

Annual Report 2024 – 2025



50 years of transforming lives





It's the people that matter most.

As we navigate the continuing challenges facing our sector, *this is what drives us forward.*

Welcome to our Annual Report...

An introduction from the Chief Executive

Julie Layton



When I first joined Advance, I didn't expect to be here long-term. This year, as Advance celebrated its 50th birthday, I too marked a significant milestone of 25 years at Advance!

There are lots of reasons I've been committed to Advance for such a long time, but it's the organisation's vision that inspires me to stay most of all. It is the vision that people had when they formed the organisation back in 1974 and the vision we still have: to support adults with disabilities and mental health conditions to live the lives they choose.

Today, we have customers who are shared owners – living in homes they chose themselves – who would have previously spent their entire adult lives in long-stay hospitals.

We have several people with Down Syndrome who we've supported through their personal relationships, who are now happily married.

I once met a customer in Canvey Island who told me how, many years ago, she'd been sectioned and had been moved to a secure unit in Nottingham. She spent a long time there, hundreds of miles away from her family and children. Since she moved into our service, she's had the opportunity to rebuild her life and relationships with her family.

It's the people that matter most.

And as we navigate the continuing challenges facing our sector, this is what drives us forward.

I continue to be passionate about Advance's growth, as I believe that the success and development of the organisation will enable more people with disabilities to be empowered and to live in the communities they choose, as valued citizens. I am pleased that, although we don't always meet our ambitious targets, we continue to grow each year as we have this year.

Along with this, I think our customers deserve the best possible homes and services and I continue to believe that everything works better when we listen to customers and work with them to shape the services we deliver.

Funding continues to present significant challenges across the housing and social care sector and I hope we will see more of a commitment from Government to reform the social care sector and protect the progress

that has been made by and for disabled people. But as you will read in this report; despite the pressures, we have continued to build on our long and rich history, to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of our customers and to new regulatory and funding landscapes, and to challenge ourselves to do more for more customers.

In this second year of our three-year Strategic Plan: *Strong for the Future*, we have continued to build the resilience of our organisation, ensuring we are well placed to grow and thrive long into the future, so that we can share more stories about our customers successes for at least another 50 years.

An introduction from the Chair

Jonathan Higgs



It has been a real privilege in my first year as Advance's Chair to share in the organisation's 50th Anniversary celebrations. Not least because it has offered plenty of opportunities to meet with customers; the people who inspire the work we do.

But, also, because it has allowed us to take stock of how much has been achieved in the Supported Housing sector and for people with disabilities over the past 50 years. It has been an incredible journey.



Like every provider, Advance has a range of challenges to contend with: increased scrutiny, a raft of new legislation and ongoing financial pressures. But our vision to transform lives and our determination to move forward with the people we support is as strong today as it ever has been.

Advance has a long and rich history to draw on and, as you will read in this report, it continues to successfully respond and adapt to new challenges, invest in growth and maintain quality homes and services.

During this year, work to strengthen core services and maintain the quality of our homes has paid off with increased customer satisfaction across almost every Tenant Satisfaction Measure and 95% of support customers saying they are happy with our service. We have involved more customers – informally through events

and activities, and formally through vehicles like the Housing Customer Partnership and the Complaints Panel – and strengthened our approach to capturing and learning from customer feedback. It has been especially pleasing to see colleagues and customers of Advance working together to identify areas for improvement and to deliver change.

We have continued to strengthen our Governance with new co-optee members bringing additional insight and expertise to our committees. Once again, these efforts were recognised with the retention of the top rating (G1, V1) from the Regulator of Social Housing for Governance and Financial Viability.

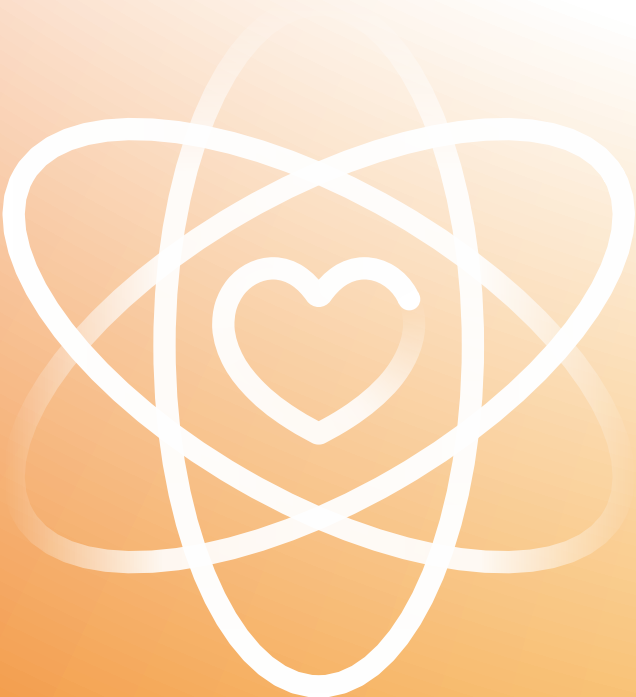
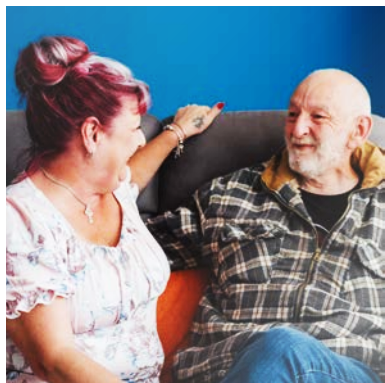
We have also grown our services to reach more people, developing an additional 66 new homes, and expanding and developing our support services in a number of locations across the country.

I am particularly proud that 90% of colleagues continue to rate Advance as a good place to work. Ultimately, Advance is a people business and a valued and supported workforce is fundamental for meeting customers' needs and aspirations.

Overall, I am pleased to see that Advance continues to challenge itself, to strive for high standards and to prioritise good outcomes for its customers. These are the foundations that will enable Advance to move forward and thrive for many more years to come.

Our vision and values

To transform the lives of people with a disability or mental health condition by providing the best quality housing and support services – to enable them to live the lives they choose, achieve their personal goals, feel valued and know their voices are heard.



PRIDE

Partnership

We work in partnership with our customers and build relationships with others that help us serve our customers better

Respect

We treat our customers, colleagues and others as we would like to be treated

Inclusion

We work to create an environment where diversity is celebrated and where everyone can thrive

Drive

We do the right thing at the right time and everything we do is driven by our customers' needs

Efficiency

We make good use of resources, find innovative ways to do things and maximise efficiency to deliver the best services for our customers

Tenant perception survey results 2024/25

Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM)	Advance 2023–24	Lower Q	Median	Upper Q	Advance 2024–25
TP01: Overall satisfaction	77.5%	66.9%	73.2%	79.5%	80.5%
Supported Housing* median			77.5%		
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs	71.6%	67.7%	73.3%	78.9%	81.0%
TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	63.7%	61.9%	69.4%	75.7%	70.8%
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	69.9%	66.6%	72.7%	78.7%	79.2%
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe	76.3%	73.3%	79%	84.6%	83.9%
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	68.4%	56.2%	63.3%	69.9%	72.8%
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	64.7%	66.2%	72.8%	79.1%	70.0%
TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	77.0%	74.1%	79.4%	84.7%	78.3%
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling complaints	54.3%	31.9%	37.0%	43.4%	55.8%
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well-maintained	70.3%	60.4%	66.8%	72.3%	72.8%
TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	65.9%	57.1%	64.7%	73.2%	61.5%
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour	68.3%	54.6%	61.0%	67%	69.2%

*Landlords with >30% supported housing

Customer-led



At Advance, we have always felt that customers are the experts when it comes to knowing what works for them. From taking a person-centred approach to delivering support to involving customers in driving improvements in our housing business, we are always working to make sure the customer voice is front and centre in everything we do.

We welcomed the introduction of the Consumer Standard by the Regulator of Social Housing last year which has only helped us to focus the approach that we take to this work, enabling us to further strengthen our relationship with customers.

In June, we submitted our first report against the tenant satisfaction measures and were pleased to see that on almost every tenant perception measure, gauged by the annual satisfaction survey, we have improved since last year and that for many, our performance when compared to other landlords, is in the median or upper quartile.

We will continue to focus on seeing improvements in all areas, and will particularly focus on gaining a better understanding of tenants’ sentiments around being kept informed and feeling that they are treated with respect .

Involving customers



All of our customers are different, so we aim to provide a range of opportunities for them to engage with other customers and Advance staff, share their views, and get involved in shaping services. This is set out in our Customer Engagement Plan.

We have collected feedback in a range of ways. Over 800 tenants, shared owners and support customers completed our Annual Satisfaction Survey which provided rich insight into what customers think about our services.

The Chief Executive and Board Members have visited schemes and individual customers around the country throughout the year, and the 50th anniversary gave us the perfect opportunity to get together with as many customers as possible.

The Customer Collective has met online every month to socialise, learn and share feedback. The Collective has also been involved in developing safeguarding awareness training which it will help to deliver to other customers in the coming year, and customers have worked with colleagues to develop a new induction session for new starters.



A group of customers worked together with the Learning and Talent Team to develop a new 'Welcome to Advance' session for new starters.

Not only did the customers help to design the session, they have also committed to attending it once a month to present what is important to them when it comes to delivering services.

At the first session colleagues were joined by customers Amy, Julie and Sophie who spoke about what they think makes a good Housing Officer or Support Worker.

"The induction was very interesting. The fact that our customers were involved speaks volumes of our commitment to person-centred care. Individual customers commented on how they feel about our services".

**Adeleke Alamu,
new starter**

Photo: Customers, Sophie, Julie and Amy with colleagues from the Learning and Talent team

Report from the Housing Customer Partnership



The Housing Customer Partnership has held quarterly meetings throughout the year. The partnership is made up of tenants and shared owners and meets to review Advance’s performance, monitor progress against improvement plans and input into decisions about Advance’s services.

“The Housing Customer Partnership is a group made up of five customers of Advance. We get together either in person or over Teams and currently meet every quarter. However, we are looking at the possibility of meeting more frequently.

“Over the last year, we have been looking at complaints, services provided by contractors, the customer survey and Anti-Social Behaviour.

“We have also been looking at communication which, as a person with a speech difficulty, is an issue close to my heart. We are keen to have lots of different ways for customers with different needs and abilities to be able to contact Advance if they have a problem.

“I really enjoy being on the Housing Customer Partnership and love it when I see things changing for the better for everyone. I want to make a difference to Advance. I want to share the work we are doing as a group with other customers of Advance and to make them feel like they can come on this journey of change with us.”

Sophie Lord, Customer and member of the Housing Customer Partnership

During the year, members have:

- Contributed to the development of the Customer Engagement Strategy
- Asked us to look into the performance of the Customer Service Centre, particularly noting the difficulties customers sometimes face getting through. This led to a full-scale review and changes to the Customer Services team which is starting to deliver improvements.

- Challenged us to look at how communication preferences are recorded and used and increase the communication channels we are able to offer to customers. This will form part of the Service Improvement Plan for 2025-26.
- Reviewed feedback from the wider customer base and identified priorities for 2025-26. These will feed into the Service Improvement Plan for 2025-26.



Members’ recommendations for 2025–26

Members asked us to:	We will:
Involve customers in choosing contractors and monitoring performance	Involve customers in contractor procurement and work with them to develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A respect standard/charter• Training for contractors• An approach for monitoring performance
Continue to deliver improvements in Customer Service Centre Performance and increase communications channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the Customer Services transformation project• Monitor performance at the Housing Customer Partnership meetings
Review the level of contact customers have with Advance, and in particular their Housing Officer, and to ensure that housing officer visits are meaningful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out a review and identify areas for improvement• Set a standard for customer visits• Review customer communication
Make it clearer to customers what they can expect from our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carry out customer journey mapping of some of our key processes (reporting a repair/ the Shared Ownership process)• Develop and publish service standards• Review how we communicate standards to customers

Our highlights



We have over 3,000
Advance customers



745 people are
Shared Owners with
Advance



Around 1,600 people are
Advance tenants



1974 – 2024:
Advance is 50 years old



1,952 people
receive Support from
Advance



66 new homes
developed: 25 for rent
and 41 for shared
ownership



84% of tenants
and 79% of shared
owners feel their
home is safe



£980,000 secured through
a second Department
for Energy Security and Net
Zero grant



95% of customers are
happy with their
Support



80% cost reduction
on agency staff



90% of colleagues
think Advance is a good
place to work

Celebrating 50 years of transforming lives



1974 – 2024

This year, Advance celebrated its 50th birthday.

It all started in 1974 when two people leaving institutional care had a dream of living independently in their community. That dream came true for them and has continued to come true for many more people since then.

50 years on, Advance is respected as a major, national provider of housing and support and the leading provider of shared ownership for people with long term disabilities. We continue to support people to dream big, to reach their goals and to live the lives they choose.

Throughout the year, we have taken opportunities to remember, recognise and celebrate the journey of Advance and our customers have been on during the past half century.

We held 26 parties where staff and customers could celebrate together around the country, as well as engaging in fundraising initiatives and getting customers active in their gardens through our Just Add Water initiative.

Thanks to our partners who supported our 50th Anniversary celebrations:





50

Advance completes its largest ever development



Thatcham House is a brand-new supported housing scheme in Gloucester. The largest scheme we've ever delivered, it provides 21 self-contained apartments, communal living areas and garden spaces for people with mental health support needs. Advance has developed the scheme in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and developers, Kitto, and we are the landlord for the residents who live there.

Sophie has lived at Thatcham House for just over a month. She says: "I love it. I love everything about it. It is such a nice, bright and colourful place. I love the freedom to be able to step out whenever I want to and get some fresh air; I didn't really get out before".



Sophie's bird box.

Each resident of Thatcham House has individual support to help them manage their wellbeing, live as part of the local community and achieve their personal goals. It provides a safe and secure environment for people, with 24-7 access to on-site support.



Russ moved in in March and, after living in a shared house previously, is loving the peace and quiet of his own home. He says, "It's good!"



Strategic plan update

Strong for the Future: Year 2

In 2023 we published our strategic plan for 2023-2026: Strong for the Future. In it we set out our plans to build on our long and rich history, investing in the resilience of our organisation to make sure we are well placed to respond to ongoing changes and challenges in the sector and able to continue delivering excellent services for our customers long into the future.

Report against the plan

Strong progress has been made during this second year of the Strategic Plan, delivering against our strategic objectives of:

1. Deliver quality homes and services
2. Achieve sustainable growth
3. Invest in our people
4. Be a high-performing organisation

Quality homes and services



"The staff do treat me with respect and dignity, they speak slowly, respect my private time when I am in my flat, they treat me very good, they tell me in a nice way when my flat needs cleaning, they knock on my flat door and give me privacy when I ask for it".

Advance customer comment from Local Authority review

Across Housing and Support we have continued to deliver quality services and focused on building strong foundations for the future. In our annual satisfaction surveys, 95% of support customers, 83% of tenants and 75% of shared owners said they were satisfied with the service they receive from Advance (Annual TSM survey). The least satisfied group are Shared Owners, and we recognise that delays in carrying out repairs caused by the section 20 process has been a key contributor to this. We hope that changes planned for this year to streamline the process will help to increase satisfaction. We also intend to carry out a full customer journey mapping exercise to understand what further process changes might help to increase satisfaction among shared owners.

In response to customer feedback, we have carried out a detailed review of our Customer Services Centre this year, which led to the

implementation of a transformation project within the team. This includes a review of roles, new processes and improved use of technology. Although the transformation project will continue into the year ahead, benefits have already been seen in the form of reduced wait times for people calling and e-mailing Advance. Call wait-times have reduced from an average of 10 minutes in September and 23 minutes in December, to 6 minutes in March.

Throughout the year, work has focused on 'getting the basics right' and we have invested in developing core systems and processes and strengthening management and oversight. This includes ensuring we are compliant with the new Consumer Standards for Housing and further developing a robust management monitoring approach across Support.

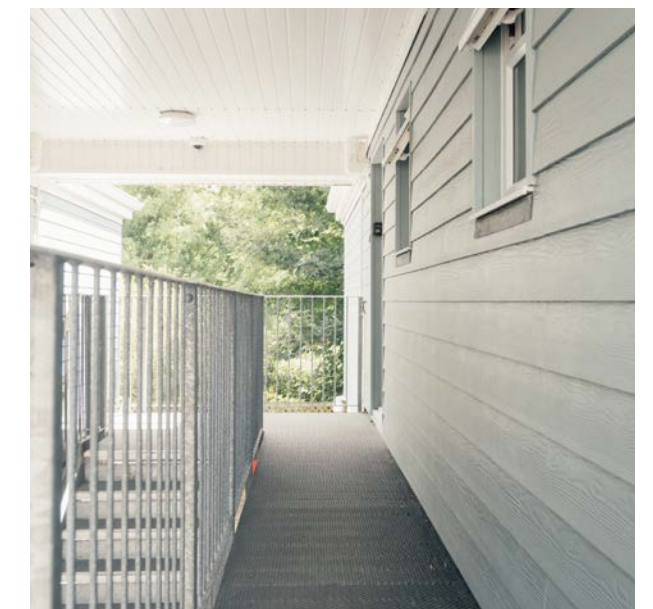


We have carried out a significant review and transformation of services in the Midlands to provide more sustainable higher volume support packages which will help to achieve the financial return we require as well as expand services to customers, including 24-hour services. Further work on this will take place during 2025-26.

We have continued to maintain good quality homes, with all but two of our properties meeting the Decent Homes Standard. Those two outstanding include one property where we have access issues and one which has an incorrect EPC rating and is being reassessed.

It has been a busy year for repairs, with contractors completing around 1,000 more jobs than they did last year as a result of improved processes around contractor management and tracking work in progress.

We have continued to proactively identify and treat damp and mould in customers' homes as part of this. Despite the increase, performance has remained strong with 95% of emergency and 98% of non-emergency repairs being completed in timescales.



Landlord Health and Safety – Annual TSM Return

We also continued to perform well in relation to Landlord Health and Safety and exceeded our energy efficiency target, getting 71% of homes to EPC level C or above. Towards the end of the year, we secured a further £980,000 of funding from the Department for Energy, Sustainability and Net Zero which will enable us to continue progressing this work into 2025-26.

Proportion of homes for which all required:	%
Gas safety checks have been carried out.	99%*
Fire risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
Asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.	100%
Legionella risk assessments have been carried out.	95.9%**
Communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.	100%

*19 homes where access issues delayed completion of gas checks.
**Contractor delays in issuing relevant certificates for 6 properties.

In some areas we have not met our targets. We have continued to face challenges in turning around void properties in time. A number of factors have contributed to this: a significant one being getting referrals into our homes from the relevant authorities.

We have created an improvement plan to address this which focuses on working with those authorities to understand why we are not receiving referrals, providing better information about our offer and establishing how we can work together more effectively.

Housing and Support colleagues have also worked together to review longer term voids where Advance is both the landlord and support provider. This has revealed opportunities to re-purpose schemes to provide housing particularly needed in certain areas.

We have also struggled to meet our target for annual housing officer visits, completing 65% of visits to individuals, and 88% of scheme visits. This was in part due to staff changes and shortages in some areas, but we have also seen an increase in complex anti-social and safeguarding issues which has required us to target resources where they are most needed.

While it continues to be our aim to visit every tenant at least once a year, we are also starting to use data about our customers to proactively target those who may need more support, or those who we have less contact with.



We remain below target for the number of support services rated as Good. This result is carried over from the previous year as no inspections were completed during the time-period.

Work to improve the quality of our Support services is ongoing and is currently focused on strengthening oversight and scrutiny. While we have good systems for self-regulation and internal governance in place, work during this year has revealed these are not always used consistently across all services.

However, Local Authority inspections have highlighted good practice with a large number assessing services to be ‘Good’. The review for our Bexley service found that **‘Interaction from staff to residents was respectful and indicated positive relationship[s]’**, and that **‘residents ‘have**

regular face-to-face meetings to determine their goals, and set up ... action plans to achieve their goals. In addition ... they are involved with reviewing and updating their care plan and risk assessment where required.’



Complaints

Last year we received:

91 Stage 1 complaints and 4 Stage 2 complaints from Tenants

59.2 complaints for every 1,000 homes.

100 Stage 1 complaints and 8 Stage 2 complaints from Shared Owners

19 Stage 1 complaints from Support customers

Complaints answered within timescale	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints
Tenants	79%	100%
Shared Owners	68%	88%
Support Customers	82%	None received

Strengthening our approach to complaints

We provided our first complaints self-assessment to the Ombudsman in April 2024. While we were compliant with the new code, we identified a number of areas for improvement in terms of strengthening our systems and processes for complaints handling across the business, as well as increasing customer engagement in reviewing complaints.

New initiatives, including system developments and the appointment of a dedicated Customer Experience Manager, have delivered a number of improvements this year, including:

- Increased reporting of complaints
- More customers involved in reviewing complaints
- Improved performance in complaints handling against timescales
- Better quality of responses, and
- More in-depth insights from complaints data that will enable us to shape services for the future

Strategic Plan Targets

	24-25 Target	24-25 Actual	25-26 Target
3-Year Target / 2023 – 2026			
85% of Housing customers are satisfied with our services	80%	83% Tenants 75% Shared owners	85%
95% of Support customers are happy with our services	96%	95%	95%
90% of Housing customers are happy with their home	85%	83%	90%
72% of homes achieve EPC C rating or above	70%	71%	72%
100% of our services are rated as ‘Good’ by the CQC	100%	85%*	100%
90% of eligible support customers access their annual health check	80%	66%	90%

*Includes 5 schemes awaiting inspection. (CQC states: ‘New services are assessed to check they are likely to be safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led’.)

Priorities for 2025/26 include:



- Using data and customer feedback to target service provision and inform service improvement
- Implementing Advance’s new Customer Led Service Improvement model which will strengthen customers’ input into and scrutiny of service design
- Setting standards for service delivery
- Improving Voids performance
- Implementing new processes to track and respond to emergency and damp and mould cases in response to the introduction of Awaabs Law
- Completing the transformation of Customer Services
- Completing the transformation of Support Services in the Midlands
- Developing and implementing a customer-focused Mental Health strategy

Achieving sustainable growth



“ This is a wonderful achievement for us and our partners. In the future we hope to provide more housing that benefits people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities.”

Graeme Jackson, Head of Housing Development.

Growth continues to be challenging in the current climate, but Advance remains determined to extend our services to more people every year. This year, we have increased both the number of homes and support hours we provide.

We haven't quite met our ambitious targets, but we have developed 66 new homes over the year: 41 for shared ownership and 25 for rent. This includes Advance's largest ever development: a 21-unit housing scheme for people with mental health conditions developed in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council. We now have around 750 people who have become shared owners through the Government's HOLD (Home Ownership for people with Long term Disabilities) scheme and continue to be the only major provider of HOLD in the UK, which is something to be proud of, but also a source of frustration as

demand for the product far outstrips our ability to deliver it. We have continued in our efforts to raise the profile of HOLD in the sector and hope that more providers will join us in offering the scheme.

We have also carried out work to understand how we can maximise our existing housing stock and continued to explore partnerships with other providers where it makes sense to do so.

We have exceeded our target for increasing support hours this year, taking on additional contracts in a number of areas. In some areas, we have worked with local authorities to transition traditional care homes into supported living schemes. Not only does this make the schemes more financially viable, it also promotes greater independence for customers living there.

Growing our support offer for people with complex needs.

Working with Hampshire County Council, Advance took on a new complex needs service comprised of two residential care homes which were being converted into four two-bedroomed houses.

The service provides a 24-hour supported living service for four customers with learning disabilities and/ or autism, transitioning from in-patient settings and with trauma-informed and forensic backgrounds.

Two customers moved in during the year. With 315 hours of support and two waking night staff between them, they have been able to live independently in their own homes, maintaining their tenancies and avoiding re-admission to hospital.

A further two customers have been identified for the scheme and will be moving in during the early part of 2025-26.

Strategic Plan Targets

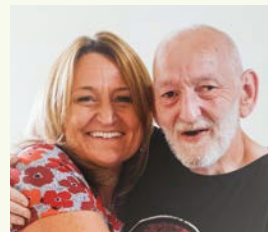
	24-25 Target	24-25 Actual	25-26 Target
3-Year Target / 2023 – 2026			
Secure an additional 165 shared ownership properties	45	41	45
Achieve 100 new rented homes	39	25	27
Achieve a 2.5% increase in support hours each year	2.5%	3%	2.5%

Priorities for 2025/26 include:



- Continuing to grow support hours
- Developing a further 72 homes
- Continuing to raise the profile of HOLD in the sector
- Developing a strategy to maximise use of existing properties
- Explore partnerships with other providers where it compliments existing offer
- Prioritise investment in existing properties, including preparing for the introduction of a new Decent Homes standard

Investing in our people



Advance's people are its greatest asset. Attracting and keeping the right people, making sure they feel valued, equipped and empowered to carry out their roles is fundamental to delivering great services to our customers.

During this year, we have continued to make good progress in this area and oversight has been strengthened through the formation of a new People and Culture committee of the Board.

We are especially pleased that we have continued to increase the number of support workers and managers who are permanently employed by Advance, reducing our reliance on agency workers. This, along with a year-on-year reduction in voluntary employee turnover has delivered significant savings and, more importantly, consistency and quality of service delivery.

We have improved recruitment and onboarding processes and strengthened the induction programme for new colleagues, including involving customers in the design and delivery of a new 'Welcome to Advance' session.

We have also continued to invest in training which empowers people to carry out their roles well and underpins the quality of our services. We're delighted to have ended the year with a 94% completion rate for mandatory training and to have introduced a range of new courses to support professional development including preventing sexual harassment training for all employees and finance training for Support Managers.



Inspirational guest speaker sets the right tone at Annual People Conference.



Colleagues were inspired at our annual People Conference this year by a key-note speech from Tommy Jessop – award winning actor and disabled rights activist.

Tommy spoke about how, from being told he would never be able to read, he pursued his dream of becoming an actor and ended up performing on-stage, playing lead roles in main-stream TV dramas and writing his memoir.

Tommy challenged us to remember not to put limits on people with disabilities and to listen to what they want for their lives.

The conference also included sessions focused on the experiences of customers, led by customers; the new regulatory landscape in housing with guest speaker, Jenny Osborne of TPAS; and an overview of support offered by new Employee Assistance Programme providers, Care First.

Tommy Jessop, Actor and Activist – best known for his role in Line of Duty.



Recognising long service

132 colleagues have been with Advance for more than 10 years, with 32 of those having more than 20 years of service.

We are proud that many of Advance’s employees choose to stay with us for the long term. The dedication and commitment of colleagues is one of Advance’s greatest assets for providing excellent services to our customers.

Caroline Toseafa is a waking night Support Worker at Lion Road and has been with us for 25 years.

Managers described Caroline as a committed member of the team who is passionate about her role.

They said: ‘Caroline doesn’t hesitate to organise and attend events to enhance the lives of the customers at the service, attending parties, birthday celebrations and Christmas events and cooking traditional dishes to celebrate multicultural events.’

Caroline receiving her long service award with her two sons and manager, Sarat.

Wellbeing and health

We carried out a wellbeing survey and mental health and wellbeing strategic health check which will inform the development of a wellbeing strategy, and engaged with Inclusive Employers to strengthen our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The EDI group has met throughout the year and made progress against its three-year plan: ‘Everyone Valued’.



Strategic Plan Targets

	24-25 Target	24-25 Actual	25-26 Target
3-Year Target / 2023 – 2026			
More than 85% of colleagues feel that Advance is a good place to work	85%	90%	85%
Maintain a vacancy rate of less than 7%	<7%	4%	<5%
Ensure no more than 5% of the support workforce are agency workers	<5%	1.9%	<5%
More than 10% of vacancies are filled by internal applicants (excluding support workers)	>10%	33%	>40%

Priorities for 2025/26 include:

- Launching and delivering the People Strategy
- Developing a project focused on defining and embedding Advance’s workplace culture
- Progressing a Leadership Development Programme
- Creating a new wellbeing strategy
- Further developing our approach to gathering and responding to colleague feedback



High-performing organisation



Overall, we have seen strong financial performance this year, driven by a continued push to reduce spend on agency workers in the Support side of the business and strong overall management of costs. In the year 2024-25 the total spent on agency staff was £476k compared to 2023-24 when spend for the year was £2.1 million. That represents an almost 80% year on year reduction.

Funding of social care generally continues to be challenging. We have successfully secured fee uplifts from Local Authority partners for 91% of our Support contracts, but this leaves a 9% gap. Clearly failure to secure adequate uplifts poses a real risk for the future sustainability of our services. Along with other providers in the sector, we continue to call for the Government to prioritise investment in Social Care and provide some answers to the funding dilemma

Despite the ongoing financial pressures on our sector, we have managed to maintain our interest cover headroom this year, achieving almost £1.5m against a target of £1.3m.

We have not met our Value for Money target, largely due to failing to achieve savings targets in the housing side of the business. This included not realising the full amount of grant funding expected as part of the Energy Efficiency works and slower progress than expected on Void performance. Further information on this is available in the Annual Accounts section of the report.

Significant work has taken place to continue strengthening the Governance of Advance with a new Chair starting in April, and a new Board member and two committee Co-optees appointed during the year. The new Co-optee roles were created to bring in new skills and experience to our Audit and Risk,

Service Quality and newly created People and Culture committees, helping us to strengthen services to customers. Customers were involved in the interviews for all Board member posts.

We invited consultants, DTP, to carry out an independent review of Board effectiveness at Advance during this year. Overall, it found Advance's governance to be effective with 'robust supporting processes which provide for sound oversight and assurance.'

The report also recognised the strong commitment to placing customers' voices at the heart of decision-making, saying: **'The Board is listening to customers. There is a genuine desire to respond and to be open to customer feedback and scrutiny.'**

Further assurance was provided by the Regulator of Social Housing when we retained G1 and V1 ratings for Governance and Financial Viability; the best possible rating and a signal of its confidence in Advance's stability and long-term viability.

Significant work was carried out this year to prepare for the transition to a new housing system. Although Advance has chosen to pause the migration to a new system, work to cleanse and refine data and review processes has delivered significant benefits. Similarly in Support, work has taken place to develop a robust customer contract database holding information on the contracted hours commissioned for each customer which has strengthened visibility and oversight of support contracts.

Strategic Plan Targets

	24-25 Target	24-25 Actual	25-26 Target
3-Year Target / 2023 – 2026			
Maintain interest cover covenant headroom of at least £1m	£1.2m	£1.485m	£1.3m
Support contracts achieve a minimum 10% annual contribution to central overheads (with an average of 12% over the three years)	10%	9%	9.9%
Achieve annual VfM savings target	£1,432k	£1,201k	£1,425k
Central overheads do not exceed 12% of income each year	<12%	10.8%	11.4%

Priorities for 2025/26 include:

- Ensuring financial viability of support contracts
- Further strengthening our Governance
- Strengthening the Business Assurance function including further development of the assurance framework
- Developing the existing Housing Management system
- Completion of a new loan facility





Customer Services:

0333 012 4307

www.advanceuk.org

Follow us:

 **[@advanceuk.org](https://www.facebook.com/advanceuk.org)**

 **[@advance_uk](https://www.instagram.com/advance_uk)**

 **[@advancetweets](https://twitter.com/advancetweets)**
