

Croydon Council Housing Questionnaire - Optivo

1. How many homes do you currently operate?

3,406 managed

Source: SDR 2017/18

2. What are the different types of tenure that you have within your stock?

General Needs (general needs + intermediate rent + affordable rent): 2,295

Supported Housing: 57

Housing for older people: 35

Low cost home ownership where the purchaser has not acquired 100% of the equity (shared ownership): 713

Social leased homes where the purchaser has acquired 100% of the equity but not the freehold interest (leaseholders): 306

Source: SDR 2017/18

3. How much do you spend on maintenance on average per property?

4. Maintenance costs per unit across Optivo stock: £1,540 - routine and planned maintenance cost per social housing units owned and/or managed as defined by the regulator in the Accounting direction for providers of social housing 2015

Source: Sector Scorecard 2017/18

5. Can you summarise your housing stock maintenance programme/expenditure

6. Can you summarise your housing stock investment (major works) programs.

7. How many new homes have you built over the past ten years in Croydon?

Roughly 700

8. How many homes have you planned to build over the next ten years in Croydon?

A total of 984 up to March 2023, of which roughly half (494) are already on site and 490 are in the pipeline. Our Croydon pipeline does not extend beyond 2022/23 so we are not able to provide figures further into the future.

9. What are the average net rents on your new build homes in Croydon?

Recent new builds have been funded through Government's 2011-15 and 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programmes, which have specified Affordable Rent for rented homes. For these we charge 80% of open

market rent or the Local Housing Allowance, whichever is lower, inclusive of service charges. This works out as roughly £183 weekly in net rent.

10. What are the average service charges on your new build homes in Croydon?

£9 weekly (for those which have service charges)

11. How many homes have you sold under Right to Buy?

0 for as long as our records go back

12. Regarding your properties in Croydon, how has your organisation responded to the events of Grenfell Tower?

We have assessed all properties in the borough for potentially combustible cladding. Only one scheme was found to feature this – Leaden Hill a new-build (2015) low-rise scheme at 127 Brighton Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 2BQ. We have now replaced the cladding and have received building control sign-off for the works.

Whilst replacement works were underway we instigated daily controls and regular communication with our residents and their local MP (Chris Philp).

13. What types of tenancies do you offer your tenants?

Principally Assured and Fixed Term Tenancies

14. What is your response to London and Quadrant's recent actions to phase out fixed-term tenancies?

We see this as an important issue and we're currently reviewing our tenure policy

15. What are the average rents for your relet properties?

£134 net rent for homes relet in 2017/18

16. What are the average service charges for your relet properties?

£9 for homes with service charges relet in 2017/18

17. How many tenants have you evicted from your properties over the past ten years, and why?

21 from 2014/15 to 2017/18

Roughly two-thirds for rent arrears; one-third for ASB

We do not have robust figures for previous years

18. What support do you offer to residents who are experiencing financial difficulties?

A variety of support including: help to secure benefits to which residents are entitled, budgeting advice, referrals to debt advice charities (e.g. Step Change), and referrals to charities offering charitable grants (e.g. Turn2Us / Glasspool / Helping Hands).

We are also running an innovative rent flexibility trial in conjunction with the Centre for Responsible Credit, which enables residents to create a personalised rent schedule to compensate for fluctuating demands on their income throughout the year. For example, lower payments during school holidays and Christmas time compensated for by higher payments at other points during the year. Several Croydon residents are participating in the trial, which aims to:

- Make it easier for residents to pay their rent, without recourse to credit use and without cuts to living standards;
 - Help residents plan ahead, and make it easier for residents to save; and
 - Improve residents' overall well-being (for example, by reducing stress and anxiety about money).
-

19. What support do you offer to vulnerable residents?

We have a dedicated Tenancy Sustainment Officer offering personalized support to our most vulnerable residents. That covers the likes of helping with paperwork including benefit claims, supporting residents who wish to move home or are being decanted due to major works and tackling hoarding.

Following our research with the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute – and several other housing associations - we also offer “Breathing Space” to residents in arrears with some form of vulnerability. This essentially means pausing our arrears process once residents have engaged with our Financial Inclusion team to enable a particularly supportive approach to arrears management without the potential stress created by further warnings of action and court proceedings.

20. What support do you offer to residents who are experiencing domestic violence?

If an Optivo resident discloses domestic abuse, we'll:

- provide advice on safety options
 - make a referral to Croydon's Family Justice Centre
 - arrange any emergency security repairs (such as lock changes) needed free of charge
 - where appropriate, make a bid for an A1 priority move to rehouse them
-

All frontline staff have received safeguarding training and we have a safeguarding workflow to support them to deal with safeguarding concerns such as domestic abuse

We also have a specialist Domestic Abuse Co-coordinator, responsible for ensuring a consistent approach to responding to domestic abuse throughout Optivo. They'll also lead on securing DAHA accreditation as well as delivering our CIH / Women's Aid / DAHA 'Make a Stand' pledges.

21. Can you share with us your resident satisfaction information for your tenants, shared owners, and leaseholders please?

Croydon Tenants (general needs and homes for older people): 96% based on 107 surveys in 2017/18

Croydon Shared Owners: 100% based on 10 surveys in 2017/18

Croydon Leaseholders: n/a

22. Which parts of your services get the most complaints?

Responsive repairs

23. In your view, what are the main barriers to investment that you currently face?

More of a strategic/policy issue really...is investment in housing in Croydon easy/difficult? Are there issues around land availability, viability, does the council provide a decent enabling function, how does planning function etc...

24. How can Croydon Council help you overcome these barriers?

25. Do you have any further feedback?
