money in meeting its objectives. In respect of this EHSL has analysed its income, costs and performance during the 2016-17 accounting period with the aim to identify areas in which it has achieved value for money, and areas in which it can review or improve how well it does this. EHSL has also given consideration to how it offers quality services whilst ensuring value for money
- 1.10** Decision made in relation to Value for Money must also take quality into consideration, with the intention always being to ensure that tenant satisfaction and the quality and availability of EHSL's service is not compromised as a result.
- 1.11** EHSL manages its ability to offer value for money in the following ways:
- Robust and consistent decision making backed by policies and procedures which are reviewed annually by EHSL's board.
  - Rigorous appraisal of alternative models of service delivery.
  - Giving consideration to the wider impact of the decisions that made by EHSL.
  - Risk assessment and risk management controls.
  - Use of accounting tools to forecast and measure risk and returns.
  - Ensuring that the board scrutinises EHSL's expenditure and that a culture of promoting value for money is fostered at all levels of the organisation
  - Ensuring that EHSL understands the factors that influence its costs.

## 2 Strategic Objectives

EHSL's objects are defined in its articles of association. The objects are:

*For the benefit of the public, the provision of housing, accommodation and associated advice to persons who are in need by reason of their age, disability or economic circumstance*

In April 2017, EHSL's board proposed a revision to its objects, in the interests of widening its objectives and to embed its not-for-profit status in its objects. The proposed objects have been approved by the board, subject to confirmation from the regulator. The revised objects are:

### **Objects**

- 3.1 *The objects for which the Company is established are, for the benefit of the public:*
- 3.1.1 *To provide social housing as defined in section 68 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 any other purposes connected with or incidental to the provision and management of housing, social housing and accommodation including, but not limited to, the provision of support services, housing services, care services, training services, advice services, and other services to persons who are in need by reason of their age, disabilities or economic circumstances;*
- 3.1.2 *To carry out its business not for profit. The income and property of the Company shall be applied solely towards the promotion of its objects as set forth in this Article 3 and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred, directly or indirectly, by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit, to members of the Company, provided that nothing herein shall prevent any payment in good faith by the Company*
- 3.1.2.1 *Of reasonable and proper remuneration to any member, officer or servant of the Company for any services rendered to the Company;*
- 3.1.2.2 *Of any interest on money lent by any member of the Company or any director at a reasonable and proper rate;*
- 3.1.2.3 *Of reasonable and proper rent for premises demised or let by any member of the Company or any director; and*
- 3.1.2.4 *to any director of out-of-pocket expenses.*
- 3.1.3 *To carry on any object that can be carried out by a company registered as a provider of social housing by the regulator.*
- 3.2 *EHSL is registered as an English body under the company registration number 7965814.*
- 3.3 *The objects set forth in each sub-Article of this Article 3 shall not be restrictively construed but the widest interpretation shall be given thereto, and they shall not, except where the context expressly so requires, be in any way limited or restricted by reference to or inference from any other object or objects set forth in each sub-Article or from the name of the Company. None of each sub-Articles or the object or objects therein specified or the powers thereby conferred shall be deemed subsidiary or ancillary to the objects or powers mentioned in any other sub-Article, but the Company shall have full power to exercise all or any of the objects conferred by and provided in each of the said sub-Articles as if each sub-Article contained the objects of a separate company. The word **company** in this Article, except where used in reference to the Company, shall be deemed to include any partnership or other body of persons, whether incorporated or unincorporated and whether domiciled in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.*
- 3.4 *If upon the winding up or dissolution of the Company there remains, after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid or distributed among the members of the Company, but shall be given or transferred to some other institution having objects similar to the objects of the Company and which shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income to its or their members, such institutions to be determined by the members of the Company at or before the time of dissolution subject to S167 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and with the approval of the Charity Commission if required."*

### 3 EHSL's Value for Money strategy

- 3.1** In October 2016, EHSL prepared its first Value for Money Strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that EHSL is maximising opportunities to achieve optimum value for money, in the context of sustainability whilst ensuring quality and tenant satisfaction.
- 3.2** Within this strategy is a definition of Value for Money, specific priorities, information on how EHSL involves residents in ensuring value for money, strategic objections and actions, responsibilities for delivery, and the Key Performance Indicators that allow EHSL to measure how and where it is achieving value for money, and where improvements can be made
- 3.3** EHSL's strategy has been made available to all staff, and value for money is discussed as part of all decision-making process.
- 3.4** The Social Housing Regulator has proposed that changes are made to the Value for Money standard and that a code of practice is introduced to accompany the standard. The proposed standard will require providers to move away from the current narrative reporting method of assessing value for money, and towards a set of metrics defined by the regulator. The new standard is proposed to be introduced from April 2018. EHSL will monitor the proposal in order that it can ensure that its strategy is compliant with the new standard.

## 4 Social impact Statement

EHSL's provision of supported housing accommodation prevents tenants from relying on more costly services such as residential care homes and long stay hospitals, contributing to a government policy which commenced as long ago as 1959 with the 1959 Mental Health Act. EHSL has provided accommodation to people who have previously lived in long stay mental hospitals or NHS campuses.

In other cases, EHSL's accommodation has been made available to people who would otherwise have been in prison, or be reliant on short term accommodation such as homelessness hostels, shelters, or temporary accommodation.

Whilst it is difficult to quantify exactly how much has been saved due to the varying profile of need of EHSL's tenants and the absence of exact cost figures of alternatives, there are a number of research papers and statements in which the wider economic value of supported housing is measured.

*"Supported housing makes good economic sense. It delivers average net savings to the public purse of around £940 per resident per year. Depending on the type of scheme, the level of savings can be even greater; for example for people with learning disabilities the saving is £6,764 per resident per year. Research undertaken in 2009 showed a net financial benefit of the Supporting People programme of £3.41bn per year against an overall investment of £1.61bn. A new, sustainable approach to funding supported housing is needed to ensure the benefits of supported housing are maximised and positive outcomes for the people that live in it continue to be delivered.*

*The availability of specialist and supported housing is failing to keep up with existing and increasing future demand. This leaves older and vulnerable people in housing that does not suit their needs and which does not deliver the integrated care and support which is so vital for their independence. It is estimated that around 16,000 more specialist homes are needed every year for older people alone to close this gap by 2030. This does not include the extra homes required for the thousands of others with support needs such as those with learning disabilities or mental health problems"<sup>1</sup>*

Based on the saving calculation of £6,764 per resident per annum, as above. EHSL's provision of supported housing accommodation for 180 people contributed to a central government saving of around £1,217,520 in 2016/17.

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<sup>1</sup> A proposal for a strong and sustainable future for supported and sheltered housing, The National Housing Federation, 2016

## 5 Performance in 2016/17

### 5.1 Rent collection and arrears management

Rent arrears places stress on EHSL's finances because a tenant's failure to pay their rent results in EHSL's resources being limited, constricting its ability to deliver its objectives. During 2016/17, EHSL's rent arrears figure was £71,886, representing 4.5% of rents due. Rent arrears may occur for any of the following reasons, which EHSL addresses in the following ways.

Reason	Approach
<b>Technical</b>	
<b>Restriction of Housing Benefit awards to a level below the eligible rent.</b>	EHSL supports tenants to appeal to the Housing Benefit department. A robust rent setting methodology and consistency in approach ensures that rents are reasonable and within market rent levels, reducing the risk of these decisions being made.
<b>Restriction of Housing Benefit awards to the level of the Local Housing Allowance.</b>	EHSL supports tenants to appeal to the Housing Benefit department, and submits documentation evidencing eligibility for claims to be treated under exempt accommodation rules. EHSL's staff have also received training specific to welfare benefit legislation.
<b>Tenants circumstances affecting their ability to claim housing benefit (i.e. not being in receipt of qualifying welfare benefits)</b>	EHSL seeks to identify eligibility issues at an early stage as part of its robust referral process. When an issue is identified, EHSL offers advice to tenants and stakeholders, signposting tenants to additional advice as appropriate.
<b>Ineligibility for Housing Benefit for reasons relating to a lack of identification or supporting evidence.</b>	EHSL seeks to obtain this documentation prior to issuing a tenancy agreement.
<b>Failure to successfully claim housing benefit</b>	EHSL offers assistance to tenants to make a housing benefit claim on the day they move into the accommodation. EHSL then follows up the claim with the Housing benefit department to ensure that it remains open until it is awarded.
<b>Non-technical</b>	
<b>Failure to pay HB ineligible charges.</b>	EHSL issues tenants with a pre-populated standing order form in order that a standing order can easily be set up to cover any charges that are not eligible for Housing Benefit. During 2017 EHSL moved banks from Clydesdale Bank to HSBC to enable tenants to make cash payments in branch.
<b>Poor budgeting decisions</b>	EHSL offers its tenants consultative visits and works in partnership with local authorities, care providers and other stakeholders to assist tenants with budgeting. Where a tenant is unable to manage their money and their accommodation is at risk as a result, EHSL will be in support of arrangements to appoint an appropriate deputy.
<b>Dereliction of duties by an appointee or deputy</b>	EHSL challenges deputies and appointees who do not meet their obligations towards EHSL's tenants. In some cases, parental deputyship has been revoked in favour of local authority deputyship.
<b>Disputes over liability</b>	EHSL presents its rent and service charge information in a clear format, with easy-read materials available to assist tenants understanding of what they are responsible for paying for. The tenants' handbook provides information about how to pay rent and other charges. This ensures that tenants are aware of their responsibilities, minimising disputes.
<b>Lack of capacity</b>	EHSL works with local authorities to address matters relating to lack of capacity, seeking to establish arrangements for money management for tenants who lack capacity.
<b>Availability of funds.</b>	EHSL offers its tenants consultation visits and works in partnership with local authorities, care providers and other stakeholders to assist tenants to access the welfare benefits that they are entitled to.

#### Note

In situations where a tenant fails to make payment of any sums due to EHSL, EHSL will consider all options in respect of recovering the debt. This may include setting a payment plan, appealing to the authority to instigate deputyship proceedings, invoking direct deductions from source via the DWP, and opening possession proceedings to recover possession if the situation has become untenable.

## 5.2 Tenant Satisfaction.

In February 2017 EHSL prepared an anonymous survey using the ‘Survey Monkey’ website, which was distributed via email. EHSL contacted the care companies that provide care to its tenants, asking them for assistance in engaging tenants to respond to the survey. We also offered family members and professional stakeholders an opportunity to respond. Some care providers were particularly supportive in engaging tenants to respond, others did not respond or acknowledge the request. The full survey report can be found at the rear of this statement.

EHSL received 5 responses to the survey. We recognise that this is a level that is too low to establish the broad scope of areas that may require improvement, although it is likely to be the case that tenants who would give feedback for negative reason may have been more motivated to complete the survey. Responses may also relate to stock that EHSL manages for other associations, for which we do not have control over certain aspects of service delivery. The lack of a wider response indicated that the care providers may not have made all tenants aware of the survey, or care providers may have completed one form to summarise the responses of a number of people that it supports. EHSL asked the respondent to state whether they are a tenant, support provider or other stakeholder. Having reviewed feedback received, EHSL’s action plan included the following points.

Action Point from February 2017.	Position at end of 2017
1. EHSL will appoint a property manager whose role is to deal exclusively with repairs and property related matters. This will ensure that we are appropriately resourced to deal with matters of this nature and can improve the service being offered.	In May 2017 EHSL appointed a full-time property manager. The new role has made time available for housing officers to focus on tenancy management, with all repairs, maintenance, adaptations, safety checks and compliance related works being dealt with as part of the focused Property Manager role.
2. EHSL will review its property management software and the functions it offers, with a view to ensuring that it follows up on a higher number of repairs to ensure that the tenant is satisfied with the work performed.	In May 2017 EHSL started using Re-Leased property management software, which is better suited to meet EHSL’s needs. This software is integrated with the online accounting software EHSL uses, which saves time in the preparation of financial reports. The software allows tracking and flagging of late jobs.
3. EHSL will review its response times and clearly set out what tenants should expect.	EHSL has reviewed its repairs and maintenance policy and made this available via its website. Further information is provided in the Tenants Handbook.
4. EHSL will distribute a Tenant’s Handbook to all new and existing tenants. In doing so, it will provide relevant information about its services.	EHSL prepared and distributed a Tenants Handbook in April 2017. The handbook is given to each new tenant.
5. EHSL will conduct a further feedback exercise aimed at assessing the quality and value for money of the communal services provided.	EHSL intends to conduct a new survey in February 2018, and will make it easier for tenants to respond by also offering paper forms and a telephone response option. It will promote the survey more widely using both email and the postal service.
6. EHSL will review the quality of the repairs contractors that it uses and seek to introduce new contractors where a lack of quality is identified and not remedied.	EHSL has reviewed the level of service from its contractors and stopped using a number who it felt were not meeting the standards expected. The issues related to poor quality of communication and timekeeping, and failure to meet agreed deadlines. EHSL has also introduced a new emergency maintenance contractor. The contractor offers a ‘troubleshooting’ service which is intended to minimise unnecessary call-outs. There are also tighter controls for authorisation of works which exceed the pre-approved limit than there were with the previous contractor.
7. EHSL will review its rent arrears and evictions policy	EHSL has reviewed its policy and whilst it feels that the policy remains appropriate, EHSL has received feedback that it is sometimes quick to commence possession proceedings when other stakeholders feel that all alternative avenues have not been explored fully. EHSL is addressing this by reviewing authorisation procedures prior to instigating an eviction – this includes the introduction of an Equality Act assessment prior to any proceedings commencing, along with the requirement for a capacity assessment that will inform other actions. EHSL has prepared and distributed information for tenants and stakeholders explaining how the eviction process works.



### 5.3 Void management

EHSL's position is that where a unit of its accommodation is not being used, EHSL's ability to offer value for money is compromised. Thus, void risk management is a key area of focus affecting both value for money and viability. The nature of EHSL's supported housing accommodation is such that void periods are sometimes longer than we would like. Voids may not be refilled promptly for any of the following reasons, either singly or in combination:

- Quality of EHSL's relationship with the local authority
- Quality of the nominated care provider's relationship with the local authority.
- Lack of local support for the scheme.
- Difficulties in finding new tenants who are compatible with existing tenants.
- Desirability of the accommodation, including size, quality of facilities, location, condition.
- Limited numbers of people within the scheme's intended client group.
- Lack of suitability of referrals received
- Oversupply in surrounding area.
- Forthcoming closure
- Change of commissioning priorities

Shared housing schemes are exposed to a greater number of these risks. These schemes should only be set up where there is strong demand communicated by a local authority, and that it is expected that this demand will be sustained for the full duration of any lease. Schemes containing self-contained flats are least likely to suffer from long-term voids as they are considered amongst the more desirable of accommodation types. Single occupancy schemes in dispersed accommodation are less likely to become void as they tend to be secured with a particular tenant's needs in mind. Depending on location, voids in these schemes may be more difficult to re-fill.

Longstanding issues with voids suggest either ineffective commissioning or that a service is no longer relevant to meeting the intended clients' needs.

EHSL considers void risk management to be one of the most important aspects of ensuring value for money. By partnering with a care provider who undertakes to cover periods in which properties are void, the majority of risk is mitigated. EHSL is exposed to void risk in the following areas.

- Where EHSL leases a property from the private sector, it may need to spend some period of time preparing the property for occupancy by supported housing tenants. This might include fire safety measures, adaptations, HMO related works, provision of furnishings/white goods, and other such health and safety related tasks. Once this work is completed and any void free periods expires, the care providers liability to meet the cost of voids commences.
- In situations where a care provider ceases to provide care to an EHSL tenant and EHSL chooses to continue to provide accommodation without a void cover agreement in place, EHSL would cover any losses relating to voids occurring after the care provider has been released from its obligations.
- Situations in which EHSL leases a property from a care provider with rent payable on the basis of occupancy. During void periods, EHSL does not have to pay rent to the head landlord, but also cannot collect a rent or void cover to contribute towards its other costs.

During 2016/17, £58,709.70 of income was foregone as a result of voids. EHSL did however collect £153,420 from care providers in respect of voids that they were liable for under the agreements in place. EHSL continues to work with its care provider partners to ensure that voids are managed effectively. EHSL includes a component within its rent for void and bad debt cover to meet the costs of voids that EHSL is liable for. EHSL is seeking to fill in gaps in its void cover arrangements.

#### Void Cover insurance

EHSL has assessed whether Void Cover insurance would be an appropriate way to manage void risk. EHSL determined that the cost of insurance would be greater than the payments it would receive from the insurer – this is because the insurer will only pay where voids have occurred for specified reasons - many voids have occurred for reasons that the insurer will not insure against, including EHSL led terminations and terminations that do not relate directly to the tenants' health and social care needs.

## 5.4 Repairs, Maintenance, and communal services

### Extent of repairs and maintenance services

EHSL leases properties from private landlords and care providers, on varying terms. The longest leases are 5 years with the option to renew, and the shortest can be for just one year. In most leases, the building owner is responsible for some repairs and maintenance, although this is usually limited to works under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. Broadly, this means that they are responsible for ensuring that there are working systems for heating, plumbing and electricity supply, and that there are no issues with the fabric and structure of the building. Whilst this reduces EHSL's liability for repairs, it does mean that EHSL is not in control of upgrades and renewals that may be required. EHSL incurs cost in relation to response repairs to these systems, including via emergency call-outs. It is important that EHSL makes prudent decisions in relation to where it spends money where it does not own the buildings accommodation is provided in.

Another significant area of maintenance expenditure for EHSL is in ensuring that the accommodation it secures is suitable for its tenants. This often includes the installation of more robust fire alarm and emergency lighting systems, fire doors, other works related to standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation, including local standards and legal requirements, installation of different types of sanitary facilities, works intended to prevent or minimise anticipated future damage, and works intended to ensure that the property meets the requirements of the Decent Homes standard. In making decisions around this type of expenditure, consideration must be given to the longevity and suitability of the accommodation, the expected lifespan of the accommodation, the recoverability of the costs incurred in making these changes, and whether the costs proposed are reasonable.

### Use of maintenance management software, and 24/7 reporting.

EHSL has reviewed its repairs reporting process and the software it uses for managing repairs. In 2017, EHSL implemented the Re-Leased property management system, allowing repairs to be tracked effectively and for costs to be linked directly into EHSL's accounting system.

EHSL's tenants can report repairs via email or by telephone, via a 24/7 call centre number. Where an emergency is reported during evenings and weekends, EHSL's out-of-hours contractor is notified in order that the nature of the emergency can be verified against a list of agreed emergency situations. The contractor's service will discuss possible end-user led solutions with the caller (i.e. switching an RCD on, placing a bucket under a containable leak, adjusting a thermostat), and a contractor dispatched only if required. If an emergency is reported during office hours EHSL staff consider the most cost-effective way to resolve the issue, limiting the use of expensive emergency contractors only to situations where they are absolutely necessary. It is important when arranging repairs to ensure that the response is proportionate – the appropriateness of sending an emergency contractor will depend on the extent of the issue, the impact it is having on the tenant, the needs of the tenant, and the comparative cost between an emergency repair and a routine repair.

*“Depending on the contracting arrangements, responding to a repair as a priority can be more expensive than treating the same repair as routine. Reducing the number of emergency and urgent repairs can bring important financial savings. The proportion of priority work undertaken will be influenced by several factors, including the nature of the stock and tenant profile. However, a high percentage of emergency and urgent repairs may indicate that work is being over-prioritised and highlight training needs around the accurate diagnosis and prioritisation of repairs<sup>2</sup>.”*

EHSL seeks to ensure that repairs are diagnosed effectively. All out-of-hours callers are asked to identify whether their repair is an emergency repair or a routine repair. If the caller identifies that they have an emergency, they are directed to the out-of-hours contractor, who will verify the issue against a list of pre-agreed emergencies. Secondly, the out-of-hours contractor will attempt to talk the caller through possible solutions if there may be a solution that can be implemented by an end-user. An out-of-hours contractor will be dispatched if the issue is an emergency and the 'troubleshooting' hasn't worked. If the issue isn't an emergency the contractor will refer the issue to EHSL's team for a decision. The out-of-hours contractor can also perform routine works at EHSL's request, at daytime rates. The service is subject to an authorisation limit which is sufficient for all situations to be made safe.

### Procurement

Services and works at EHSL's properties are two of EHSL's main areas of expenditure. It is governed by the procurement policy, which is designed to ensure that services are contracted with businesses that provide value for money. It is important to EHSL that it is not spending inappropriately on services, or collecting funds for services it is not required to provide. EHSL is currently exploring opportunities to join procurement clubs and associated initiatives

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<sup>2</sup> HouseMark G15 Club benchmarking report 2012/13

#### Appointing in-house maintenance staff.

EHSL relies on third party maintenance contractors to meet its maintenance obligations. EHSL does not employ its own maintenance staff because EHSL's properties are spread across a wide area. EHSL has considered appointing maintenance staff to cover specific areas, and has assessed that this would not offer value for money for the following reasons:

- EHSL would still need to use third party contractors for works which its own maintenance staff were not trained to do – appointing a multi-skilled tradesperson would increase cost because salary expectations would be higher, and in many cases they would be spending time doing lower-skilled work such as painting and handyman type tasks.
- EHSL has 23 sites within reach of the M25, including in London boroughs, Kent, Surrey and Hertfordshire. The location of EHSL's concentrated stock is in predominantly high cost areas, with higher salary expectations as a result of the cost of living.
- Comparable roles within other organisations are filled at salaries of around £23k-28k pa.
- Other costs would include tools, a vehicle, insurance, NIC and pension contributions, holiday and sickness absence allowances, fuel and parking, management, and time lost to travel. Based on prudent assumptions around salary and other costs, each day of work would cost around £195, not including materials. EHSL feels that whilst this is comparable to emergency maintenance contractors' costs, EHSL does not engage an emergency maintenance contractor for every day of every week, and therefore cannot justify employing somebody to cover a specific area at this cost.
- EHSL engages contractors to perform routine maintenance, with many jobs costing significantly less than the calculated daily rate above.

The suggestion was discounted because EHSL feels that its stock is too geographically dispersed for it to be cost effective to appoint its own maintenance staff. EHSL will review this position periodically, particularly if it secures a significant amount of stock within a clearly defined geographical area.

#### **5.5 Contributions to income from other Housing Associations.**

EHSL has provided tenancy management services to another housing association since 2014, an activity which is deemed to be a non-social housing activity. At the end of the 2016/17 accounting period, EHSL was providing services to 83 units. The services include tenancy sign-ups, inspections, addressing anti-social behaviour, the arranging of communal service provisions, access to EHSL's repairs reporting functions, liaison with tenants and other stakeholders, and engagement with Housing Benefit departments in respect of benefit awards and rent levels. The costs incurred relate predominantly to staffing and travel.

The provision of these services allows EHSL to collect additional income, which is allocated against staffing costs on a pro-rata basis – meaning that the cost of managing an EHSL tenancy was considered to be the same as the cost of managing a tenancy for another association. EHSL's surplus for the period included a contribution from the income received from the other housing association. EHSL considers that the provision of services to other associations' stock assists with offering value for money because EHSL can charge fees at a level which supports EHSL's staffing provision, enabling efficiencies associated with scale.

#### **5.6 Review of rents**

During 2017, EHSL has reviewed how it sets rents and has prepared a new rent setting policy to comply with the requirements of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. EHSL has prepared a revised methodology of determining that its rents are within the market rents, which has been approved by Savills Housing Consultancy. This methodology ensures that EHSL produces rents that are within market rents for supported housing. Rents are subject to internal approval by the Chief Executive, prior to external approval being sought from the relevant local authority. In February 2017, all respondents to EHSL's feedback survey stated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied that EHSL was fair and transparent when setting rents and service charges, and managing debt.

#### **5.7 Benefits and drawbacks of EHSL's two main business models.**

One of the methods that EHSL relies on is accessing the Private Rented Sector to secure suitable property, which it then offers for as long as it is able to, renewing leases every few years to continue the provision. Another significant amount of EHSL's business relates to property which is owned by a care provider that also offers care to the people living in the property.

EHSL is aware that each model has different strengths and weaknesses, and that it should explore alternative methods of service delivery in all areas of the organisation – this is particularly pertinent when it relates to how EHSL conducts its core business.

EHSL has conducted 'SWOT' analysis of the two main models of accommodation provision.

SWOT analysis of working with the Private rented sector	
<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a wide range of property advertised to lease at any one time</li> <li>• The turnaround time once a property is identified is rarely longer than a month.</li> <li>• Lease rents are favourable to other models as EHSL's lease payment costs are aligned with the wider housing market.</li> <li>• Low set-up costs, usually no more than £10,000.</li> <li>• Arrangements can be exited with relative ease.</li> <li>• Some landlords are willing to dispose of their property to EHSL should EHSL have the means to purchase it.</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to secure property is subject to landlords' perception of the arrangements, and of the care sector</li> <li>• Lease terms are rarely longer than 3 years.</li> <li>• Lack of flexibility with carrying out adaptations</li> <li>• Short-termism means that it may not offer value for money to invest in improvements which EHSL will not see a benefit for during the lifespan of the improvement.</li> <li>• Some lease terms are onerous and letting agents will not alter standard leases to allow terms that consent to sub-letting. This can obstruct proposals.</li> <li>• Searching for suitable and available property is time-intensive.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EHSL is in a strong position to lease property in a wide geographic area due to its experience and knowledge of this model</li> <li>• Arrangements can be made to provide bespoke transitional accommodation which enables a clear care pathway for tenants.</li> <li>• A higher volume of accommodation can be provided with minimal capital investment.</li> <li>• Schemes in areas with high property costs can be delivered using a leased building at a lower cost than could be achieved where a property is purchased.</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidences of damage and anti-social behaviour pose a high risk of arrangements being terminated.</li> <li>• Arrangements may be terminated at the expiry of a lease, with a relatively short notice period.</li> <li>• Rent increases are rarely limited to a pre-set level.</li> <li>• Some landlords are emotionally invested in their properties and can become more involved than is desired, making schemes vulnerable should there be issues with damage or challenging behaviour.</li> <li>• Landlords can be poor at meeting their repairing obligations.</li> <li>• EHSL may incur cost at termination due to dilapidations.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis of working with care provider landlords	
<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation tends to be purpose built and of a good size, designed with a particular client group in mind.</li> <li>• Arrangements are made with care operators who have extensive knowledge of the sector and the risks associated with it – partnership working tends to be robust as a result.</li> <li>• Rents tend to be realistic and the care operator often retains some repairing obligations.</li> <li>• There is often strong support from commissioning when a care operator sets up a new scheme in a building that they own.</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominations are often solely the responsibility of the care operator and there is little control over who lives in the property.</li> <li>• The issuing of a new tenancies may be subject to care, support or supervision being provided by the care provider that owns the building</li> <li>• Occupancy based head rent payments can mean a deficit of service charge income during periods of under-occupancy.</li> <li>• The success of the scheme is often solely in the hands of the Care operator and their relationship with the relevant local authority.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care operators can own large estates, which include properties that require deregistering and converting from Care Homes to Supported Living.</li> <li>• Care operators require a housing partner to be involved where they wish to provide supported housing in a building that they own.</li> <li>• Continued development activity by care operators means a strong pipeline of this type of property</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arrangements can be seen to be contrived to create an artificial separation of housing and support if not managed appropriately.</li> <li>• Arrangements may allow the care operator to withdraw with short notice and pass the scheme to a competitor</li> <li>• There has been some difficulty with implementing new rents at existing schemes – new rents can be perceived to be 'contrived to take advantage of the Housing Benefit scheme'</li> <li>• Lack of control over repairs and maintenance.</li> </ul>

## 6 Unit cost comparison

In June 2016, the Homes and Communities Agency (the social housing regulator) published a report entitled “*Delivering better value for money – understanding differing unit costs*” The report sets out the median social housing cost figures for the sector and provides narrative around the factors that affect cost, and how value for money is monitored across the sector.

“Median headline social housing costs were £3,550 per unit in 2015. This is made up of management and service charge costs, maintenance, major repairs and other social housing costs. However, there is considerable variation in costs: with the lower and upper quartiles of headline unit costs being £3,200 and £4,300 respectively, and a minority of providers - mainly supported housing specialists - with headline unit costs in excess of £10,000.”

A hypothetical ‘baseline’ provider (with 100% general needs properties, traditional status, with all units meeting the Decent Homes standard, and operating in an area with mean average wages and median deprivation) might be expected to have a cost of £3,300 per unit. Around 50% of the variation in headline social housing costs per unit can be explained by the following key factors, ordered by relative importance, and holding all other factors constant:

- Supported housing (not including housing for older people) – each unit is associated with costs of £10,800 above General Needs properties. This is likely to be associated with the high support costs, and a broader scope of activities undertaken by organisations with a specialised focus. The precise estimate of associated costs is sensitive to the inclusion or removal of more specialised supported housing organisations, with model estimates varying from £8,400 to £14,000 per unit. There is likely to be considerable diversity with the cost associated with each supported housing unit in the sector, for example by the client group and the level of service supplied.”

EHSL has assessed its headline social housing cost per unit for the 2016/17 period based on the HCA’s unit cost definitions, and the figures provided in the global accounts published on 13 December 2017.

<b>Sector mean for 2017 – source, HCA global accounts 2017</b>	<b>Sector Mean</b>	<b>Median by provider (unweighted)</b>	<b>EHSL’s costs in 16/17 (180 tenancies)</b>
Management & service charge costs	£1,494	£1,313	<b>£7,601.92</b> <sup>1</sup>
Maintenance costs	£991	£925	<b>£757.60</b> <sup>2</sup>
Major repairs costs	£747	£683	<b>Nil</b> <sup>3</sup>
Other social housing costs	£467	£241	<b>£323.64</b> <sup>4</sup>
<b>Headline social housing costs</b>	<b>£3,698</b>	<b>£3,162</b>	<b>£8,683.15</b>

Notes:

1. Management and service charge costs are inclusive of the rents paid by EHSL to lease properties, staffing costs, and service charges that are predominantly made up of gardening, window cleaning, communal cleaning, and utility supplies which EHSL collects and recharges. EHSL believes that its management costs are higher than the sector average because EHSL provides supported housing services across a wide geographic area, to a smaller number of tenants with complex needs for whom a higher level of management input is required. A key contributor to these costs are the rents paid by EHSL. Service charges include services such as gardening and window cleaning that are performed for tenants with a disability, when general needs tenants may not be provided with such services. EHSL believes that increasing its stock levels will enable greater value for money to be achieved for its management costs, and this will bring its cost closer to the sector mean. Management and Service charge costs are broken down more finely as follows.

Management and Service Charge Costs	EHSL’s cost in 16/17
Head landlord rents paid	<b>£5,637.86</b>
Staffing	<b>£929.11</b>
Communal services	<b>£269.93</b>
Utility bill costs	<b>£527.17</b>
Other (professional fees)	<b>£98.16</b>
Council Tax	<b>£139.70</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,601.92</b>

2. EHSL's maintenance costs are lower because many of the landlords that it works with are responsible for specific repairs under both individual leases and under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. These works are funded indirectly via the lease rents paid by EHSL. EHSL does however incur cost in relation to its emergency maintenance provision, adaptations, and works to prepare properties for let for its client group. Landlords also expect EHSL to meet costs relating to how its tenants and their staff use the accommodation, including works required as a result of damage and greater wear and tear.
3. EHSL does not generally have significant major repairs costs because it does not own the buildings in which it provides accommodation, and landlords are usually responsible for carrying out major repairs. Any items which might be classed as major repairs have been included within maintenance costs. EHSL has reviewed how it records maintenance expenditure and will record major repairs separately from maintenance for the 2017/18 period
4. Includes overheads and central operating costs, inclusive of office rent, IT equipment and services, postage, advertising and promotion, consumables, accounting and legal costs. It is felt that efficiencies will be achieved with an increase in stock levels – for instance, EHSL will not have to pay a higher rent for its office, but could accommodate up to twice as many full-time staff as are currently employed.

EHSL has considered how its costs compare to the HCA's unit cost figures and established that its accommodation is offered at a cost significantly higher than the social housing sector mean. This is because the sector mean is based on a traditional association providing 100% general needs stock in an area with average wages and median deprivation. EHSL's cost is significantly lower when compared to the £14,000 per unit per annum for the HCA's hypothetical baseline provider with 100% supported housing stock, This may be because a significant amount of EHSL's accommodation is shared housing, which can be secured at a comparatively low lease cost when compared to self-contained or bespoke accommodation. In some areas, prior to EHSL's registration, EHSL has had to work within the boundaries of the Local Housing Allowance, which has meant that EHSL has only secured accommodation that can be offered within rents that reflect these levels.

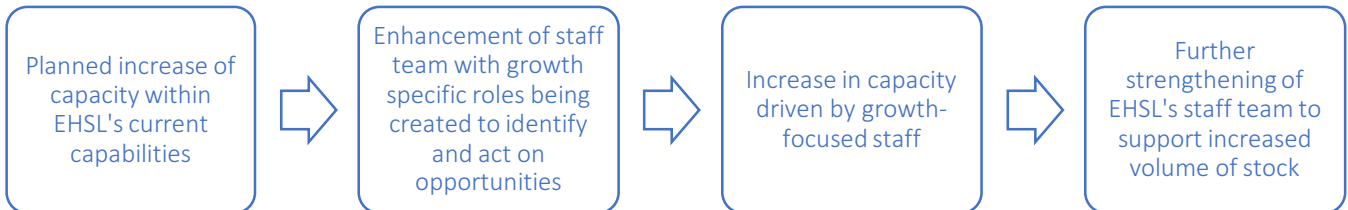
## 7 Development

### Development plan

EHSL has prepared a 5-year development plan which sets out how EHSL will increase its capacity to 500 tenancies by the end of 2022. EHSL's aim is to develop a range of models of accommodation, and to diversify both in terms of the types of accommodation it offers, and the geographical areas.

### Facilitating growth

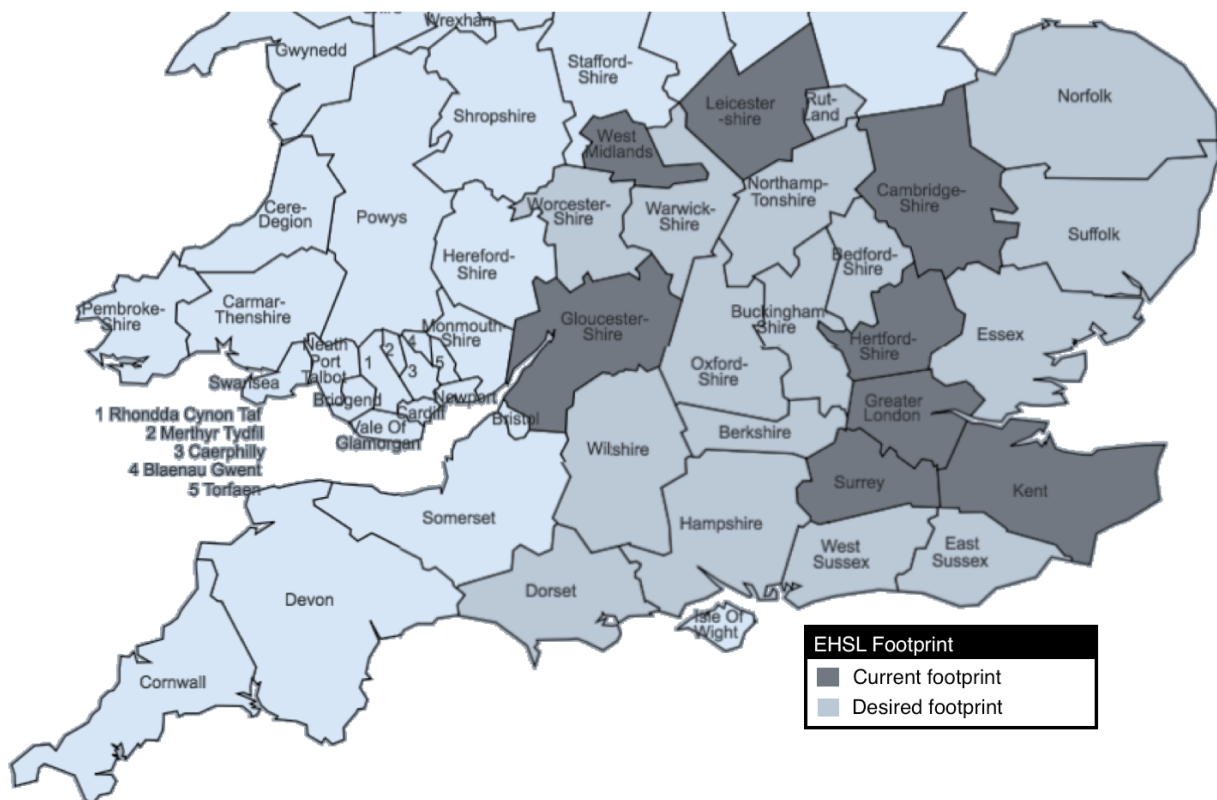
Various studies including the NHF's 'Supported Housing, understanding need and Supply'<sup>3</sup> have determined that there is an undersupply of suitable supported accommodation. EHSL intends to develop its provision to ensure that it can make accommodation available to a greater number of people who need it. This will be achieved in the following manner:



EHSL is conscious that growth needs to be managed in order that it doesn't expose EHSL to an unsuitable level of associated risk. This will be managed by ensuring that EHSL has sufficient financial and logistical resources to service the new stock without reducing its quality or availability of service for its existing stock. EHSL has exposure to a number of opportunities for growth, driven by the needs of prospective tenants, adult social care commissioners and care providers, and the availability of buildings. Once EHSL has sufficient resource to appoint a service development manager who will be responsible for facilitating growth, it will do so.

### Locations for growth

Due to the location of EHSL's office and staff team, the key areas for growth are the Home Counties, the Thames Valley and London. EHSL also wishes to bridge gaps in its current footprint, providing services in the M4 corridor, the area south of Birmingham and the East Midlands. Should EHSL be able to develop a substantial amount of accommodation outside of this area, it may be possible to support a regional office to facilitate fuel cost savings and travel time.



<sup>3</sup> [http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/Supported\\_housing\\_understanding\\_needs\\_and\\_supply.pdf](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/Supported_housing_understanding_needs_and_supply.pdf)

### Models of accommodation

EHSL’s current stock is made up of a substantial number of shared houses, most of which are leased from the private rented sector. Whilst EHSL recognises that there is a place in the market for shared accommodation, it believes that the most robust and desirable accommodation is in blocks of self-contained units, at which varying levels of support can be provided to people who have more complex needs. EHSL wishes to focus on the provision of single or dual occupancy accommodation, both dispersed and in clusters, in order to deliver accommodation that is in increasing demand and for which EHSL believes is exposed to lower levels of void risk, both currently and into the future.

EHSL intends to continue to provide Specialised Supported Housing<sup>4</sup>, but will consider providing non-specialised supported housing where it is viable and appropriate to do so.

### Sources of property

EHSL recognises that new supported housing supply is increasingly being funded via private finance, including REITs, pension funds and other commercial entities. The availability of private finance can enable fast-paced growth and the provision of high quality, long term accommodation – it is however not without risk due to the level of finance required and the concurrent commitment. EHSL will consider all opportunities available for growth and conduct a rigorous appraisal of risk prior to entering into any new arrangements. Decisions made in respect of growth will be reflected in EHSL’s risk management plan and risk register.

EHSL will continue to access the private rented sector to secure quality accommodation that can be offered at market rents, and will periodically review its capability to purchase stock.

### Alternative methods of service delivery

EHSL has considered other methods of providing accommodation – these are summarised in the table below

Model	Strengths	Weaknesses
Buying property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the greatest security of tenure for EHSL’s tenants</li> <li>EHSL would benefit from increases in property values.</li> <li>Ultimate flexibility to adapt, reconfigure, and design for purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EHSL does not currently have access to capital at a level that would allow sufficient volume of accommodation to be provided.</li> <li>Would decrease EHSL’s cash reserves, which are held to mitigate risk and ensure liquidity</li> <li>Some lack of flexibility should disposals be sought</li> <li>EHSL would have new risks to manage, including adverse market conditions, interest rate risk, and breach of lenders covenants.</li> </ul>
Long-term Leasing from institutional investors/REITs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long term security of tenure can be offered</li> <li>Access to a range of accommodation types</li> <li>Ability to offer volume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High leasing costs exacerbate rent risk and void risk</li> <li>Significant lack of flexibility if accommodation is no longer required</li> </ul>
Becoming the managing agent for schemes currently operated by other housing providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows efficiencies to be achieved via contributions to staffing and overheads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not increase EHSL’s own stock levels.</li> <li>Vulnerability to contract terminations</li> <li>Lack of control in previous arrangements has affected EHSL’s ability to control quality, which can have an adverse impact on EHSL’s reputation</li> <li>Does not add to overall social housing stock – negligible social impact.</li> </ul>

### Staffing

The size of EHSL’s staff team is determined primarily by the resources generated through its rental income. Increased stock levels will enable the development of a larger staff team to support the growth of the organisation. EHSL will make roles available to meet the demands of the organisation, with salaries benchmarked against similar roles with other organisations within the sector. Increasing EHSL’s operational staff team will assist with ensuring the following essential tasks are performed efficiently.

- Issuing and terminating tenancy agreements
- Enforcing the terms of the tenancy (particularly with regard to anti-social behaviour and damage)

<sup>4</sup> As defined in the Social Housing Rent (Exceptions and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2016



- Collecting rent and service charges
- Arranging repairs, adaptations, redecorations, and the provision of services.
- Inspecting properties

#### Partnership arrangements

EHSL recognises that it may be most cost effective for services to be delivered in partnership with other providers, such as other housing associations, private sector property companies, care providers, and other relevant bodies. EHSL is open to discussions with other organisations about joint provision of services, and will also consider opportunities for mergers and acquisitions where this will enable value for money to be achieved.

## 8 Assessing Value for Money

To offer value for money it is essential that EHSL understands how to measure it. Value for money is achieved when a suitable level of quality is achieved, and reflected by the payment of appropriate amounts to achieve that level. Value for money is not achieved by spending as little as possible and allowing quality to suffer as a result. It is also not achieved when the expenditure incurred is greater than the quality achieved. EHSL uses the following tools to measure value for money.

### Key performance indicators

EHSL's key financial indicators are capacity, occupancy, voids, rent arrears, turnover and expenditure. EHSL's costs per tenancy are compared against previous periods to establish year on year financial performance levels.

### Headline Social Housing Costs

EHSL will continue to assess its headline social housing cost in order that it can compare it against the figures published for the sector.

### Benchmarking

EHSL is seeking to join the Small Providers Benchmarking club, which will enable EHSL to measure its performance against other similar sized housing providers. This will assist in identifying areas of improvement and will allow EHSL to access information and resources from similar sized providers.

### Tenant Feedback

EHSL has a dedicated feedback email address, which is [feedback@ehsl-uk.com](mailto:feedback@ehsl-uk.com). EHSL will conduct a further tenant feedback exercise in 2018. Tenants are welcome to provide feedback to EHSL at any time.

## 9 Conclusion

**9.1** This statement supports EHSL position that it offers value for money and has incorporated value for money into all areas of its operation.

### What EHSL has done well

- We have taken measures to ensure that we are setting rents at an appropriate level with measures put in place to ensure efficiency of rent collection.
- We have managed risk effectively and in a manner to ensure that EHSL's viability is not threatened.
- We have ensured that our objectives have remained relevant to our business plan.
- We have set out how we will expand our services to benefit more people.
- We have developed tools for engagement with tenants and other stakeholders, including a tenant's handbook and information sheets on key matters.

### What we can do to improve.

- We can increase engagement with tenants using appropriate communication tools and easy-read materials
- We can improve response times for routine maintenance by closer monitoring of contractors, and improving our communication with our tenants.
- We can improve our consistency in decision making relating to rent arrears and tenancy evictions, by following our newly adopted process.
- We can diversify our business model to improve our rate of growth.
- We can involve ourselves more with our peers in the sector, by participating in sector related events.
- We can increase marketing and development output by allocating more resource to development.
- We can assess whether goods and services can be procured at a lower cost, by using procurement clubs or other associated initiatives

### 9.2 Action plan for 2018

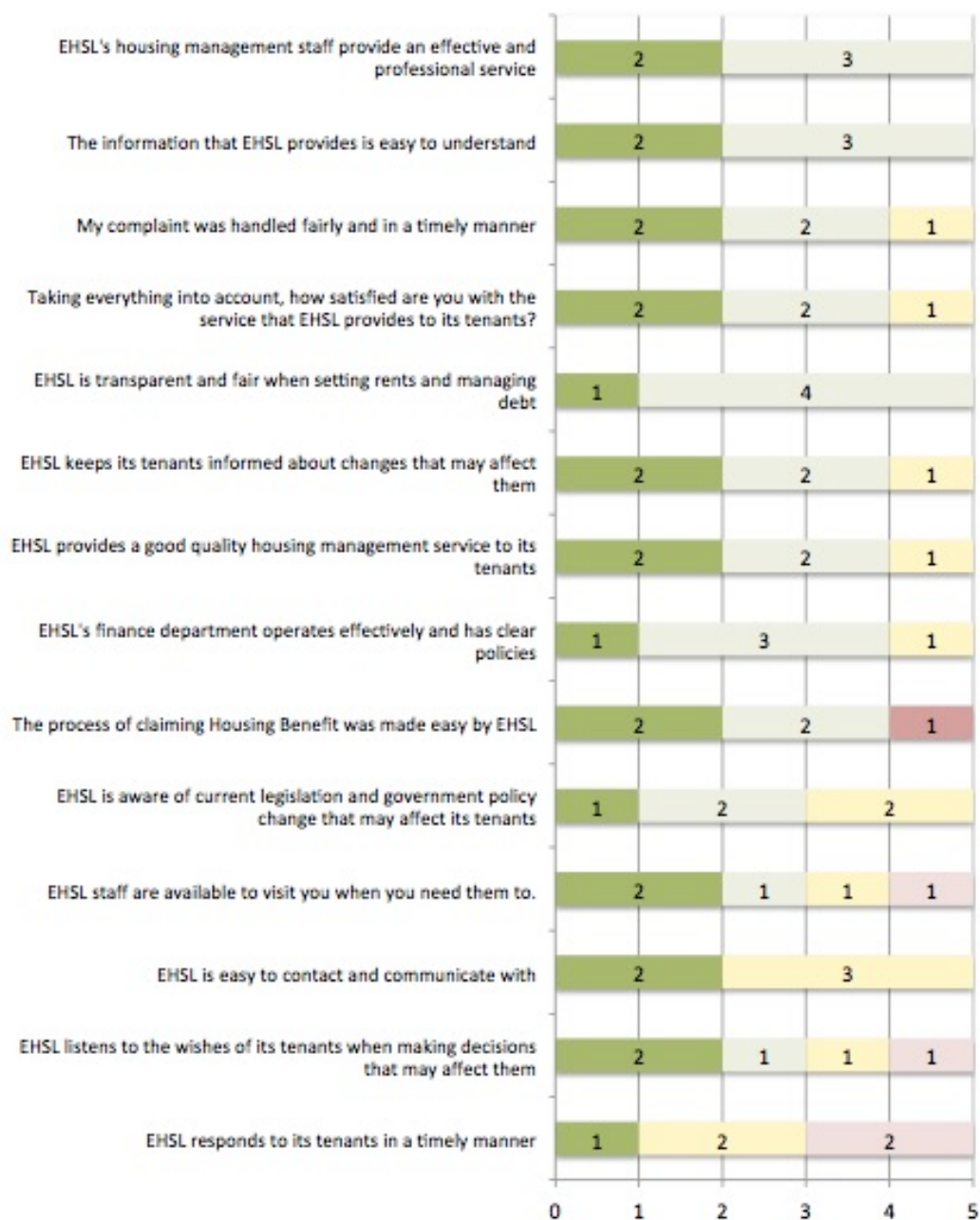
Action	Ownership of action	How will this achieve Value for Money?
Review Council Tax exemptions to establish whether EHSL can obtain Class U exemptions and reductions in shared housing.	Finance Manager	Accessing further Class U exemptions will reduce the sums that EHSL spends on Council Tax, which will be reflected in the rents charged.
Review energy consumption in shared housing and in blocks of flats, and seek to reduce cost by changing utility providers, fitting energy efficient devices, and offering further advice and information to tenants in respect of energy usage.	Finance Manager Property Manager	Reducing energy consumption will mean that EHSL spends less on utility bills, a saving which can be passed on to tenants.
At an appropriate time, introduce a development manager role into the organisation to increase stock levels.	Board of Directors	Appointing a development manager will enable EHSL to improve its rate of growth, allowing its services to be offered to a greater number of people and for some efficiencies to be achieved.
Join the Small Providers Benchmarking Club	CEO	EHSL will be better placed to identify areas for improvement when comparing its costs and performance to its peers, and by sharing best practice with them.
Improve satisfaction with maintenance response times by allocating tasks to the emergency, urgent, and routine classifications, and communicating this allocation and expected resolution time to tenants and support staff in order that they are apprised of the expected response.	Property Manager	Improved tenant satisfaction is reflective of value for money where the improvement comes at negligible cost.
Improve recording of maintenance expenditure by allocating cost against a wider number of categories.	Finance Manager	EHSL will be able to more accurately record expenditure, to assist with current and future monitoring.
Improve consistency of decision making in respect of rent arrears and evictions.	CEO	A quality service is built on consistency.

EHSL Tenant Feedback Survey 2016-17



**How satisfied are you with the following statements about EHSL’s Housing Management Services?**

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied or dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

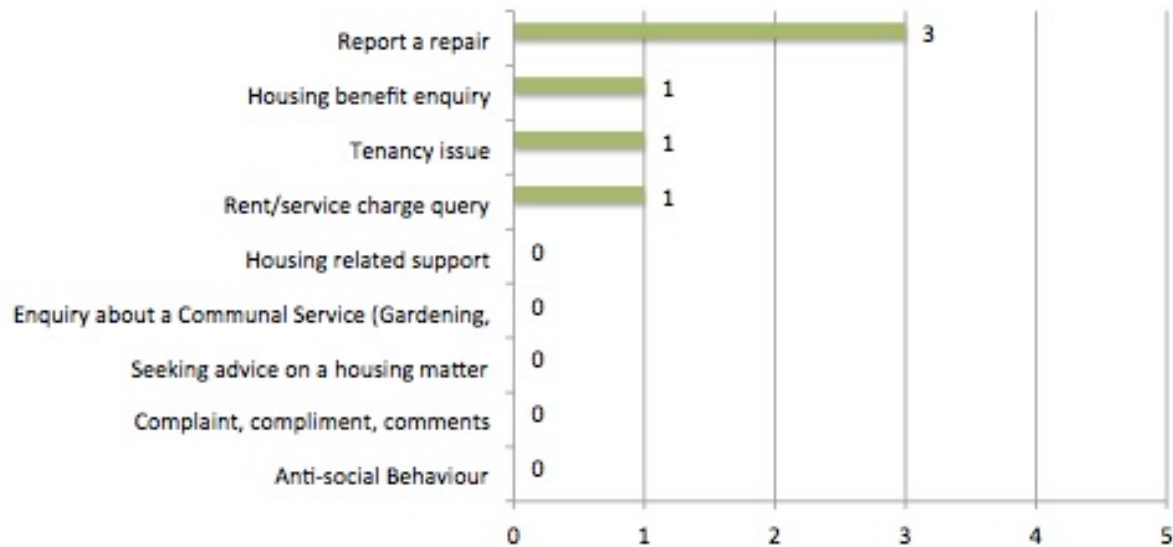


**Comments:**

"Some repairs are actioned promptly, some are not"

EHSL Tenant Feedback Survey 2016-17

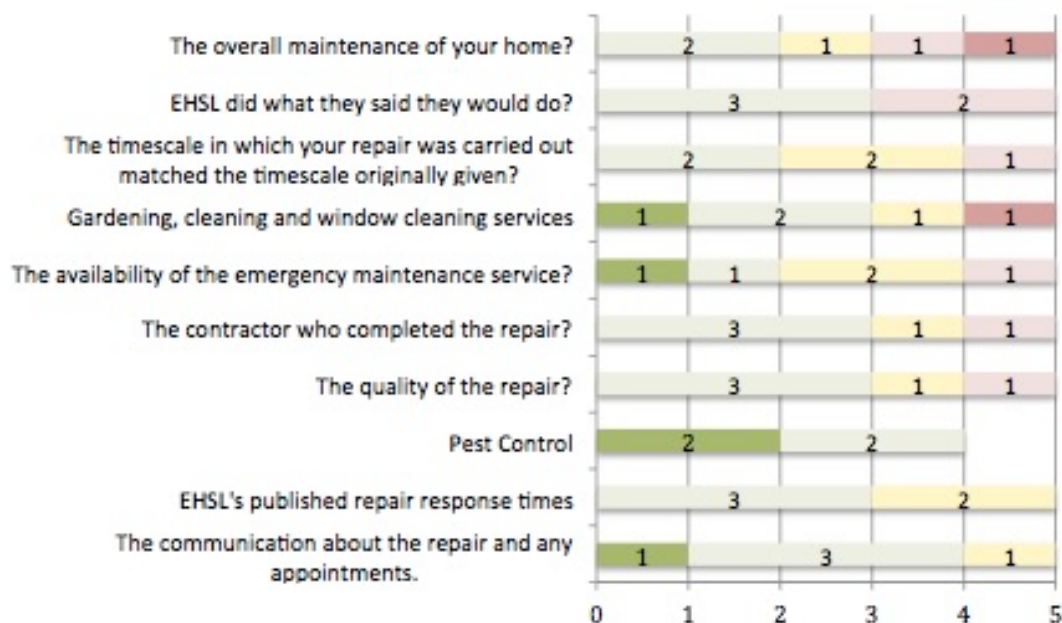
**What have been your main reasons for contacting EHSL in the last 12 months?**



**Comments:**  
'Renovations'

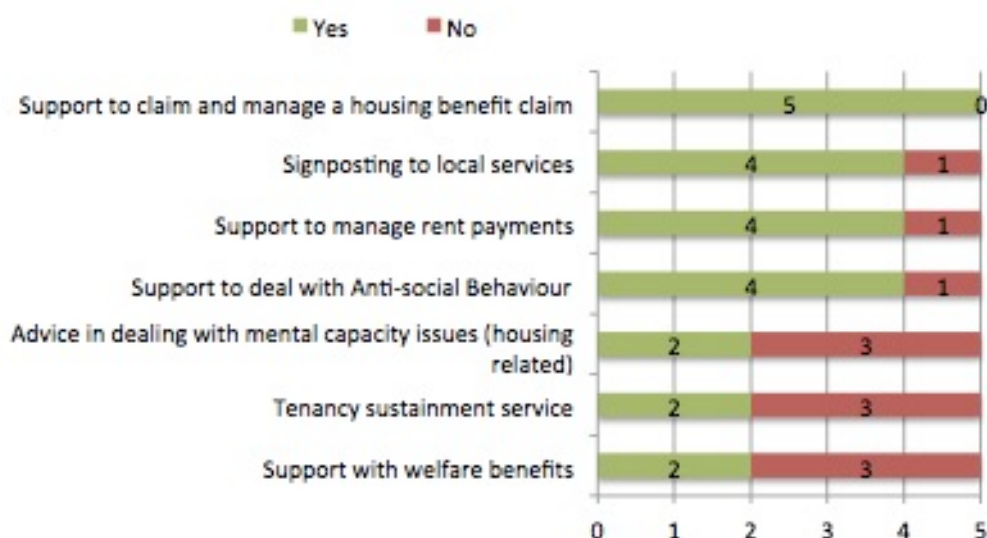
**How satisfied are you with the following aspects of EHSL's repairs and maintenance service?**

■ Very Satisfied  
 ■ Satisfied  
 ■ Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied  
 ■ Dissatisfied  
 ■ Very Dissatisfied



**Comments**  
'Never seen this "window cleaner"  
'Need a bath installed'

### Do you know about the following services that EHSL offers?



### What do you like about the services we provide?

- 'Comfortable'
- 'It's okay'
- 'Friendly people and when they respond they take on board your views'
- 'Professional and relevant information'

### What changes would most improve EHSL's service?

- "Attend to customer's complains more in an effective way. Send out the maintenance staff out for repairs quickly".
- "A bathtub - flat 2 [Address removed]."
- "Time they respond and better quality materials when renovating properties"
- "Repairs are sometimes so poor they just need to be redone over and over. Some of the contractors do the absolute bare minimum and then we just report it again in a week/months time"

### Please provide any other feedback you may wish to give at this time

- "Inform customer's earlier if their any arrears with their rent or service charges."
- "Invest in getting repairs to be done properly"

## EHSL Tenant Feedback Survey 2016-17

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### Conclusions

Despite the low response rate, the survey has highlighted the following:

- Tenants wish for a faster response time from EHSL when they make an enquiry.
- EHSL's tenants are not always aware of the services that EHSL can offer to them alongside their tenancy.
- Quality of repairs is a key area for improvement.
- The quality and performance of maintenance contractors requires more frequent review.
- Further activity is required to elicit a greater response.

### Action Plan

EHSL will make the following changes in 2017-18, to how it delivers its services

- EHSL will appoint a property manager whose role is to deal exclusively with repairs and property related matters. This will ensure that we are appropriately resourced to deal with matters of this nature and can improve the service being offered.
- EHSL will review its property management software and the functions it offers, with a view to ensuring that it follows up on a higher number of repairs to ensure that the tenant is satisfied with the work performed.
- EHSL will review its response times and clearly set out what tenants should expect.
- EHSL will distribute a Tenant's Handbook to all new and existing tenants. In doing so, it will provide relevant information about its services.
- EHSL will conduct a further feedback exercise aimed at assessing the quality and value for money of the communal services provided.
- EHSL will review the quality of the repairs contractors that it uses and seek to introduce new contractors where a lack of quality is identified and not remedied.
- EHSL will review its rent arrears and evictions process.

### Future surveys

EHSL wishes to engage further with its tenants and will consider using the following methods to survey its tenants in future.

- Web based link distributed by email.
- Paper forms
- A link on our website.
- A telephone response option

EHSL also recognises that it may need to take action to collate up-to-date contact details for tenants, some of whom may not be using the email address they were using at the time.

EHSL will also consider conducting a survey for tenants in properties that it manages for First Priority Housing Association. It was not appropriate to include these tenants in this survey as the service provided by EHSL differs in the First Priority services. Any Survey of these tenants would be conducted in partnership with First Priority.

EHSL will also consider conducting a survey for other key stakeholders, including landlords, service providers, and professionals involved.

### Involvement

Do you wish to be involved in future surveys? If so, please send an email to [Feedback@ehsl-uk.com](mailto:Feedback@ehsl-uk.com)