



Scrutiny Panel Project – Review of the SYHA Website

Executive Summary:

- not all customers are aware there is a SYHA website or have the digital skills to be able to use it
- customers like to contact SYHA by phone and think it's easy to do
- customers want information on the website to be up-to-date and relevant
- customers want information to be easy to read and prefer it to be shown in a visually exciting way, using interaction, graphics, and links
- customers want to find information quickly and easily, often using the search bar, and expect this to work better
- there is a need to consider how accessible the website is

Introduction:

Who are the scrutiny panel?

We are a group of customers from different areas of SYHA. Some of us are tenants, some of us have been on the Good Work programme, and one of us is on the board.

I want to use my spare time to help people and use my ideas to do something about the issues people are facing. It's my contribution to life.

We've got different life experiences, and this brings different perspectives to the scrutiny panel. We're different ages, from different parts of South Yorkshire, different

genders, have different religions and are from different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

As a group, we've been running for over 2 years, but some members have considerable experience of scrutiny in its different forms at SYHA for over 6 years.

We're involved in scrutiny for different reasons:

- we're all nosey/curious
- we're all tenants (even if not a SYHA tenant)
- we want to make a difference for all tenants

Why did we choose to review the SYHA Website?

Everything is digital now and the SYHA website is often one of the first places that customers will look to find out information – **so it should feel as welcoming as possible for everyone.** We recognise that sometimes accessing information can be complicated and believe **information should be easy to find and relevant.** We looked at other Housing Association websites and found varying standards and wanted to know how SYHA's website compared. We found one particular website that had lots of information and we thought it was important that the SYHA website should show **the right amount of information, be of a high standard, and the information should be relevant.**

We looked at SYHA's performance in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) 23/24 for question TPO7 **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that SYHA keeps you informed about things that matter to you?** We scored 69.6% and we thought there was some work SYHA could do to improve how they keep customers informed and wanted to find out what was important to customers.

It was discussed that SYHA was launching new **Customer Service Standards** and one of these standards promised **"Via our website, we will keep you updated on SYHA news and information about our services you may find of interest"** We wanted to make sure SYHA was doing what they promised.

We were aware of The Regulator of Social Housing's new consumer standards and that one of the standards stated **Registered providers must ensure that**

We wanted to ask SYHA customers how they thought the website should look and what information they wanted to know about. We also wanted to know the reason people didn't use the website. We wanted to give members of the public who use the website the opportunity to tell us what they thought, as this would offer a different perspective.

What were the aims/objectives of the exercise?

To set the aims and objectives of the exercise we needed to carry out further research and this included:

- speaking with Hannah Dougherty, Marketing and Communications Lead
- familiarising ourselves with the SYHA website
- researching other housing association websites

We discussed everything we had researched and used this to form our key question: **What is the experience of using the SYHA website and is it user-friendly?**

The outcome we wanted to achieve was that **the SYHA website should be welcoming and easy to use for all.**

Survey

We discussed the research carried out as a panel and considered what we wanted to know from SYHA customers and the various ways we could find this out. We decided to ask SYHA customers a survey to find out what they thought of the website and agreed to use Viewpoint for this. We had worked with Viewpoint before and were pleased with the number of responses and the quality of feedback. Viewpoint has specialist knowledge about surveys, and we wanted to ensure we were asking the type of question that would give us the most detailed feedback. We decided to ask Viewpoint to survey by both email and telephone so we could get responses from a greater number of people and also include those who might not use digital platforms.

How did we decide which questions to ask?

We looked at some analytical information from marketing that showed which were the most visited pages on the website and we wanted to understand more about how customers were visiting these pages and what pages were they visiting less frequently. We wanted to know how often customers were using the website, or if they didn't use the website what other ways were they choosing to contact us. Based on this we decided to ask the following:

- **When did you last use the SYHA website?**
- **Why don't you use the SYHA website?**
- **How do you choose to contact SYHA?**
- **Why is this your preferred way to get in touch?**
- **Why do you visit the SYHA website?**

We noticed when carrying out our research, that information was not always up to date or in the place you would expect it to be on the SYHA website and there was often a different look, feel, and experience depending on which device was used.

Based on this we decided to ask the following:

- **Is it easy to find what you need on the SYHA website?**
- **Why isn't it easy to find what you are looking for?**

We knew from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Customer Service Standards it was important to find out what customers wanted to know about and wanted to ask the question:

- **Is there anything you would like to see on the website that isn't currently on?**

We also asked for a score for the following and asked them to tell us why they had given that score:

- **Look and feel of the website**
- **Getting around the website**
- **Quality of information**
- **Search function**

How did we choose which customers to contact?

We decided to create a targeted list of customers to survey, and this included customers who had:

- contacted us using an online form in the past 12 months and may be more likely to respond and give relevant answers
- engaged customers, many of whom had completed feedback surveys online and therefore likely to be digitally engaged
- randomly selected Livewell and General needs customers, we were keen to include customers who may not use the website to find out why this was
- randomly selected ethnically diverse customers. The website should feel and be as inclusive as possible; we wanted to know if this was the case

The survey was also posted on social media and on the SYHA website to capture as much feedback as possible, including members of the general public.

Task

We wanted to know how easy the SYHA website was to navigate and decided to set a **task exercise** to find specific pages on the website. We decided to use customers from the engaged customer list for this exercise. We asked them to

visit the same pages that we had used in the survey and answer the following questions:

- **How did you locate the page?**
- **Was it located where you thought it would be?**
- **Where do you think it should be?**
- **Please tell us about any issues you had locating the page.**
- **Please tell us what you liked or disliked about the page.**
- **Is there any other information you expected to see or think would be useful to see on this page?**
- **Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience using the website?**
- **Which device did you use to visit the website?**

Incentive

We agreed that more people would agree to complete a survey and task if there was an incentive attached.

We offered:

- A prize draw to win a £25 gift card, 5 winners.
- Each engaged customer £25 for completing the task.

Findings:

Quotes and statistics used are from both the survey and task exercise

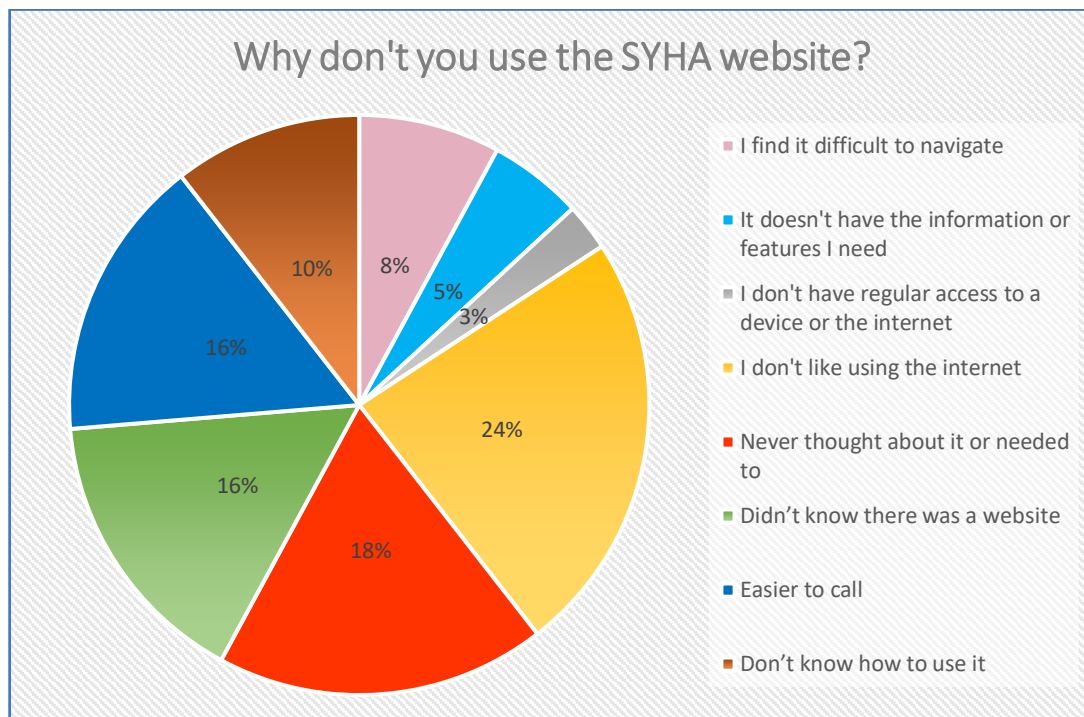
How customers contact SYHA

We were pleased with the response rate of **27%** from the Viewpoint survey, and we based our findings on a score of **7,8,9 or 10 as being satisfied**, as this aligns with SYHA transactional surveys. **62% of the surveys were completed by telephone**, which didn't surprise us, we think people are more likely to agree to a phone survey and will often give better feedback this way. Only 1 person completed the survey from the link posted on the SYHA website and Facebook page and this person was a SYHA customer, we found this disappointing and wondered if people thought it was a waste of time. We were pleased with the level of detail in the findings from the website task exercise.

Over half of the customers surveyed told us they used the website, with most of the visits being in the past 12 months. We were surprised to find that **43% of the customers surveyed told us they had never used the website**, almost all of these

customers told us they chose to contact SYHA by phone instead, with a small number choosing email, letter, or in person.

Reasons for not using the website were:



It didn't surprise us that some customers preferred to contact SYHA by phone and said it was easier to do this way, as we knew from our own experiences as customers, calling SYHA is usually a positive experience. **We wanted to make sure that however customers choose to contact SYHA they are made aware of the website as an alternative way to find out information.** We realise that some people don't have the knowledge or confidence to use the internet and that SYHA no longer offers a Digi-friends service and found this concerning and wondered if SYHA could offer any other **support for less tech-savvy customers**, we are aware that SYHA does hold some IT courses and thought it would be a good idea to share information about these on the website.

We were pleased that 79% who used the website said it was easy to find what they were looking for.

Search function

Only **49%** of the customers who used the website were satisfied with the search function and this was also highlighted in findings from the task exercise "**The biggest problem with the website by far is the poor search box - it doesn't find a**

lot of items customers might search for and will probably become not used as it often just shows past reports”

We discussed how important the search function was and how it was usually found in the same place on all websites and quite often the first-place customers would try and find the subject they were looking for and it needed to work well **“Sometimes when I type in a topic, it does not take me straight to it, this should be quick and easy, it needs a bit of a-z organisation.”** We noted that the search function also showed out of date information, and we think it is important that the information is current and relevant **“Tried typing current vacancies into the Search bar first but it only came up with a report. Also came up with a lot of old information e.g. 25 JAN 2022”**

Look and feel

61% of the customers who used the website were satisfied with how the website looked **“Pleasant colours and a modern design keep users engaged and comfortable while browsing”** and **“Website is welcoming and set out perfectly”** Some customers told us it could be improved upon **“Great room for improvement with the look and feel, it needs more vibrancy and less corporate-looking.”** We realise that everyone’s opinion will be different about how the website looks.

Images and video clips of people using the SYHA’s different well-being services adds a human touch and makes the webpage more relatable. the use of graphics referring to various wellbeing services makes the navigation intuitive and user-friendly. The vibrant visuals create a

When completing the task exercise customers mentioned that some of the pages could be better laid out and be less text heavy **“The text on the page while informative is quite overloading and could be improved by being broken down to key highlights”** and **“Lots of information making it very text heavy, needs more graphics and photos, and bullet points this would make it more interesting to read.”** We had found this ourselves when looking at certain pages, such as **Complaints and Service Charges.** We understand that some pages do need to show more information than others but think this should be easy to read and it should be easy to identify key information.

One customer mentioned their health condition made it more difficult to read the text **“Long paragraphs without spacing are tiring, adding bullet points or breaking text into smaller chunks would enhance readability. The colour contrast and overall design of the page could be improved”** This made us consider how

accessible the website was for people with a diverse range of needs. We noticed other websites made use of accessibility tools and thought the SYHA website should be as accessible as possible. We particularly liked the look of the DMC page of the website, this showed good use of graphics, smaller chunks of text, and a document that is also available in languages other than English.

Quality of information

61% of the customers who used the website were satisfied with the quality of the information on there **“Everything that you need to know is on there”** One customer liked the Finding a home page, telling us

It has all the information I need to rent a place. I like that it has options for different local authorities you can rent from. Also, it's good to see different options of renting like part rent and part buy.

We agreed with this but thought the photo used at the top of the page could be improved upon and thought it would be better if we could show examples of both the interior and exterior of SYHA homes. We think it is important to show the right type of photograph on the website as these can instantly engage users.

One customer told us the information and photos showing their supported living scheme were out of date and this had led to dissatisfaction from customers expecting services that were no longer offered. This is concerning, **we think it is important that customers trust SYHA to tell them the right information.**

We asked customers when completing the website task to tell us how pages could be improved, and one customer told us **“A Frequently Asked Questions section (FAQ) that can address common questions about service charges...”** and **“Include a frequently asked questions section to address common queries about services.”** We did find a FAQ page for rents and service charges, but this was a news item and we found it by using the search bar. We think it would improve the experience for customers to have FAQ on some pages, for instance on the Finding a home to rent page, it would help customers to understand the lettings process, without having to read lots of information or policies.

Some customers found we used jargon and told us **“Maybe call the menu link “suppo”rt finding work” rather than “work well” which is jargon”** and **“Some texts like “ Starts at Home Day 2023 ” does not clearly indicate what it` s about at first glance...”** We didn't find lots of examples of this but thought it was something SYHA should be mindful of.

When we were researching other websites we found some Housing Associations had pages dedicated **to Anti-social behaviour (ASB)**, with information about how to report ASB, what constituted ASB and helpful numbers for support services etc. Customers told us they couldn't find any information about ASB and that the form to report it wasn't where they expected it to be **"I thought the reporting would be under complaints. I couldn't find any information about ASB"** We think it is important that customers can find information about ASB and report it easily.

I expected to find the option to report anti-social behaviour under the "Complaints" section in the main menu. However, when it wasn't there, I had to go back and check the "Report a Problem" section, where I eventually found the option listed as "With a neighbour/anti-social behaviour." It may be helpful to make this option more intuitive to find, as it could save residents time and reduce confusion

We were concerned that the engaged customers completing the website task couldn't find any **money-saving advice**, either in the menu or by using the search function, and when we looked we found there was some information under **Get involved/Be more green**. We didn't think was the right place for it to sit though we understand it includes ways to live more sustainably and save money. We think it's important that customers can easily find help with money-saving advice as prices for rent, food and utilities are all going up and any way people can save money would be useful to know about and it's important that it is one place.

We liked how **News stories** were on the home page of the website but agreed the link could be more prominent, one customer suggested we **"could put "View all news" link in a large clickable box at the bottom of the home page as well as where it"** another customer saying the **"Nearly missed it"** One customer also told us a filter or archive function might enhance engagement when viewing News stories. Customers told us they would like community information to be featured in News stories **"I would like there to be more information about home improvement work that is coming up and for SYHA to engage more with communities about their future improvement plans for our homes."** and **"Adding an events calendar of upcoming workshops or community events and offer a newsletter sign up"** We agree it can be difficult to know what is happening in the area you live in and this would be a good way to let people know and help them feel included.

Some customers told us they hadn't realised we offered specific support for the over 50's **“Didn't know you did an over 50's”** and **“I'm not sure a 60-year-old person would know to look under well-being to find information out about a home”** We thought it would be a good idea to also feature some information on the Finding a home page, or at least the link on there to take people to the relevant page.

This concludes our findings, we have highlighted the main areas we would like to see an improvement, however, there may be details about specific pages we haven't included, and these can be found in the result spreadsheets. We were pleased that 78 out of the 102 customers surveyed agreed SYHA could contact them in the future to discuss further and thought this would be useful should there be any future website development projects.

Recommendations:

Based on your findings from researching the SYHA website and analysing the survey results and task, what do you recommend that SYHA do to improve the situation?

- consider if more could be done to improve awareness of the SYHA website on:
 - all forms of written correspondence,
 - the SYHA phone line,
 - any text messages the business sends, e.g. repair satisfaction surveys
 - any other promotional material
- improve the search function so out-of-date and irrelevant information doesn't show in the results, and specific content does
- check how user-friendly the page layouts are and consider creating a consistent house style, including:
 - using summaries,
 - bullet points,
 - avoid using Jargon and acronyms,
 - creative graphics,
 - photos used are up-to-date and relevant,
 - and hyperlinks to make the pages less text-heavy and increase interaction
- ensure information is up-to-date and relevant and there is a process for regularly reviewing it
- make the website as inclusive and accessible as possible, considering the different needs of customers
- documents should be available in different languages wherever possible
- use more FAQ sections on pages and make them easy to find

- have a page dedicated to ASB that is linked to the Complaints page and includes:
 - how to make an ASB complaint,
 - the different types of ASB, and
 - support services you might need if experiencing ASB
- consider adding a heading in the main menu under ‘find a home’ for ‘support services’
- money-saving advice should be found in one place, easy to find and called something that makes sense to customers
- consider other topics of interest to customers that missing from the website, e.g. information on training and community events

How does the scrutiny panel want to follow this up?

- monitor the action plan
- ask the engaged customers to look at the website again and note any improvements
- Scrutiny Panel to spot-check website content

How do you want to communicate changes to customers?

- SYHA website and social media
- promote as a news story on the website to tell customers we have made improvements and that we listen
- make use of any opportunities when SYHA corresponds with customers to tell them about the website

Is there anything you’ve learned from this process that you will use for future scrutiny projects?

- using Viewpoint to carry out the surveys increased the response rate
- asking engaged customers to complete a task is a good way to collect feedback, but consider an in-person session for future exercises so more detail can be given, if needed
- by targeting the relevant customers, you can get better-quality data
- consider other ways to collect insight that are less time-consuming

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Appendix 1 : [Website Timeline.docx](#)

Appendix 2 : [Task and survey results](#)

[Additional reading](#)