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***Resident Satisfaction Survey 2007/08***

Report by the Operations Manager

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The following report details findings from English Rural's Resident Satisfaction Survey. The report looks to capture data collected to gauge satisfaction levels with the homes and services provided, as well as inform about the wider needs and expectations of residents. In line with previous reports English Rural scores highly in terms of overall satisfaction, with 91% of all respondents being satisfied. The encouraging feedback and statistics presented highlight the continued commitment of English Rural to quality of service provision. Although very positive generally the report also highlights some particular areas on which to focus when planning improvements.

**2. BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY**

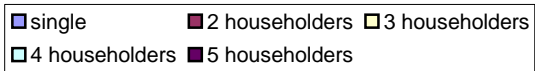
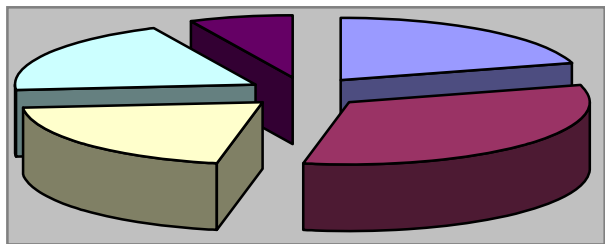
- 2.1 To satisfy regulatory requirements and monitor ongoing performance, English Rural currently undertakes a resident satisfaction survey annually. The purpose of the survey is:
- To ascertain the opinions of residents on a variety of issues such as services and repairs;
  - To provide anonymous information to develop a profile of English Rural residents;
  - To gather information from new residents about the selection and allocation process;
  - To discover areas of strengths and weaknesses, with a view to improving weaknesses;
  - To generate feedback for all aspects of the organisation;
  - To highlight any design criticisms of which English Rural is not aware;
  - To discover if there are any scheme specific issues which need to be addressed.
- 2.2 The survey form is circulated to all residents with a reply-paid envelope. The incentive of a prize draw for returned forms is offered to encourage participation. On this occasion 209 households responded (114 tenants and 92 leaseholders NB. 3 responses omitted to indicate tenure) which represents a 35% response rate.

- 2.3 English Rural has opted to undertake the survey itself using a bespoke database to collate entries and report results. The database is also used to print a template form, the content of which is reviewed to reflect the National Housing Federation's model STATUS survey and reflect any specific requirements needed by English Rural. The database offers significant scope for detailed analysis, however, for the purpose of this report key highlights and trends have been selected with a view to gauging overall satisfaction, whilst also identifying particular areas of concern.
- 2.4 The survey also offers the opportunity for resident involvement in the broadest sense. With every households being invited to participate and contribute.
- 2.5 This year's survey also asked residents to supply optional personal information. The purpose being to use the information supplied to inform the Disability and Equality Action Plan and Scheme and Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 2.6 The following sections below highlight and report on the different areas of the survey.

### **3. FEEDBACK ON HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

- 3.1 The length of residency of respondents was fairly evenly spread and consistent with the age of housing stock and development programme, for example 26 replies came from new households who had occupied their home for less than 1 year, the majority (122 or 60%) came from households who had lived in their property for less than 5 years and 43 (21%) from those who had lived in their property for more than 10 years.
- 3.2 Households sizes can be described as follows; single households 20%, two person households 33%, 3 person households 20%, 4 person households 20% and 5 person households 7% (see Figure 1). A total of 48% are family households with 84% of these having 1 to 2 children and 14% having 3 children (children meaning under 16).

Figure 1

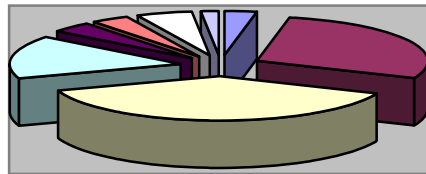


3.3 A small proportion of respondents (12%) indicated that they had one or more household members over the age of 60, of these 73% highlighted that these members were retired.

3.4 Respondents were asked to indicate if they had a household member with a long term illness, health problem or disability which limited their daily activity. A total of 21% of respondents answered 'yes' to this question, and of these 2% highlighted that the use of a wheelchair was necessary.

3.5 Out of the remaining respondents the majority were aged between 25 to 44. Taking the primary householder only (the one who completed the form) in total 30% fell into the 25-34 age bracket and 36% into the 35-44 age bracket. A small proportion (2%) of the primary households were aged between 18-24 and 21% between 44 and 60. A more detailed analysis of age was undertaken in the optional personal information (see Section 11) and the results of this are highlighted in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

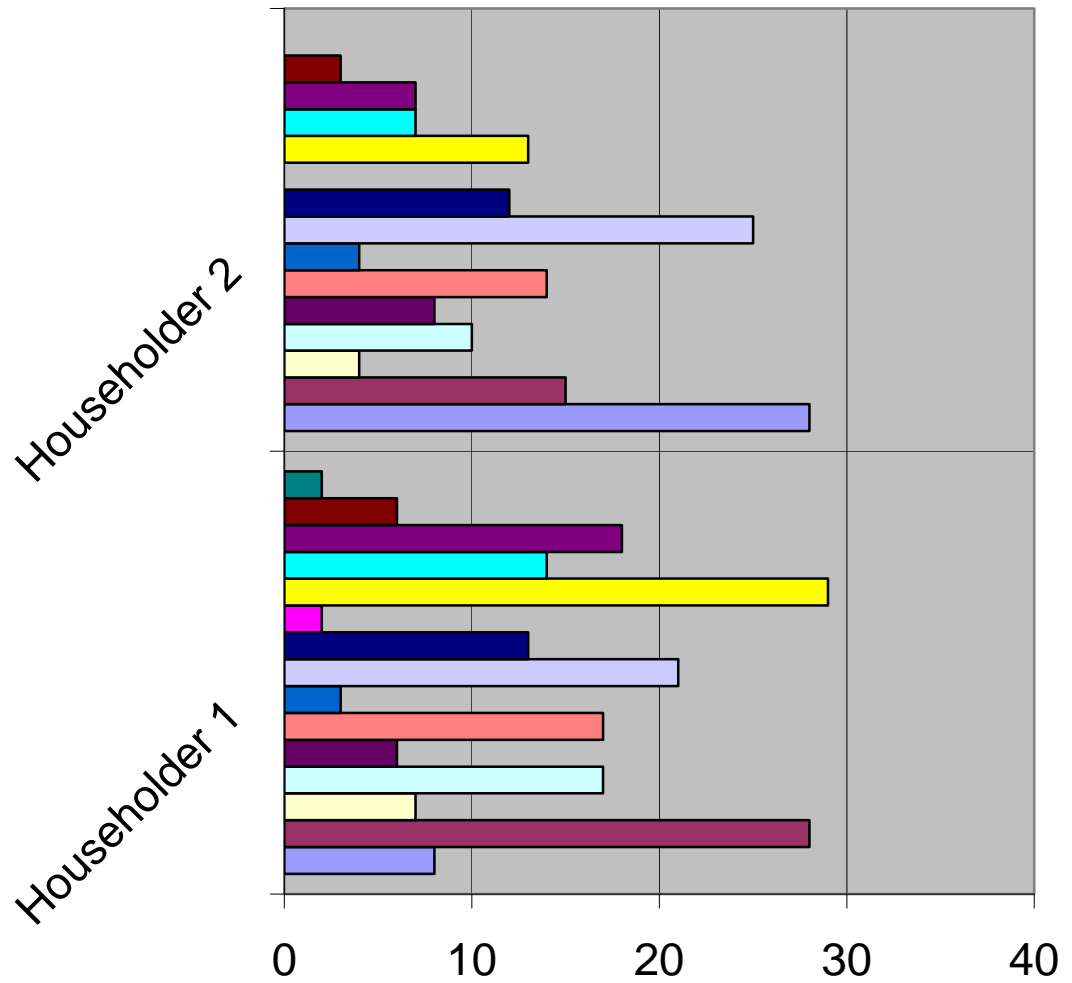


3.6 A total of 78% of households indicated that the primary householder was in employment (ie. full time, part time or self employed) the remainder were retired (10%), unemployed or unable to work (2%) or looked after the family/home (10%). All those who responded were asked to highlight their occupations, and these have been broken down into appropriate categories, and can be viewed in Figure 3.

3.7 In addition to sourcing employment information the survey also sought details on salary levels. The main trend being that on the whole shared owners had a higher income than tenants, with 76% of shared owners having a household income in excess of £20,000 and 61% of tenants having a household income below £20,000.

3.8 Respondents were asked to indicate which ethnic grouping that they belonged to. In total 99% of respondents described themselves as white British, with 0.5% considering themselves of Caribbean origin and 0.5% of white non specific.

Figure 3



	Householder 1	Householder 2
Student	2	0
Unemployed	6	3
Homemaker	18	7
Retired	14	7
Personal Service	29	13
Volunteer	2	0
Agricultural	13	12
Elementary	21	25
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	3	4
Sales & Customer Service	17	14
Skilled Trades	6	8
Administrative & Secretarial	17	10
Associate Professional & Technical	7	4
Professional	28	15
Managers & Senior Officials	8	28

#### **4. FEEDBACK ON APPLYING FOR AND MOVING IN TO A HOME**

- 4.1 The survey sought to identify any problems with the application and moving process. Only those who had moved into a property in the past 12 months were asked to provide information on this subject. Although 28% of all respondents answered, indicating that some households who had occupied their home for a longer period may have also answered.
- 4.2 One respondent indicated that they had found completing the application form difficult. On closer examination the reason for this was due to disability, although no particular illness was identified. All other applicants had no difficulties with the application form. In line with this, 89% of those who responded to this section confirmed that the assessment interviews were arranged at a time and place convenient to them (7% couldn't recall this) with 95% stating that the application process was made clear (5% couldn't recall) and 97% satisfied that the documentation clearly explained their rights and responsibilities (3% couldn't recall).
- 4.3 When asked to rate overall satisfaction with the sales and letting process one applicant felt fairly dissatisfied with the process, with the majority (93%) fairly or very satisfied (5% had no opinion).
- 4.4 There was however some areas of concern highlighted by new residents and these related to the condition of the property when first occupied. On the whole (65%) respondents to the section felt that everything was in good order, although 35% stated the contrary. Those who answered that the property was not in good order were asked to explain their answer further. On examining the replies concerns centred around the quality of finish and number of defects or outstanding work on new homes.

#### **5. CONTACT WITH ENGLISH RURAL**

- 5.1 Households who had contacted English Rural over the preceding 12 months were asked to provide information on their method of contact and satisfaction with the outcome. In total 149 respondents stated that they had been in contact, with the preferred method being the telephone which was used in 83% of cases. Of those who had been in contact 97% knew how to make contact. Other methods of contact included email (10%), letter (5%) a further 2% used alternative methods or couldn't recall how they had made contact.

- 5.2 Respondents were asked to highlight how easy it was to get hold of the correct person. In total 82% easily contacted the right person to assist with their enquiry and 10% had difficulties contacting the right person (8% had no opinion or couldn't recall). Once they had made contact 86% found the English Rural representative helpful with 77% of calls being successfully resolved. In contrast, 5% found the English Rural representative unhelpful with 12% of calls being unresolved. When asked to consider the final outcome of their contact with English rural 69% were satisfied, 21% dissatisfied and the remainder had no opinion.

## **6. INFORMATION ABOUT HOUSING AND AREAS**

- 6.1 One of the primary purposes of the Residents Survey is to measure performance, with the most obvious indicator being the overall satisfaction of residents with their home and services provided. In this instance 90% of respondents stated that they were very or fairly satisfied (91% of the total of tenants and 88% of the total of shared owners), with 5% expressing dissatisfaction (5% had no opinion).
- 6.2 As well as detailing overall satisfaction, the survey also sought to break down satisfaction with particular area of service and housing provision. Details on these results are highlighted in the graphs below, with Figures 4 and 5 demonstrating satisfaction with certain services.

Figure 4

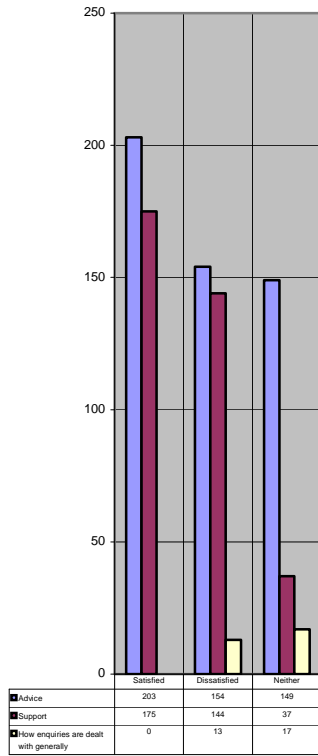
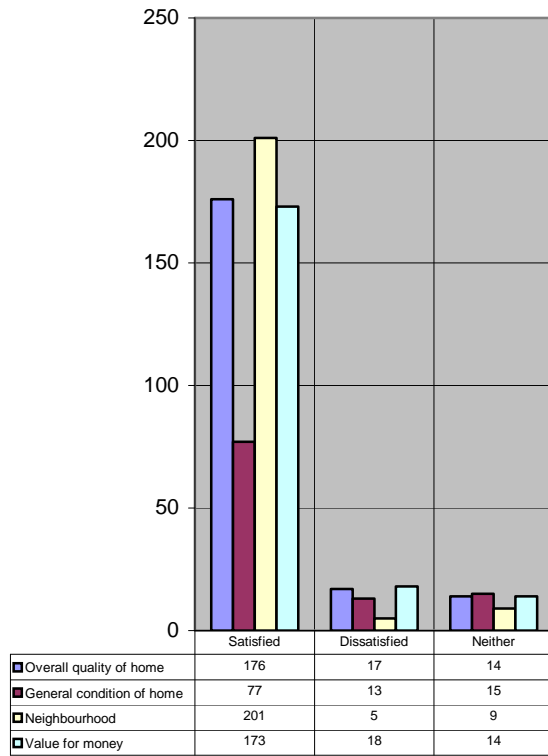


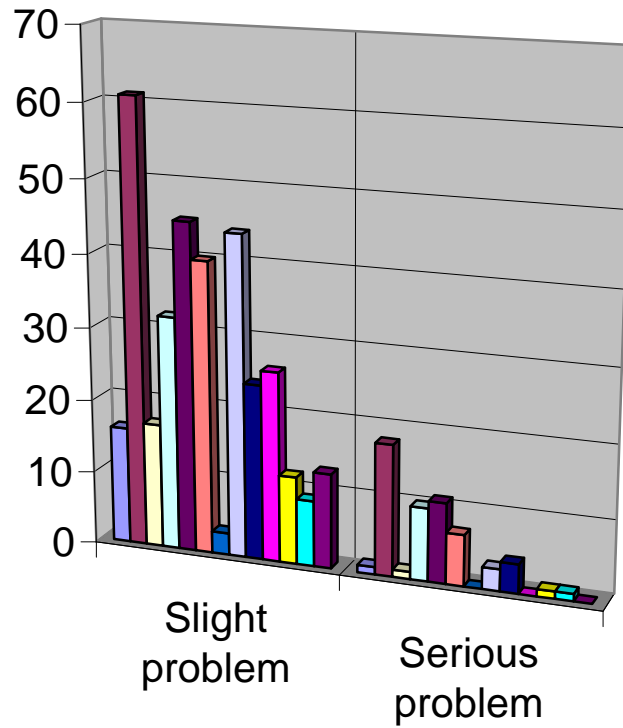
Figure 5



6.3 Value for money is also an indication of satisfaction, and the survey found that 83% of respondents felt they were getting value for money (85% Of tenants and 80% of shared owners), 12% had no opinion on this. Overall satisfaction with accommodation was 91% (4% had no opinion).

6.4 The survey also sought to establish to what extent neighbourhoods were affected by certain aspects of anti-social behaviour. Where a problem existed respondents were asked to note the name of the village. Details of any problems are highlighted in Appendix 1, copies of which have been passed to the relevant Housing Manager to follow-up as appropriate. Figure 6 below highlights the types and levels of problems indicated.

Figure 6

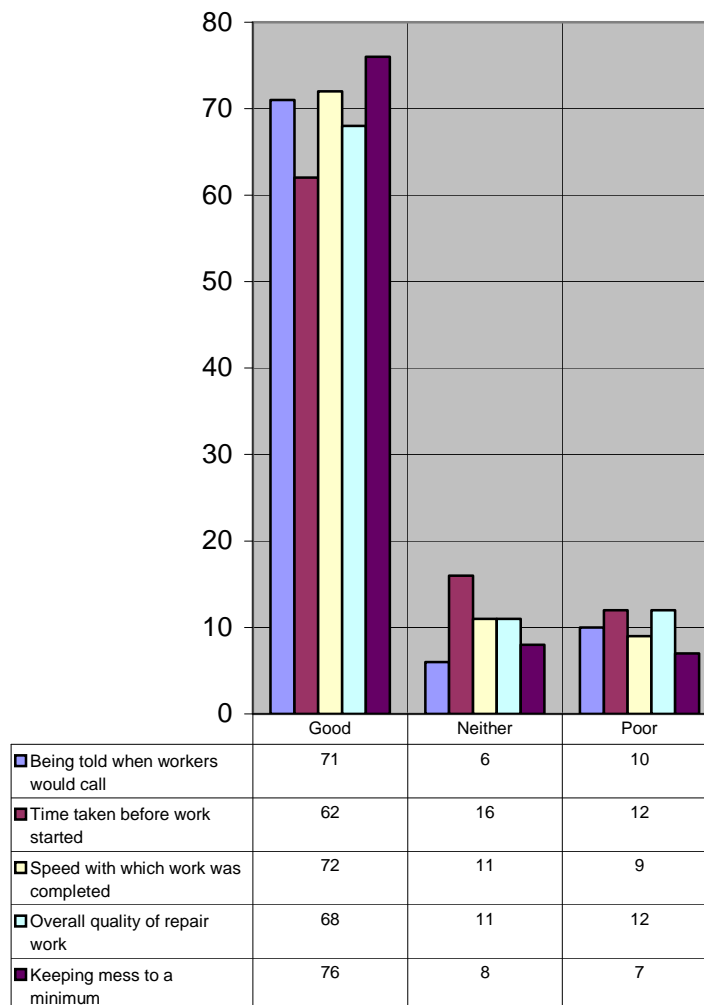


	Slight problem	Serious problem
Vandalism	16	1
Car parking	61	18
Other crime	17	1
Pets and animals	32	10
Litter and rubbish	45	11
Problem neighbours	40	7
Racial harassment	3	0
Noise from people	44	3
Noise from traffic	24	4
Disruptive children	26	0
Abandoned vehicles	12	1
Drug use/dealing	9	1
Rowdy behaviour	13	0

## 7. REPAIRS SERVICE

- 7.1 This section of the survey was aimed at sourcing feedback from tenants only about the repairs service offered to them. Only those who had requested a repair during the preceding 12 months were asked to complete the section.
- 7.2 Overall satisfaction with repairs was 76% and with the level of dissatisfaction being 12% (12% had no view). In order to unpack relevant satisfaction and dissatisfaction further tenants were asked to rate certain aspects of the repairs service provided. An analysis of this feedback is provided in Figure 7 below.

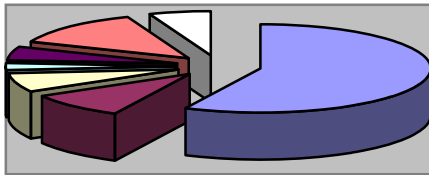
Figure 7



## 8. COMMUNICATING WITH ENGLISH RURAL

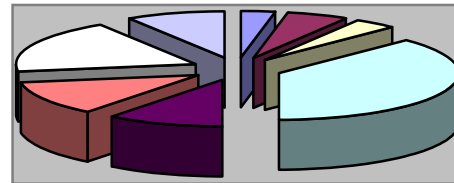
- 8.1 Communicating with tenants is increasingly an important part of our business, with the continued growth of involvement and consultation opportunities for residents it is essential that we understand how residents want us to engage with them.
- 8.2 In total 84% of respondents felt that English Rural was good at keeping them informed, 13% had no opinion on this matter and 3% felt that English Rural was poor at keeping them informed. This was particularly prevalent when asked to consider service charge consultation, with 26% indicating that they would like to see more consultation relating to service charge setting. In total 66% were satisfied that their views were taken into account opposed to 5% who felt this was not the case (29% had no view on this).
- 8.3 To understand the best way to engage with residents a series of questions relating to what they felt were priorities and what the preferred method of contact was. Details on these can be viewed in Figures 8 and 9 below, with Figure 8 indicating the preferred method of contact to source views and Figure 9 the preferred method of contact for keeping residents informed:

Figure 8



- Completing questionnaires
- Telephone surveys
- Resident groups/forums
- Open days
- Small discussion groups
- Virtual/online panel
- Do not want to get involved

Figure 9

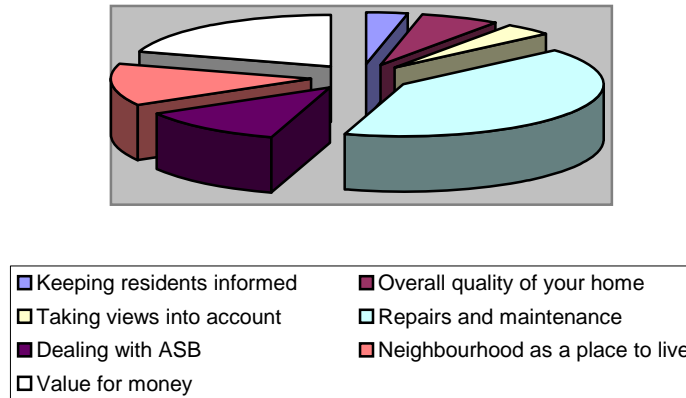


- Open meetings/AGM
- Resident groups/forums
- On-line forums
- By letter
- Personal visit
- By email
- Newsletter
- Telephone call

- 8.4 One of the main ways that English Rural currently engages and informs residents of changes affecting them is the twice yearly newsletter. In total 93% of respondents stated that they gained useful information from the publication.

8.5 The survey sought to identify which key services residents felt should be a priority for English Rural. The results of this are detailed in Figure 10 below:

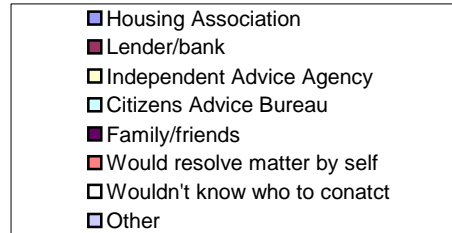
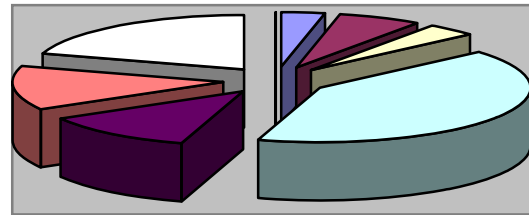
Figure 10



## 9. HOUSEHOLD COSTS

- 9.1 The survey also sought to understand residents' views towards debts and to what extent they had experience financial difficulties as a household over the preceding 12 months. In total 23% of respondents stated that this had been a problem with 19% of these households stating that the problem had resulted from household costs being higher than they had anticipated.
- 9.2 This issue of debt is an important one for English Rural given that the organisation assists many households on lower incomes and relies on these households for revenue (ie. rent). In order to examine this issue and perceptions about tackling debt respondents were asked to highlight who they would turn to for debt advice. The results from this question are highlighted in Figure 11 below:

Figure 11



## 10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- 10.1 All those completing the survey were offered the opportunity to make additional comments about their home and the service provided to them. The covering letter circulated with the survey highlighted that specific enquiries should be made to the appropriate English Rural representative. Inevitably some respondents still detailed specific enquiries that can not be addressed due to the anonymous nature of the survey form. All comments made are attached to my report (Appendix 2).

## 11. FUTURE PLANS

- 11.1 To plan for future management and understand more about the fluidity of stock the survey sought to identify possible movement trends. The majority (80%) of respondents had no plans to move from there property, 14% planned to move within the next 5 years, 6% in the longer term (more than 5 years) and 3% didn't know.
- 11.2 To understand the motivations for moving, further questions were asked to identify potential reasons and what type of tenure respondents saw themselves moving to. Figure 12 below illustrates where tenants (the question was aimed at rented homes only) were likely to move to and Figure 13 illustrates what shared owners (the questions was aimed at shared owners only) felt restricted them from accessing the open market or purchasing additional shares:

Figure 12

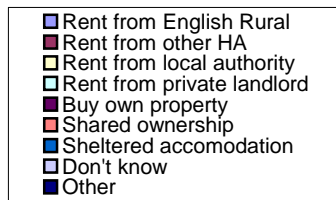
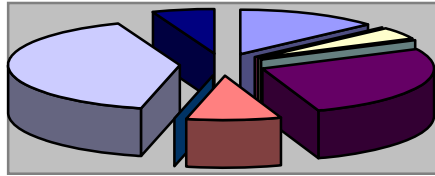
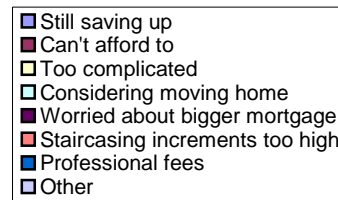
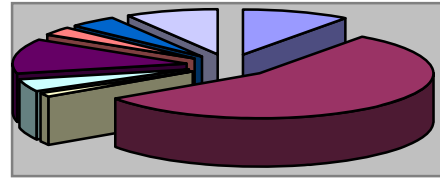


Figure 13



## 12. OPTIONAL PERSONAL INFORMATION

- 12.1 This year respondents had the option of providing extra personal information. This information was in addition to the standard personal information collected under the Household Characteristics heading (Section 2). The purpose of this exercise was to further establish a profile of residents and use the results to inform Equality and Diversity issues, and establish if any specialist needs exist that are not currently being considered.
- 12.2 One of the main characteristics identified was that females were more inclined to respond to the survey, with 62% of all forms being completed by them.
- 12.3 The majority of applicants (68%) described themselves as Christian (all denominations), 2% stated that they were Buddhist, 3% followed another religion, 2% preferred not to say and 25% did not belong to any religion.
- 12.4 When asked to describe their sexual orientation 91% stated that they were heterosexual, 2% were gay men, 1% were bisexual (and gender), 1% described themselves as other and 5% preferred not to say.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS

- 13.1 On the whole the results from the survey can be taken as a good indication of general satisfaction from residents, although some particular issues exist that should be considered and are detailed below. The results from this report should be measured along with the association's performance indicators, although one is not necessarily synonymous with the other. Satisfaction relates not only to performance, but also to how expectations are met and the relationship English Rural has with those living in its homes. Interestingly tenants are more satisfied overall than shared owners, and this is perhaps an indication of the level of expectation that the two groups have. Given that more services are provided to tenants then more scope exists for dissatisfaction, but the survey suggests that the contrary is the case. One possible suggestion for their higher satisfaction is that they have more contact with English Rural, feel more involved and are therefore more satisfied.
- 13.2 Because of the specialist nature of English Rural's objectives and activities the demographics of our residents differs from the wider social housing sector. For example, because of the rural areas that we are working in and local needs allocations policies, the ethnic mix of residents remains mainly white British. High levels of employment can also be noted, and in the main household sizes are in proportion to the accommodation that is occupied. A greater proportion of family than for Housing Associations generally is also a characteristic of English Rural's homes.
- 13.3 One area that does perhaps deserve a separate mention is the high level of households where a disability was recorded (21%). Consideration of this is in part being met by English Rural's review of the Equality and Diversity and Aids and Adoptions Policies, as well as the work of the Disability and Equality Scheme and Action Plan.
- 13.4 Overall satisfaction with repairs and maintenance was recorded at 76% and this was also noted as the priority service by residents. This is something to consider as English Rural brings all housing services in-house and establishes systems for repairs and maintenance provision.
- 13.5 Another area highlighted by residents was the consultation undertaken when setting service charges. At present service charges are reviewed annually in-line with actual expenditure and collected from residents depending on the circumstances of their particular development. Consulting widely on such a detailed scale would require the investment of additional resources, with the likelihood being that the outcome would be the same (ie. the same amount needs to be collected if not more due to the increased administrative management). However, it would perhaps be worth assessing how information on service charges flows between English Rural and residents and expanding dialogue in this area.

- 13.6 Household finances remain a problem for many residents and this in part reflects the background of those who are in need of Social Housing. The majority did not see English Rural, their landlord, as someone who could offer advice or support. Advice in this area is important and usually takes the form of Housing Benefit advice or providing guidance on household budgeting at the initial stages of offering properties and signing up tenants/shared owners. Households struggling with finances are ultimately likely to impact on English Rural in the form of bad debts and arrears.
- 13.7 It is also worth noting the high levels of satisfaction with the application and moving process, in part this could be considered a reflection of English Rural's review of this area when the previous Service Agreement ended back in 2006.

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