



# You Said, We Will

---

Abbeyfield's response to the 2023 Residents'  
Survey (Housing & Independent Living)

## Introduction

Thank you to all who participated in this year's Residents' Survey. We received responses from 42% of all Housing and Independent Living residents (an increase from 32% last year), so thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback.

The themes and subsequent actions below are taken from the collated national results from over 80 Abbeyfield services. As the survey is anonymous, we have only been able to respond individually to specific comments where the resident completing the survey provided their name and / or the name of their service.

The responses show that 90% of Housing residents who responded were satisfied with the service provided by Abbeyfield, while 85% of respondents would recommend Abbeyfield to others.

In particular, we received overwhelmingly positive results for questions relating to our staff teams, with 95% of respondents stating Abbeyfield staff members are friendly and approachable, and 94% stating they were kind and considerate. Thank you for recognising the great people we have working for us!

While the results were largely positive, the following themes were identified:

- Activities and social events
- Variety, quantity, and quality of meal provision
- Repairs, maintenance, and condition of the property
- Information, involvement, and feedback
- Staffing pressures
- Rent increases

## Activities and social events

69% of respondents were satisfied with the activities and events available to them when living with Abbeyfield, with a number of supplementary comments on the same topic.

The impact of COVID-19 on activities and events at our Housing and Independent Living services was recognised within last year's survey results. As a result, each service is committed to hosting at least four events for residents, their families and outside visitors every year.

However, unfortunately, the involvement of regular volunteers at most of our services has not yet recovered following the pandemic, which has impacted on the ability to deliver a busier schedule of social events and activities for residents. As there are no staff members with a dedicated activities remit within our Housing services (unlike our Care Homes), it is important for activities to be supported by volunteers and / or resident-led, wherever possible.

The following actions are planned:

- Undertaking a national volunteer recruitment seeking local individuals to contribute to the social events and activities calendar at each service, and to further build our relationships with local communities.
- Provide a resource pack for residents to be able to set up and lead chosen activities at their house.

# Variety, quantity and quality of meal provision

88% of respondents are satisfied with the quality of food provided by Abbeyfield, with 85% stating they were satisfied with the variety of food provided by Abbeyfield.

In addition, there were 23 surveys returned with comments relating to the variety, quantity, or quality of food provision. We always welcome feedback and would be grateful if you could provide specific feedback to the staff on duty on the day if there is an issue with the quality of a meal, so it can be rectified immediately.

As improvements in the quality of meal provision was identified as a theme from last year's survey results, it is recognised that the work which has taken place so far has not yet resulted in significant improvements. Actions that have already been taken include:

- Undertaking a comprehensive review of Abbeyfield's national food contract within our Housing services, and taking steps to limit its use for particular items which can be better sourced locally.
- Reviewing menus and meal costs, as part of work to standardise the resident experience in relation to meal provision.
- Developing resources to support staff to provide quality and varied food for residents via the new Taste of Abbeyfield campaign.
- Introducing a new dining experience survey form at every service for residents, their relatives or volunteers to complete to provide focused feedback on the quality of the food and meal experience, with completed forms being monitored by the Regional Operations Manager.

In response to this year's results, Abbeyfield is committed to:

- Continuing to limit the use of our national food contract within Housing services.
- Continuing to promote a Taste of Abbeyfield amongst Managers and residents.
- Developing a suite of lighter recipes for early evening (supper) meals as part of our Taste of Abbeyfield resources.
- Implementing our standard meal provision expectations at all services, including an at least four-weekly menu plan with plated teas only being provided in the event of a staff shortage or under prior arrangement with residents.
- Promoting the use of the dining experience surveys.
- Providing information on portion sizes and food types in line with the Eat Well plate.
- Monitoring compliance with the resident meeting framework to ensure these take place quarterly, minutes are displayed after every meeting and any trends regarding meal provision at specific houses are identified.

## Repairs, maintenance and condition of the property

The survey results reflected our recognition that our repairs service, as well as the condition of some properties, have not always been at the standard expected.

For respondents who had a repair carried out within the last 12 months, 77% were satisfied with the overall repairs service provided by Abbeyfield and 69% were satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair. We also received over 50 comments relating to repairs, maintenance, or the condition of the property.

The need for improvements to residents' experiences of property maintenance and repairs was identified in last year's survey results. While some work has taken place, a number of long-term actions, such as the implementation of a new property management system, remain ongoing. Nonetheless, stock condition surveys have now been carried out on all properties, which has enabled us to identify the needs of our property portfolio and establish schedules for works, as appropriate. We have also ensured the protocol for reporting a repair is clearer, via regular residents' meetings and by reissuing the Residents' Handbook, while we have also focused on the prudent use of budget and resources and improved contractor management.

Additional planned actions are:

- Communicating a summary of findings and requirements of each stock condition survey with residents on a site-by-site basis and, where relevant, the schedule for works.
- Standardising the process for dealing with local repairs, including improving the communication back to the resident making the report and seeking timely feedback upon completion
- Setting our clear expectations for residents on the standard/expected length of time that different repairs and maintenance works will take to be resolved.
- Continuing to improve the management and monitoring of contractors nationally.

## Information, involvement and feedback

Across our Housing and Independent Living services, 79% of respondents told us they were satisfied that Abbeyfield keeps them informed about things that matter to them, with 76% of respondents being satisfied that Abbeyfield listens to their views and acts upon them. There were number of comments about residents' meetings, in particular. Furthermore, of those respondents who stated that they had made a complaint within the previous year, only 54% reported being satisfied with Abbeyfield's approach to complaints handling.

As resident engagement and information provision and the handling of complaints had been themes from last year's survey results, we have already taken the following steps:

- Circulated information to residents on the changes being introduced as part of the Regulator of Social Housing's new approach to consumer standards and how this will impact on Abbeyfield's engagement with them.
- Recruited a Resident Engagement Manager, who is due to commence employment in August 2023.
- Established a framework for resident meetings for all services post-COVID-19, when meetings were temporarily suspended, which is monitored by the Regional Operations Manager.
- Developed a standard resident meeting agenda and minute templates, which includes a specific item on feedback and complaints.

- Formalised the process for managing service-level complaints and issues, to enable central oversight of all issues and ensure escalation into the Complaints process if they cannot be addressed locally
- Provided training for all managers on complaints handling

Forthcoming actions include:

- Standardising Abbeyfield information on resident-facing noticeboards.
- Recruiting a national Residents' Panel, which will have a direct link to the Abbeyfield Board.
- Establishing a resident engagement strategy, led by the new Resident Engagement Manager.

## Staffing pressures

While responses to questions relating to the staff team were overwhelmingly positive, there were a significant number of comments referencing staff shortages and/or the pressures facing staff.

Abbeyfield has ongoing efforts underway to alleviate the recognised recruitment and retention issues facing the organisation and the wider sector. Recent initiatives include increasing frontline staff member pay by 15%, enhancing our staff benefits package, introducing a generous 'Recommend a friend' scheme, and appointing a dedicated recruitment team.

Furthermore, it was noted that a number of comments referred to the need for staff support on-site 24/7. It is important to note that residents within our Housing and Independent Living properties are tenants or leaseholders, and there is a 24/7 emergency call system in place when staff are not on-site. In addition, any increase in staffing levels would result in increased service charges for residents. The reissued Residents' Handbook sets out what each staff role is responsible for and gives information on what it means to live at Abbeyfield.

## Rent increases

There were a number of comments on the topic of increases in rent and service charges.

Abbeyfield's core rent increase is capped at CPI (Consumer Prices Index) + 1% based on the CPI rate from the previous September. This equates to an 11.1% increase in core rent for the 2023/24 financial year.

The biggest driver of the service charge increases this year has been utilities. The rise in global gas and electricity prices has resulted in an unavoidable rise in residents' service charges. Abbeyfield has secured three-year fixed rate deals with our gas and electricity suppliers, which means we do not anticipate any significant fluctuations in utility costs until 2025. The remainder of the service charge increases have been kept to a minimum or reduced wherever possible as a result of efficiency savings, in order to try to mitigate the increases in utility costs.

There has also been an increase due to staff pay increases. The feedback during residents' meetings last September was the importance of Abbeyfield's ability to recruit and retain high quality staff, as outlined in the section above. In response to this feedback and the current rate of inflation, we provided a significant uplift in wages for our frontline staff which we believe will improve recruitment and retention, thereby further improving the services residents receive.

Following the survey feedback, we will also reissue our Abbeyfield leaflet on rent and service charges to provide further clarity on what residents actually pay for.

---

## **Missed this year's survey?**

The next Residents' Survey will take place in October 2023. In the meantime, you can speak to any member of the staff team or send feedback to [feedback@abbeyfield.com](mailto:feedback@abbeyfield.com)

**[www.abbeyfield.com](http://www.abbeyfield.com)**