

**Acuity**  
**Benchmarking**  
**2022 Report**



# CONTENTS

- 01 Introduction
- 05 Performance and improvement
- 07 Voids and lettings
- 08 Rent collections and arrears
- 09 Repairs and maintenance
- 10 Residents satisfaction – General Needs
- 11 Resident satisfaction – Housing for Older People
- 12 Resident satisfaction – Supported Housing
- 13 Staff engagement
- 14 Value for money/Cost measures
- 15 Regulator for Social Housing
- 16 Acuity salaries survey
- 17 Benchmarking clubs





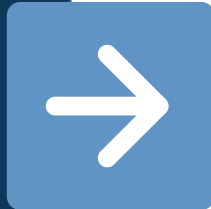
# Introduction

# Introduction

Welcome to Acuity's annual benchmarking report: key performance and cost data for smaller Housing Associations in England.

**Acuity Benchmarking** is the national benchmarking network for smaller housing providers, facilitated by Acuity in partnership with Housemark.

Aimed at housing providers with up to 1,000 homes, the network has **152 members** owning/managing over **81,000 homes** across eight English regions, with a **median stock size of 335**.



## Providing the data you need

Acuity provides performance and cost benchmarking data for members, enabling you to compare against a peer group of similar organisations facing similar challenges. This data is used by staff, boards and residents to better understand performance (including what 'good' looks like), contextual factors and inform decision making.

Data provides lenders, potential partners, the regulator and other stakeholders with assurance that you are efficient, well-run and delivering on your social mission.

The data for 2022 shows Acuity members in a positive light once more: you compare favourably with the rest of the social housing sector in all the key areas, and general trends in performance and costs are positive. Resident satisfaction remains high at a time when Government and regulatory focus is increasingly on customer metrics and landlord accountability – that's great news.

*The diversity of RSLs involved and the discussion at meetings on the benchmarking data helped me to report to the Board on how [our] data compares and what lessons can be learnt from this information. There is also much more that can be achieved.*





*Our members will continue to drive the Acuity Benchmarking agenda.*

*This means we are likely to do more of the same: benchmarking performance, costs and processes, and supporting members through networking and sharing of good practice in the most cost-effective way possible. We plan to run more face-to-face events including our annual conference again in April 2023.*

*The new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) standard becomes operative in April 2023 and applies to all providers. Whilst providers with less than 1,000 stock are not required to submit their TSM data to the regulator, they still have to collect and report on the 22 TSMs to their tenants. Here, Acuity will provide a vital role in facilitating your collection and reporting of the data whilst the benchmarking clubs will support your efforts to get the TSM regulatory requirements right. This [briefing](#) provides a useful rough guide to the TSMs.*

*We have already added the new TSM metrics to the benchmarking system for those who want to pilot them this year, and we will run TSM data workshops in March/April 2023 to help ensure data consistency and quality for members.*

*And, as many of you will know, Acuity isn't just a benchmarking business; we are a long-established provider of satisfaction surveys and market research. Over 2022, we introduced the draft TSMs into many of our surveys; you might be interested in the results [here](#). Our team is at hand to help you with your surveys whether you want a specific task undertaking or to outsource it all from conception through to surveying and reporting. Contact: [denise.raine@arap.co.uk](mailto:denise.raine@arap.co.uk)*

*As facilitator of a national network for smaller providers, we have a unique role and will explore the development of new collaborations, services, workshops and events. We will continue to work with organisations such as the Regulator of Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman, CIH and NHF to ensure that we provide the business intelligence our members need.*

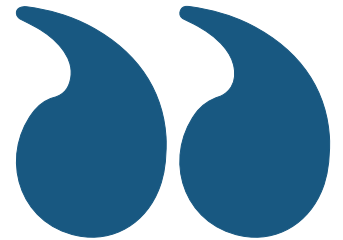
*We keep looking for ways to improve and adapt what we already do, to help our members navigate a challenging operating environment and to support you in every way possible so you can provide the best service for tenants. We'll also continue to keep you up-to-date through emails and our website's news, blogs, webinars and events.*

*Since the disruption associated with Covid, we have been delighted by the positive feedback from members about how much they value the network and the services we provide, and how Acuity Benchmarking has helped them to navigate their set of challenges. We hope you'll feel the same way about it this year.*



*An excellent tool to help smaller housing associations compare their performance with other similar organisations. Acuity's work with the group has been a very productive working partnership.*

*What has been particularly useful has been the networking and discussion of issues with others in similar roles who face similar challenges, particularly with similar-sized organisations.*



*I like the fact that it is an opportunity to meet up with similar organisations and discuss the different approaches that organisations are adapting to cope with the sector changes. It is interesting to be able to question the success or otherwise of these approaches.*

*[I'm] very satisfied and my Board are extremely pleased when the reports are produced at Board meetings.*

*Acuity Benchmarking is a must for all smaller organisations that are serious about continuous improvement ... A win, win situation and membership ensures that both the regulatory requirements can be satisfied in terms of peer review and benchmarking and that information is readily available to provide to tenants for scrutiny and Boards for governance.*





# Performance comparison and improvement



**Acuity benchmarking data provides** smaller associations with comparisons between similar peers and the rest of the sector. The results on the following pages show that, on the whole, members compare favourably with the rest of the sector in key areas such as rent collection, arrears, voids and the cost and management of repairs.

The data in the following pages provides an insight into the overall performance of Acuity Benchmarking members for the year April 2021 to March 2022. Two sets of data are provided for each key activity:

- 1** The median performance of all organisations submitting data to Acuity (referred to as ‘Smaller Providers’) and the median performance of all organisations submitting data to Housemark (referred to as ‘All Providers’)
- 2** Year-on-year data indicating the direction of travel in performance among Acuity members.

We use a traffic light system to indicate whether the median for Acuity members is higher, lower or the same as the median for All Providers, and trend arrows to indicate whether performance among Acuity members has improved, declined or stayed the same.

The year-on-year trend is based on data from Acuity members who submitted figures for both 2020/21 and 2021/22. Using a **balanced panel** in this way ensures that trend comparisons are robust and not adversely affected by changes in the sample between years. This means that the Acuity medians compared against All Providers may differ slightly from the medians used for the same year in the trend analysis.

Housemark medians are drawn from Housemark Cost and Performance benchmarking submissions, based on data from around 350 Housemark members of all sizes and not including Acuity members. All resident satisfaction data are based on the Housemark standard STAR methodology.

Acuity and Housemark comparisons are based on identically defined performance indicators.

*It focused the Board's attention on the areas where improvements are possible. This has kept the momentum going in areas where we are behind our sector.*



# Voids and lettings

The performance of Acuity members on rent loss from voids and average re-let times during 2021/22 compares favourably with that of All Providers, with Acuity members reporting shorter void times for all stock and lower void losses for GN and HfOP.

Average (median) void times have decreased for GN and HfOP lettings although void losses have only decreased for HfOP. It's likely that Coronavirus restrictions continued to impact voids and lettings performance, particularly in the early part of the year.

	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Percentage of rent lost due to void properties (GN)	1.08	0.61	●	0.48	0.57	↓
Percentage of rent lost due to void properties (HfOP)	2.43	1.34	●	1.68	1.44	↑
Percentage of rent lost due to void properties (Supported)	5.96	6.20	●	5.77	6.33	↓
Average re-let time in days (GN)	45.72	27.76	●	29.54	28.00	↑
Average re-let time in days (HfOP)	55.52	32.00	●	35.50	32.50	↑
Average re-let time in days (Supported)	67.01	32.00	●	34.68	45.15	↓

*The quality of the reports we received together with benchmarked comparisons was welcomed by both our staff and Board.*



# Rent collection and arrears

The median performance of Acuity members on rent collection was lower than that of All Providers for all stock types (albeit marginally for GN and HfOP). Rent collection figures are significantly affected by the timing of housing benefit (HB)/Universal Credit (UC) payments, and arrears levels often reflect performance over a number of years and not just the reporting period. This is why such data should always be considered in context. For some clubs, we also use measures that exclude arrears caused by late HB payments, to give a more accurate comparison of performance.

GN and HfOP arrears were lower for Acuity members than All Providers. For supported housing, Acuity members have higher average arrears than All Providers. When we exclude arrears caused by late HB payments, Acuity members' GN median arrears is higher than All Providers.

Rent collection and arrears management have generally declined since last year.



	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (GN)	100.12	100.00	●	100.40	100.00	↓
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (HfOP)	100.31	99.92	●	100.00	99.83	↓
Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (Supported)	100.43	99.05	●	100.00	99.00	↓
Current tenant arrears (GN)	3.69	2.63	●	2.85	2.68	↑
Current tenant arrears (HfOP)	1.61	1.00	●	0.91	1.00	↓
Current tenant arrears (Supported)	2.81	3.95	●	4.08	4.20	↓
Current tenant arrears net of unpaid HB (GN)	2.86	3.00	●	2.19	2.97	↓
Current tenant arrears net of unpaid HB (HfOP)	0.51	0.26	●	0.08	0.29	↓

# Repairs and maintenance

Acuity members' median performance was higher than All Providers for average end-to-end time, gas safety and resident satisfaction with completed repairs.

Since last year, performance has decreased marginally or remained the same across all metrics. That said, resident satisfaction with the last completed repair is marginally better. All data is for GN housing, supported housing and HfOP combined.

	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Percentage of emergency repairs completed within target	N/A*	100.00		100.00	100.00	↔
Percentage of all reactive repairs completed within target	N/A	95.74		96.03	95.76	↓
Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs	13.72	7.12	●	7.00	7.36	↓
Percentage of repairs completed at first visit	90.00	90.00	●	91.00	90.00	↓
Percentage of residents satisfied with most recent repair (from repair completion survey)	87.35	95.00	●	96.05	96.10	↑
Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	99.99	100.00	●	100.00	100.00	↔

*I like the fact that these reports give [us] the ability to compare performance with similar organisations. They are in an understandable and logical format.*

\*Housemark did not collect PIs to measure repairs completion against target times last year.



# Resident satisfaction – General Needs

Acuity members reported high levels of satisfaction: an average of 89% satisfaction with overall service and similarly high levels of satisfaction with the safety of the home, being easy to deal with and value for money (VFM) of the rent. Satisfaction was slightly lower with repairs (87%), quality of the home (86%), neighbourhood as a place to live (87%) and considerably lower for listening to tenants' views and acting on them (78%) and VFM of service charges (75%). The median Net Promoter Score (NPS) for Acuity members is an excellent 57.

As has been noted in previous years, Acuity members compare favourably with the rest of the sector, with average ratings between 5 and 15 percentage points higher and NPS considerably higher.

Satisfaction has fallen by between one and two percentage points since last year for quality of home, safety of home and being easy to deal with. For all other ratings and NPS it has remained the same.



	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Satisfaction with the overall service provided by their landlord	79	89	●	89	89	↔
Satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service	71	86	●	86	86	↔
Satisfaction that landlord provides a safe and secure home	80	93	●	94	93	↓
Satisfaction that landlord listens to / acts upon tenants' views	64	78	●	78	78	↔
Satisfaction with the overall quality of the home	77	86	●	88	86	↓
Satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live	80	87	●	87	87	↔
Satisfaction with the value for money of rent	84	90	●	90	90	↔
Satisfaction with the value for money of service charges	66	75	●	75	75	↔
Satisfaction that landlord is easy to deal with	79	91	●	91	90	↓
Net Promoter Score	23	57	●	57	57	↔

# Resident satisfaction – Housing for Older People

Acuity members reported very high levels of HfOP satisfaction with an average 94% satisfied with services overall and similarly high average ratings in all areas other than for service charge VFM (89%) and listening to tenants' views and acting on them (80%). The median HfOP Net Promoter Score (NPS) for Acuity members is 61.

Compared with All Providers, Acuity members reported higher levels of satisfaction among HfOP residents across all seven STAR core satisfaction measures, achieving ratings between 4 and 13 percentage points higher.

Since last year, median satisfaction ratings have either remained the same or moved by a single percentage point except for satisfaction with repairs which has fallen by three percentage points.



	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Satisfaction with the overall service provided by their landlord	85	94	●	95	96	↑
Satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service	86	91	●	94	91	↓
Satisfaction that landlord provides a safe and secure home	91	95	●	96	96	↔
Satisfaction that landlord listens to / acts upon tenants' views	71	80	●	79	79	↔
Satisfaction with the overall quality of the home	89	95	●	96	95	↓
Satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live	90	95	●	94	95	↑
Satisfaction with the value for money of rent	87	94	●	95	94	↓
Satisfaction with the value for money of service charges	76	89	●	88	89	↑
Satisfaction that landlord is easy to deal with	82	93	●	93	93	↔
Net Promoter Score	37	61	●	61	61	↔

# Resident satisfaction – Supported Housing

Acuity members reported a median 90% overall satisfaction for Supported Housing tenants, with medians of 90% and 91% for providing a safe and secure home and being easy to deal with. Median satisfaction was slightly lower for VFM rent and VFM service charge, the quality of the home and listening to tenants' views and acting on them (all 87%) and satisfaction with the neighbourhood (86%).

Compared with All Providers, Acuity members reported higher levels of satisfaction for all of the key measures apart from satisfaction with the neighbourhood which was the same.

Since last year, median overall satisfaction has increased by one percentage point. The medians have remained the same for VFM and listening to tenants' views and acting upon them. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood and the safety of the home has fallen while satisfaction with repairs, the quality of the home and being easy to deal with have increased.



	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Satisfaction with the overall service provided by their landlord	82	90	●	89	90	↑
Satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service	82	86	●	83	86	↑
Satisfaction that landlord provides a safe and secure home	89	90	●	94	93	↓
Satisfaction that landlord listens to / acts upon tenants' views	75	87	●	88	88	↔
Satisfaction with the overall quality of the home	86	87	●	85	86	↑
Satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live	86	86	●	91	87	↓
Satisfaction with the value for money of rent	85	87	●	88	88	↔
Satisfaction with the value for money of service charges	78	87	●	86	86	↔
Satisfaction that landlord is easy to deal with	84	91	●	90	91	↑

# Staff engagement

As with previous years, Acuity members reported that on average they lost significantly fewer working days to sickness absence than larger providers. Time lost to sickness absence has increased by more than one and a half days per FTE compared with the previous year.

Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence

All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
10.74	6.31	●	4.78	6.31	↓

*Acuity has helped us identify and define critical PIs for our own use... They also provided access to excellent peer group comparators way beyond our own contacts. Really useful for the new Regulatory Framework and our reporting to tenants. Loading and accessing the data is easy and the support is quick and helpful. The broader benefits, links to Housemark and Procurement for Housing are a real bonus.*

*Making sure that we all report on the same basis has been important in the learning process. Working together with other housing professionals is also helpful.*



# VFM / Cost measures

These unit cost metrics were developed with Housemark to enable sector comparisons and are more robust than those derived from the statutory accounts because they require members to apportion costs in accordance with a methodology that is more consistent than that associated with accounting practice. The cost per property measures are 'direct' and exclude overheads.

Compared with All Providers, Acuity members reported higher average cost per property of housing management and higher overheads as a percentage of turnover. Some of this difference can be explained by the profile of Acuity members: a significant number of them are based in the southeast (staffing costs are higher) and they also have a significant percentage of supported and HfOP accommodation as compared to All Providers (see note below).

Acuity members' cost per property of responsive repairs and void works and major and cyclical were lower than the average for All Providers.

Since last year, the cost per property has increased for housing management and responsive repairs but costs have decreased for major and cyclical works. Overhead costs as a percentage of turnover has also decreased over the same period.



	All Providers	Smaller Providers		2020/21	2021/22	
Cost per property of Housing Management	299	458	●	429	465	↓
Cost per property of responsive repairs and void works	838	803	●	762	811	↓
Cost per property - Major and cyclical works	1,317	840	●	853	848	↑
Overhead costs as a percentage of turnover	13.15	17.80	●	16.87	17.62	↓

*I for one want to fully understand operating costs at a range of levels and see how I compare across the piece.*

*Reports are easy to understand and can be tailor made to address issues as they arise.*

*\*NOTE: All data relate to general needs housing, supported housing and housing for older people combined with one exception: the 'all provider' result for housing management excludes supported housing as Housemark benchmarks this separately. Although the Smaller providers metric seeks to level the playing field by excluding the cost of direct support/care provision, it is likely to reflect higher costs associated with supported housing providers' treatment of scheme-based staff, specifically the split between housing management and support and care.*



# Regulator for Social Housing

In 2018 the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) introduced the requirement that all regulated housing associations, large or small, must report in their accounts against the headline metrics below.

Arguably, these measures are as much to do with context as performance. The intention of the RSH is that they should serve as a starting point for associations to explore and demonstrate VFM, drawing on other data and evidence (such as that found in the rest of this report) to 'unpack' the headline position.

In the table to the right, the median values for Acuity members (Smaller providers) are compared with the medians from RSH Global Accounts data for providers owning or managing more than 1000 homes.

[Value for money metrics and reporting Annex to 2021 Global accounts in February 2022.](#)



	Providers over 1000*	Smaller providers	2020/21	2021/22
Operating margin (overall)	23.90	16.50	21.73	16.59
Operating margin (social housing lettings)	26.30	17.00	22.22	17.59
EBITDA MRI (as a percentage of interest)	183	248	325.00	248.30
Gearing (RSH and Scorecard measure)	43.90	16.53	15.14	15.66
New supply delivered (Social housing units)	1.30	0.00	0.00	0.00
New supply delivered (Non-social housing units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Reinvestment %	5.80	2.80	2.32	2.53
Return on Capital Employed (ROCE) %	3.30	2.41	2.79	2.41
Headline social housing cost per unit	3,730	4,774	4,688	4,825

\*RSH Global Accounts data published Feb 2022 for providers owning / managing > 1000 homes:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2021-global-accounts-of-private-registered-providers/value-for-money-metrics-report-annex-to-global-accounts-2021-accessible-version>

# Salaries survey

Each year Acuity runs a survey comparing salaries, terms and conditions for smaller housing providers. This service is free for Acuity Benchmarking subscribers.

Forty-eight smaller housing providers participated in 2022 and the feedback from participating organisations has been excellent.

Participants receive a detailed report with a comparison and analysis of salaries and other benefits. The report was developed with considerable input from members and is intended to help them and their boards judge how the pay and rewards they offer compare with others.

Would you like to see the full detail underpinning these figures? If so, please contact Acuity about taking part in the 2023 survey.



## Summary of 2022 findings

**Staff numbers:** General needs providers employ on average 2.23 FTE staff per 100 properties.

**Staff turnover:** Median staff turnover is 13%.

**Salary costs:** Median total salaries costs are 22% of turnover, compared with 21% last year. For general needs providers, median salaries costs are 18% of turnover, one percentage point lower than in 2021.

**CEO salaries:** The median salary for chief executives is £76,783 up 3.4% since 2021.

**Salary increases:** The median salary increase is 3%, higher than the previous year (1.9%).

**Overtime & bonuses:** 21% of organisations pay overtime. 23% pay bonuses.

**Pensions:** The median cost of pensions to employers (including past deficit) is 9.07% of the total salaries bill.

**Pension contributions:** The average employer contribution is 8% of salary. The average employee contribution is 5%. On average, 89% of staff participate in pension schemes.

**Sickness benefits:** 74% of organisations offer enhanced sickness absence entitlements.

**Training & development budgets:** Organisations spend on average £541 per FTE member of staff.

**Other benefits packages:** All organisations provide a range of other benefits as part of their staff reward packages with the most frequent benefits being time off in lieu (TOIL), provision of an appraisal scheme, home working, payment of professional fees, provision of study time, personal development planning (PDP), and employee assistance.

**Boards & board remuneration:** The average board has 9 members. One quarter of organisations remunerate the chair or other board members.





## Benchmarking clubs

*"Meetings are a good place to inform, challenge and bring back good practice to my organisation"*

# Benchmarking clubs

We currently support the following benchmarking clubs in England:

- 🏠 Acuity London
- 🏠 bm320 (London)
- 🏠 Housing for Older People
- 🏠 Community HAs North West
- 🏠 SHAPE (South East)
- 🏠 South West
- 🏠 Supported Housing
- 🏠 West Midlands
- 🏠 Yorkshire & Humberside

And in Ireland:

- 🏠 The Housing Alliance



Acuity brings member organisations together in regional and specialist benchmarking clubs, offering the opportunity to meet with colleagues to get beyond the numbers, network, share ideas and learn from each other.

Regional and specialist benchmarking clubs offer the opportunity to meet with colleagues from similar organisations facing similar challenges, to network, share ideas and to learn from each other.

Typically, Acuity's regional and specialist benchmarking clubs meet quarterly, but during the coronavirus pandemic we met more frequently for shorter online sessions. We are now seeing a return to less frequent meetings with a focus on wider challenges such as arrears, tenancy sustainment, decarbonising homes, the Fire Safety Act and H&S compliance and wider White Paper challenges.

Acuity webinars have proved a popular and convenient way for members to get information from the Regulator of Social Housing, CIH, Ombudsman, DWP, and a range of experts in areas such as the new Code of Governance, building safety, value for money and customer service. Resources and recordings from all these are available on our website. <https://www.arap.co.uk/news/>

*You can come away with a little gem of an idea you'd not previously thought of ... and it encourages you to try new things.*

*The high level of trust within the group really helps us in learning from each other.*



## About Acuity

Acuity provides consultancy services to help social housing providers improve services and engage with their residents. We support the performance benchmarking activities of smaller housing providers in England in partnership with Housemark.

We carry out TSM satisfaction measurement, customer research and insight and we work with staff, Board members and residents to support their learning and development needs.

Our philosophy is to build relationships with clients that enable them to achieve performance and service improvements through access to the highest quality information and learning experiences. Our services are highly flexible, and always carefully tailored to the requirements and budgets of our customers. We have been providing consultancy services to the social housing sector since 1998.



[www.arap.co.uk](http://www.arap.co.uk)



[acuity@arap.co.uk](mailto:acuity@arap.co.uk)



01273 287114