This report summarises Metropolitan’s work and progress during the year.

On the front cover: Christopher, Belinda and their children Mason and Isabella bought through shared ownership and now they have a home where the children can grow up.
Welcome to our 2014/15 customer report

Our aim is to show you how we’ve delivered value for money; how we’ve performed in areas like repairs, rent collection and complaints; and what our plans are for improving services in the future.

In the last year we continued to make progress in improving the way we do things. Reducing running costs has continued to be one of our biggest aims – the less we spend on running the business, the more we can invest in services and building homes.

Linked to this, we’ve also improved the way we collect rent – rent arrears are now at an all-time low (5.2%) and we continue to drive them down. One of the ways we’ve done this is to target support towards people with financial difficulties.

We’ve maintained our focus on improving repairs. In 2014/15 we laid the foundations for establishing new partnerships in order to deliver repairs and maintenance in London and the East of England, and for the longer term we’ve made plans for our own in-house Metropolitan repairs service. The first phase of this service will start in the East Midlands in 2015/16.

Supporting greater independence for our customers is at the heart of everything we do, and during 2014/15 we started to measure how we’re doing this.

We set ourselves a target to deliver 1,000 ‘independence steps’ – which include things like getting a job; completing training; moving from high intensity care and support to lower intensity care and support; and moving to home ownership. We exceeded this goal with our customers achieving 4,754 independence steps.

Building new homes is a big priority for us. In 2014/15 we built 456 new homes and over the next five years we plan to build thousands more. At the same time, we are investing in refurbishing homes – we invested £8.1m this year in improvements including new windows, heating systems, kitchens and bathrooms, and we’ll invest another £100m in the next five years.

I am proud of our record; but I know we can do better. Our National Customer Group is going from strength to strength and is having a greater role in helping to shape our plans for the future. We would like to see as many of our customers as possible getting involved so that together we can really make a difference.

Brian Johnson
Chief Executive

“Supporting greater independence for our customers is at the heart of everything we do.”
Introduction

I’ve been a Metropolitan resident for 11 years, and I first got involved in the National Customer Group (NCG) two years ago.

Our customer groups are important as they represent the voice of the general Metropolitan public. Our role is to look at things that are of most concern to you and, wherever possible, make recommendations for improvements.

This year we’ve had plenty of opportunity to get involved in Metropolitan’s work and put our point of view across.

We’ve seen change and progress with the new customer incentive scheme, and offered feedback to shape it at various points.

We’ve also played a part in projects such as the setting up of Metropolitan’s new in-house repairs service, soon to be rolled out in the East Midlands. We’ve also helped to define who our future customers are likely to be so that Metropolitan can prepare and adjust its services.

This report summarises Metropolitan’s work and progress during the year and I hope you find it useful and informative.

Together we can influence how Metropolitan changes and develops. We want to help it become more than just a landlord, and be known for great customer care.

We’d love to see more of you involved in our work – why not join us? As one voice we’re much louder!

Graham Taylor
Chair of the National Customer Group
About us

We own and manage more than 38,000 properties throughout the East Midlands, London and the East of England.

We work with our customers to ensure we manage their homes well and provide repairs when needed.

We provide care and support services, specialising in supporting older people and people with learning disabilities and mental health needs.

Where we operate


61 per cent of our customers live in London; 20 per cent live in the East Midlands and 11 per cent live in the East of England.

About you

Where you live


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61% OF OUR CUSTOMERS LIVE IN LONDON

We build new homes –

In 2014/2015 we built 456 and plan to build 3,300 by 2019

Colours key (number of units)

- 3,000+
- 1,000–3,000
- 500–1,000
- 200–500
- 100–200
- 0–100

We welcomed 5,114 new customers and their families in the year 2014/15: 42.2% in London; 39.4% in the East Midlands and 18.3% in the East of England.
Money matters

In 2014/2015 we continued to reduce costs and build up a surplus – this ensures we're financially strong for the future and can invest more in the services that matter to you.

At the end of 2014/15 our surplus was £60.5m (2013/14: £40.2m).

The chart on the right shows how we spend each pound.
7100% of our homes remain gas safe compliant

Getting on the property ladder
Belinda, Christopher and their young children, Mason and Isabella, are the proud owners of a new, three-bedroom home with two parking spaces at The Leys – a development of 40 new homes in Wellingborough.

Before they got a foot on the property ladder the family were renting a two-bedroom home in Bedford which they had outgrown. They bought their new home through shared ownership. Rather than having to pay the full market value for their home, they discovered that they could buy a 30% share with savings and a mortgage, making home ownership more affordable.

The family was able to buy a new home for less than it would cost to rent a similar quality property privately in the area.

Belinda explains:
“We really needed a larger home nearer to Chris’s work that we could settle in for the longer term, but we didn’t want a huge mortgage to over-burden ourselves. We wanted somewhere that the kids could grow up in, and we’re really happy here.”

Our performance continued

Rent
We are determined to reduce rent arrears (the percentage of income owed to us by general needs tenants and leaseholders) so that we can use the money to improve services for all our customers.

Rent arrears dropped to 5.2% (last year: 5.8%).

We also collected £1m in rent arrears owed to us by former tenants.

Some of our customers need support with financial planning to keep up with rent and bills. This year our financial inclusion team supported around 100 people every month, helping to reduce arrears by more than £368,000.

Building and improving homes; regenerating communities

We built
456 new homes
(last year 203)

We want to ensure that your home is safe, warm and cost-effective to heat, and that key fittings such as kitchens and bathrooms are in good condition. Through our improvement plan we replace items at the end of their expected life.

We invested
£8.1m in improving homes

We fitted 320 new bathrooms
(last year 153)

We sold 90 new homes – 57 of those were sold to people buying a share of the home (shared ownership)

100% of our homes remain gas safe compliant

We fitted
482 new kitchens
(last year 233)

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Adapting your home
Sometimes people find it difficult to move freely around their home. We provide advice and help to get the aids and adaptations that allow our elderly or disabled customers to remain independent at home for as long as possible. These include grab rails, wheelchair ramps, level-access showers and stair lifts.
In 2014/2015 we dealt with almost 500 (487) aids and adaptations cases.

Empty properties
We’ve reduced the number of properties that are empty (voids) and we’re working hard to make sure that when we do have empty properties we make them available to new customers as soon as possible.
At the end of 2014/15 1.66% of our properties were empty and available to let (in 2013/14 1.9%).

Repairs
We completed more than 90,000 repairs. 91 per cent of routine repairs were completed within our target of 28 days. 86 per cent of emergency repairs were completed within our target of 24 hours.
Our aim is to reduce the need for short term fixes by investing in our home improvement programme.

Employment
Metroployment is our jobs support service for customers.
We more than doubled the number of customers we helped into employment (372 compared to 155 in 2013/14) and completed three work academies in Nottingham – these were specifically aimed at people on benefits or who had been out of work for a longer period of time.
After completing training at the academy 19 of our customers gained employment in our Contact Centre.

Sector Based Work Academy
Martin is a Metropolitan customer who joined our colleague team after securing a job through our new Sector Based Work Academy training scheme.
With six weeks of training and practical experience, the academies offer an introduction to a career in housing with a guaranteed interview on graduation. Martin joined the academy in Nottingham after almost a year of unemployment. He now has a permanent job as Customer Service Advisor in our Raleigh House Contact Centre.
He said:
“I’d recommend Metropolitan’s Sector Based Work Academy; it’s a great opportunity and provides valuable experience to add to your CV.
“Things have changed since I completed the work academy. I can provide for my family without having to worry about the future, we no longer have to just get by.”
Our performance continued

Care and support
We provided care and support to 5,652 customers.

Our customers have a diverse range of needs, so we tailor our services when working with customers to help them maintain their independence and achieve their potential.

Some of our services are listed below:

Care and repair
Providing practical help and advice to allow people to remain independent and live in their own home for as long as possible.

Home Sweet Home
Supporting older homeowners and private tenants in Haringey, London, to stay in their home.

STEPS (Support Towards Empowering People Service)
Offering people from black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee communities in Nottingham one-to-one and group support with mental health needs.

Cambridge Road
Providing accommodation and a mix of low-level and intensive support for people with mental health needs. The homes here are made up of one and two-bedroom properties.

METTS (Metropolitan Tenancy Sustainment Scheme)
Providing advice and short term support to customers who need help to maintain their tenancy by addressing rent arrears, managing their home and ensuring they have access to health and social care services.

Monitoring quality
The Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulates health and social care services (including some Metropolitan care and support services) in England.

This year they changed the way they assess services, based on whether a service is safe, effective, responsive, caring and well-led. Currently only 20 per cent of our services are registered with the CQC but we want all of our services to deliver quality care and support, so we have introduced our own quality self-assessment based on the key questions used by the regulator.

In 2015/16 we will introduce a team to check on these assessments and make sure that different services can learn from each other.

Home Sweet Home
Mr and Mrs Greaves are an elderly couple living in Haringey, London. They are fiercely independent and like to get involved in community activities and gatherings when they can.

Mrs Greaves has been diagnosed with dementia and Mr Greaves is her main carer. Our Home Sweet Home service helped Mr Greaves to get the advice and support he needed to maximise his income and maintain the couple’s financial independence, and supported Mrs Greaves to continue attending a day centre, which was important to her.

As a result of the support they received from the Home Sweet Home team and other agencies the couple are coping with day-to-day life and remain living independently in their own home.
**Our performance**

**Customer service**

We’re keen to make it as easy as possible for our customers to contact us if they need to.

- We introduced a **24 hour service** in our Contact Centre.
- **WE HANDLED 4,962 COMPLAINTS** (3,846 LAST YEAR)
- **We took 375,055 calls** (400,000 last year) and responded to **58,157 emails** (60,000 LAST YEAR)

Although the number of complaints increased, we’ve improved the way we handle them – 99.3% were resolved at the first stage compared with 93% last year. Less than 1% of complaints were escalated to the third, highest stage. We’re working hard to reduce the overall number by looking at the root causes – such as repairs, where we are making changes.

We continued to promote our customer self serve, which enables customers to check their account, make a payment and report repairs online 24 hours a day. Almost 3,000 customers (2,969) registered for our customer self serve service.

We published two newsletters for all customers who live in a Metropolitan home, as well as local newsletters.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaints resolved</th>
<th>Complaints were about...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.8% CUSTOMER SERVICE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>99.3%</strong></td>
<td>Includes complaints about customers unable to get through to us on the phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>(93% LAST YEAR)</td>
<td><strong>STAGE 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>0.59%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1% PLANNED WORK PROGRAMMES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5% LAST YEAR)</td>
<td>Includes complaints about replacing kitchens and bathrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>71.6% RESPONSIVE REPAIRS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>0.11%</strong></td>
<td>Includes complaints about repairs not being completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2% LAST YEAR)</td>
<td><strong>17.1% HOUSING SERVICES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes complaints about how antisocial behaviour cases have been handled</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>2.7% MONEY MATTERS</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Includes complaints about financial processes, for example a direct debit not being set up properly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1.2% HOME OWNERSHIP</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Includes complaints regarding buying and selling homes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>0.6% PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Includes complaints regarding property defects</td>
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Our performance continued

Activities for children and young people
We continued to organise activities in the communities we work in to promote well-being, healthy living and education – all aimed at improving independence and equipping young people with life skills. Over 25 per cent of our housing customers who are under 25 took part in these activities, which included homework clubs, sport, drama and volunteering.

Apprenticeships work
Jassay is a Metropolitan resident who lives on the Ashmole estate in London. He started his career with us as an apprentice, working in various departments across our business. He has now progressed on to the role of Resident Liaison Officer and works with the team regenerating the area where he lives.

He said:
“Many customers I’ve spoken to through my work here are in similar positions to where I was before I started the apprenticeship – but with the right support, I know they can get work. It’s great being able to give back what I once needed.

“For me there hasn’t been just one highlight – the whole journey has been great. It’s not always been easy but I have worked hard and come out the other side with better knowledge and understanding. I have built up a level of empathy and understanding for our customers allowing me to approach a situation with confidence.”
Fixing repairs
Our new in-house repairs service – delivered directly by Metropolitan – will be rolled out from the end of this year, starting in the East Midlands and later in London.

In the East of England where our properties are more spread out, we’ll continue to deliver a repairs service through a partnership contract. We have just appointed Morgan Sindall to deliver this service on a new contract which prioritises ‘right first time’ and we will be working with them closely to deliver this.

Improving homes
We’ll be investing £22m every year – more than £100m over five years – in improving homes with new bathrooms, kitchens, windows, boilers and roofs.

Building new homes
We’ll continue to play our part in addressing the national shortage of housing. We plan to deliver 3,300 new homes by 2019 and will build at the rate of about 1,000 a year in two years’ time.

Customer service
We continue to look at ways to make it easier for customers to get in touch with us and access services – we recently introduced a 24-hour service in our Contact Centre.

“We continue to look at ways to make it easier for customers to get in touch with us.”
Help us improve our service to you

Tell us what you think and win shopping vouchers!
We value your feedback – please complete a short survey on our website and let us know what you think of this report. As a thank you, you’ll be entered into a draw to win shopping vouchers.

Join in!
Graham, the Chair of our National Customer group told us what he’s doing to volunteer with us. You can do the same and meet new people, improve your employment prospects or simply try something new.

“What all our members enjoy is the feeling of empowerment they get from making services better, shaping new policies and helping to improve the lives of others. No previous experience is necessary – get involved and make a difference!”

Right: Diana lives in a Metropolitan home in Stanmore with her two children Kaleisha (pictured) and Demarrie.

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