

# Welcome to Housing Leeds Annual Report for 2023/24

## Introduction

Welcome to the latest Annual Report for tenants, updating you on our activity and performance from April 2023 to March 2024. We will also keep you updated on our activity throughout the year so look out for regular updates on some of our key areas of work.

You may notice some changes to our report this year. This is in line with the government's new Consumer Standards as part of the Social Housing Regulation Act. These standards guide us on how to deliver our services to you and what information we need to share. This includes sharing our performance against national Tenant Satisfaction Measures. We've been sharing satisfaction from our quarterly surveys with you for over two years now and you can see these in a table within this report. This is the same information that we report to the Regulator.

I'm pleased to report that overall satisfaction with our services has risen this year. I remain committed to working with you, staff, and our partners, to focus on the key services that matter most to you, and to further improve your satisfaction with our services.

The cost of living continues to add financial pressures to many households. It's great to see that our teams have supported over 5,000 households to claim an additional £3.2 million to increase their household income. We'll continue to work with you and support any tenants who are struggling to make ends meet.

Our commitment to build new council homes continues. I'm delighted to see the homes being built to meet housing needs across the city. We also delivered on our commitment to invest in our current homes.

Over the year we spent £72 million on 100's of schemes helping improve the quality of your homes. This included projects to help make homes more energy efficient and save many of you money on your heating bills. It's great to read your feedback on how this has made a difference.

We're always pleased to hear from you and get your feedback on our services. This report shows how working with you helps to improve the services that we offer. We'll continue to do this over the coming year. To be invited to take part in various consultations and opportunities to influence what we do join our growing Tenant Voice Panel. Visit our website to look at the different ways we work with input from tenants.

I hope you'll find this report a useful summary of our work. Let us know what you think by emailing councilhousingcommunications@leeds.gov.uk



Councillor Jessica Lennox (Executive Member for Housing)

#### Your satisfaction with our service

Every three months we send a satisfaction survey to a random sample of residents to ask how satisfied you are with our service. We started this in April 2022, so we now have two years of satisfaction information in this report. We have also included an average of 16 landlords who are similar in size to us to show how we compare.

Landlords of a

similar in size to us to show how we compare.	2022/23	2023/24	similar size*
With our overall service	60%	66%	64% <b>+2</b> %
With the repair service in the last 12 months	66%	70% +4%	69% +1%
With the time taken to complete your most recent repair	61%	67%	66% +1%
That we provide a home that is well maintained	61%	68% +7%	66% +2%
That we provide a home that is safe	61%	74% +13%	73% +1%
That we listen to your views and act upon them	44%	55% +11%	55%
That you are kept informed about things that matter to you	53%	67% +14%	65% <b>+2</b> %
That we treat you fairly and with respect	62%	74% +12%	<b>74</b> %
With our approach to complaint handling	24%	29% +5%	26% +3%
That communal areas are kept clean and well maintained	56%	65% +9%	65%
That we make a positive contribution to your neighbourhood	44%	60%	58% <b>+2</b> %
With our approach to handling anti-social behaviour	42%	53% +11%	50% +3%

These questions are part of a standard set of measures, known as the 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' which we have to report to the Regulator for Social Housing. They require us to ask you about our service so that you have information about how well we are performing. The Regulator will use this information to assess us. Many thanks to everyone who has completed a survey.

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Look out for this symbol throughout the report, these are the citywide (including BITMO) figures we report to the Regulator as part of the new legislation.

TSM london

<sup>\*</sup>These results are taken from Housemark, who collect results from similar landlords for us to compare our performance

## Investing in your home Some highlights of the work we carried out.



New kitchens and bathrooms 199



New gas boilers installed 2,263



Re-roofing and insulation **350** 



Homes supplied by ground source heat pumps 811



Spend on repairs and maintenence £35.2m



Number of repairs carried out 204,164

# How we performed



- Emergency repairs completed in timescale 93.7%
- Non-emergency repairs completed in timescale 82.3%
- Annual gas safety checks carried out 99.4%
- Homes not meeting the decent homes standard 3.3%
- Required fire risk assessments carried out 100%
- Required communal passenger lift safety checks carried out 100%
- Required asbestos surveys or inspections carried out 100%
- Required water risk assessments carried out 100%

# The difference we make

## **Adapting Homes**

We completed 932 major adaptations in council homes and 649 in the private sector alongside 1000's of minor adaptations. The service spent just under £17million on adaptations and the promotion of independent living for people across the city.

# **Case Study**

Leeds has an amazing network of foster carers, but family homes are often not suitable for disabled children in wheelchairs. Working with Foster 4 Leeds we identified a foster family whose home could be adapted to accommodate the most common types of disabilities including, level access throughout, a wet floor shower, a specialist height adjustable bath and hoists to connect to an adjacent bedroom. We now have an excellent accessible home for disabled children.

## Reducing energy use

We completed improvement works to over 1,400 homes helping reduce fuel bills by up to 30%. Work included installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to six high rise blocks across the city, providing low cost heating and hot water to replace the electric storage and immersion heaters. We also obtained Social Housing Decarbonisation funding which helped install Ground Source Heat Pumps at two of our high rise blocks.

## Insulating homes

This year we installed external wall insulation to 126 back-to-back homes and 150 nontraditional homes, as well as work to seven high-rise blocks across the city.

Our tenants have told us how pleased they are with the works and that the "finished properties look fantastic". Tenants have also said that it is, "definitely money well spent from the council in tackling fuel poverty". One of our residents living in a block with a ground source heat pump expressed to us that they're "pleased to see their quarterly electric bill in credit", and that the work has been "well worth the installation".



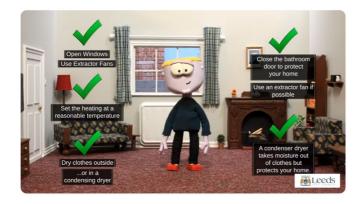




## Tackling damp and mould

We want you to live in a home that is free from damp and mould. To make sure that we're dealing with your reports of damp and mould we:

- Created and shared new advice videos, explaining ways to help prevent damp, mould and condensation and when to report issues
- Created a new information site where staff can access training guides and our damp and mould policy
- Share **regular advice** in our tenant email about how to tackle damp, mould and condensation and how to report this to us
- Set **objectives for all staff** about damp and mould, so everyone is aware of the impact to residents and able to give the right advice
- Published new website content.



## Fire safety

To keep you safe we have:



- Carried out 338 'Safe & Well' visits to our more vulnerable residents giving home safety advice
- Fitted **sprinklers to a further 12 high rise blocks**. We've now fitted sprinklers to 70 High Rise blocks, with 4 in progress
- Completed **fire safety work in our 'back to back' homes**, including fitting internal fire doors, fire alarm systems, and fire safety work to basements
- Completed over **7,000 flat entrance and communal door inspections**, in line with the new Building Safety Act
- Completed all **fire risk assessments on 1,139 properties** in line with the fire safety programme and legislative requirements
- Commenced **Person Centred Fire Risk Assessments** for residents who may require assistance to self-evacuate from their high rise home



Over the past year we completed over **200** new build homes, including the **Extra Care housing scheme at Gascoigne House, Middleton** and other **new schemes in Seacroft and Chapel Allerton**. We also acquired, refurbished, and let a further **87 homes** to meet the diverse housing needs of customers across the city



# Our priorities for the year ahead

- Ensure compliance with new and emerging legislation, including the Building Safety Act and Social Housing Regulation Act
- Improve re-let times for our empty homes
- Increase your satisfaction with our repairs service
- Continue to ensure you are safe and feel safe in your home
- Review our Asset Management Strategy to make sure we can invest in new technologies while maintaining the homes we already have.





Rent collected

95% (2022/23)

95.45% (2023/24)

Collected from former tenants

£878k

£985k (2023/24)



Households supported to claim additional income/benefits

4,680

(2022/23)

(2022/23)

5,143 (2)

(2023/24)

#### Tenancy check ins

Some of you get in touch with us regularly and others less so. As a minimum, we aim to check in with you at least once every 3 years. This gives you an opportunity to meet your local Housing Officer, or Retirement Life Support Officer and talk about any issues you may have. We also check that your home is in a good condition and there are no concerns.



**26,071** Tenancy check ins completed



**418** Hoarding cases identified



**649** Safeguarding cases identified and responded to

## Rent and support

We support you to pay your rent, reduce any arrears, apply for eligible benefits, and manage your overall living costs. Rent collected is used to keep homes in good repair and to provide services to you. If a tenant leaves their tenancy with arrears, we will seek to collect the money owed.

#### Rent enforcement

We always try to work with tenants who are having difficulties paying their rent. We will only take eviction action as a last resort, if other attempts to recover arrears are unsuccessful.



Evictions during the year

66

### Tenancy fraud

Last year we **recovered 26 properties** where we identified housing fraud. Tackling housing fraud enables us to let homes to those who need them most. Of the fraud cases we investigated:

• 56% for subletting fraud

9% succession/assignment fraud

• 21% for right to buy fraud

• 4% application fraud

• 9% for non-occupation fraud

• 1% other fraud

## The difference we make

We carry out **benefit checks** to make sure that tenants are receiving the maximum amount of benefit that they're entitled to. We also help tenants to complete **appeals** when benefit applications have been refused. Last year we worked with over 5,000 households helping them secure £3,175,000 in additional income, an average of £617 per household. Of the households supported, a third of these had children. Our officers also work with partner agencies to provide **advice around debt and budgeting**, and last year we helped award over £400,000 of British Gas vouchers to households most in need.

# Case Study

#### Successful Universal Credit challenge of under occupancy arrears

A family with two disabled boys were classed as under occupying their property following a mutual exchange to a larger property. All bedrooms were occupied as the children required their own rooms due to their specialist support equipment. Nevertheless, they were refused an increase in the housing element of their Universal Credit claim.

Working with the family, we provided evidence that the request for the additional bedroom award did comply with regulations and that the rent arrears accrued by the under-occupancy deduction was causing unnecessary distress. Following discussion, the family were awarded the additional bedroom entitlement and given a backdate, clearing the rent arrears balance in full.



Working alongside **Yorkshire Water** we helped tenants in Gipton, Burmantofts, Little London and Moortown to reduce their water bills. Some residents had water meters fitted, meaning they only pay for the water they use. Where water meters couldn't be fitted, residents were put on capped bills which reduced their spend on water. Over **200 customers** were supported with savings of over **£70,000**.

A lot of our tenants pay their rent by Direct Debit. You can also pay your rent online, by phone, or in person. Visit **www.leeds.gov.uk/rent** for more information.



Many of our tenants are still impacted by the cost of living. If you are **worried about paying your rent, we are here to help**. Please contact your local housing office. We can support you and check your entitlement to welfare benefits.





Our service supports over 4,500 residents to live independently in their homes in our 125 Retirement LIFE schemes across the city.

- Our dedicated and friendly team of Support Officers are available to provide **regular well-being checks**, offering choice and flexibility to suit changing needs.
- 'Living in a Friendly Environment' is at the heart of the services we deliver and across all schemes, staff are regularly on site attending meetings with residents and social activities.
- We are committed to scheme improvements. In 2023/24 schemes at Rycroft Green, Dulverton Court & Wellington Gardens had new furniture, carpets and decoration and 12 communal lounges had new blinds to improve the communal areas.
- In 2023/24 we started to explore opportunities to **improve our Service Offer**, this included: engaging with residents to take part in a survey to understand what they value most about our service. We also consulted over 45s to learn what future customers may want and need.







### Extra Care update

We opened our **third Extra Care scheme** in October 2023, Gascoigne House. This state of the art building has 60 apartments and is connected to a further 12 **accessible bungalows for working age adults with a physical or sensory impairment**. In partnership with us, Home Group has built a further Extra Care Scheme in Woodlesford. The scheme has 63 apartments with allocations well under way. The scheme is due to open soon.

Community-based activities are strong and running at all Extra Care schemes, including bingo; a mother and toddler group; and a lovely partnership with a local primary school where the children write to, and read with, the residents. A Middleton resident has even set up a domino club.







# Our priorities for the year ahead

This year we will:

- Build on our engagement with residents and partners to continue to develop our Service Offer for the future
- Work closely with Adults & Health to support older people better, helping them to live independently, including exploring digital opportunities to improve our service
- Make sure our engagement with residents and activities are diverse and inclusive
- Progress with plans for a new 65-unit Extra Care Scheme in Armley, which we aim to start building in late 2024.

If you want to find out more about the service we give contact the Older People's team on 0113 378 3696 or email housing.leeds.olderpeople@leeds.gov.uk



- Supported 67 local tenants, residents and community groups
- Appointed new tenant board members to the Leeds Housing Board
- Continued to support 100's of health and well-being activities in our Retirement Life Schemes
- Consulted with over 600 high rise residents about building safety to help us understand
  how well our engagement is working and to improve how we listen and respond to high rise
  residents in future.
- Involved 100's of tenants in helping design day to day services through surveys, focus groups, or workshops.

#### **Tenant Scrutiny Board**

The Tenant Scrutiny Board reviewed the **advice and support** we give to tenants about **damp** and mould. Speaking to different teams, researching with customers, and looking at what other landlords do, they submitted 12 recommendations for improvement to us. We accepted these and have now published new advice and information to residents as a result. We're grateful to the board for helping us improve and look forward to supporting them in their next review about how we learn from complaints in the year ahead.

#### Who are the Tenant Scrutiny Board?

The Tenant Scrutiny Board are a group of tenant volunteers who **review our services** and make **recommendations for improvement**. When carrying out a review, they may speak to tenants, staff or any of our partners or contractors. They'll also look at management and performance information, and good practice from elsewhere to help them identify areas for improvement.

## **Growing our Tenant Voice Panel**

Since our last annual report, our 'Tenant Voice Panel' has grown from 170 to 240 members. We invite the panel to take part in various consultations and service improvement work. This helps us strengthen your influence, and gives us a more diverse range of feedback.

Consulting the panel has helped us to:

- Design the 'Building Safety Hub', where high-rise residents can access information about their home or block
- Write the first hard copy building safety newsletter.
- Select a new gas servicing contractor, making sure any future contract has high levels of customer care.
- Get feedback from Retirement Life residents about what's valued most about our service and to help shape a wider residents consultation plan
- Design this annual report!

Panel members have also **become Leeds Housing Board members** and **joined the Tenant Scrutiny Board** to help them with their reviews.

## The difference we make

### **Housing Advisory Panels**

During the year HAPs made **250** local funding decisions, giving grants and funding projects to a value of **£395,000**. These helped improve neighbourhoods in response to residents feedback and supported community activity. You can see some examples of HAP funded activity in our **10 year anniversay HAP film. A massive thank you** to everyone who helped the HAPs in their final year of operation to invest in local communities.







Bawn fun day

# Case Study

#### Making it easier to give your feedback:

In addition to traditional walkabouts, where residents and officers meet to jointly identify any environmental issues, we also carry out 'virtual' walkabouts online. These allow residents to contribute at any time, to highlight areas that might need attention to help keep them clean, safe, or in good repair. The Holtdales virtual walkabout was visited by 181 local residents. 57 comments were left about issues that officers could look into. Using this approach, we included and involved many more residents that an in-person walkabout alone.

# Our priorities for the year ahead

We'll continue to offer local opportunities for tenants to **give feedback on how we deliver services**, and to influence local priorities. We've been consulting on how best to do this and we'll be releasing more information about what we're doing and what this achieves in the year ahead. Other priorities include **improving the accessibility of our communications**, ensuring we **comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code**, reporting back to you in better ways how we **learn and respond from all your feedback**, and developing **new digital engagement approaches**. We look forward to delivering these and other improvements with your input.

#### **Number of complaints received**

Stage 1 - 2,175 (equivalent to 41.1 per 1,000 homes)

Stage 2 - 549 (equivalent to 10.4 per 1,000 homes)



#### Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales

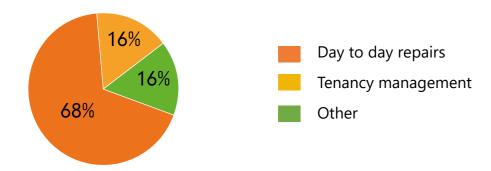
Stage 1 – 88.0% (within 10 working days)
Stage 2 – 87.6% (within 20 working days)

All social landlords must meet the requirements of the <u>Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling</u> <u>Code</u>. Our <u>annual assessment against the code</u> is available online.

We welcome your feedback as it helps us improve the services we give. If our service fails you, you can complain to us so we can put things right. If you remain unhappy with our response, you can approach either the **Housing Ombudsman** or the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** depending on what your complaint is about.

**Three out of four** complaints were resolved at **stage one** and **96**% were resolved without involving either Ombudsman. We work closely with both Ombudsman services to make sure that residents are given advice and information on how to access their services if they wish to.

#### What your complaints were about



# Our priorities for the year ahead

This year we will:

- Continue to support staff and contractors to listen to you and put things right
- Carry out any recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman
- Provide more feedback to residents on how we're learning from complaints
- Complete our annual complaints self-assessment with tenant input
- Work with the **Tenant Scrutiny Board** to support them in their review of complaints
- Continue to support staff with training and development to better respond to complaints



#### What happened?

The Housing Ombudsman investigated a complaint from one of our tenants and found 'severe maladministration' in our handling of a complex structural repair and subsequent actions and impact to the family. Severe maladministration is a formal decision by the Ombudsman that a landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or, in the Ombudsman's opinion, has delayed unreasonably. In this case the tenant was waiting for repairs to be completed over a long period of time. The Ombudsman found that our repair records were unclear or incomplete and this led to duplicate visits and inspections. The Ombudsman also found that we failed to communicate effectively with the tenant in advance of appointments, leading to unannounced visits which caused the tenant anxiety.

#### What did we do to make it right?

We apologised to the family for the delay in completing the repairs and the time taken to resolve the complaint. We worked with the family and agreed a plan to complete the works safely in line with their individual needs.

We welcome feedback from our customers to help us improve the service that we offer. We continue to ask all customers to complete a satisfaction survey after we have responded to their complaint and after every repair. This allows us to understand what works well, and where we need to improve. Our aim is to continually learn from customer feedback, and we are currently working with our Tenant Scrutiny Board to review our complaint response times, and how we can be more effective at learning from complaints.

#### What changes have we made?

The case provided an opportunity to identify the lessons learnt and actions have been implemented as a result. For example:

- Sharing the learning as a case study with all staff and our contractors
- Providing refresher training/extra guidance for all officers who investigate and respond to complaints to make sure that we are meeting our service standards
- Introducing improved procedures for managing this type of complex repair
- Reviewing our procedures for capturing and tailoring our services to meet vulnerability needs.

Other improvements made as a result of your complaints

- · Continued to share our monthly 'hints, tips, and reminders' for all staff
- Continued to **invest** in our damp and mould team to help with early intervention and triage of cases
- Used customer satisfaction data to address dissatisfaction and put in place service improvements



Number of anti-social behaviour cases 886 (equivalent to 16.7 per 1,000 homes)



Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents 53 (equivalent to 1 per 1,000 homes)

# Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT) work with us to respond to anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaints and concerns from across the city. We've seen an **overall decrease** in ASB over the past year. Working with West Yorkshire Police, we've focused on **early intervention and prevention**, as well as enforcement.

Highlights from the year include:

#### Supporting young people

Our aim is not to criminalise young people, but to ensure they are aware and **understand the impact of their behaviour**. A range of partnerships and forums help reduce the impact resulting from young people causing ASB. Helping identify, intervene, educate, and put in place appropriate diversions at the earliest opportunity, to try and **change behaviours** and reduce the need for enforcement.

#### **New ASB problem solving team**

We have secured funding from the West Yorkshire Authority to create a new **Problem Solving Team**. They can deploy 10 temporary CCTV cameras alongside other targeted equipment. This helps us to support residents and our partners to tackle problematic areas of ASB.

#### Successful Problem Solving Groups (PSG) in Beeston and Holbeck

PSG's help resolve short term issues through intensive partnership work to achieve a positive impact in a short timescale.

- We carried out two weeks of action on **Dewsbury Road** in relation to the supply of drugs. This resulted in **premises closure orders** and **injunctions**.
- In **Holbeck**, challenging ASB and criminality, and carrying out **environmental work** including clearing waste ground, improving lighting, and clearing bin yards.

# Working together to look after your neighbourhood









- We completed 425 walkabouts throughout the year. These happen at least twice a year in the Spring and Autumn months. Contact your local Housing team to get involved.
- We work closely with the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team and other partners to take a proactive approach to managing the environment
- Thank you to **West Yorkshire Probation Service** who have completed **150 jobs**, helping keep estates tidier, cleaner, and greener.
- Continued to respond to local issues, working with residents to achieve positive outcomes, such as holding **estate action and clean up days**

# Our priorities for the year ahead

- Promote more widely how residents can report ASB and raise awareness of how we can help
- Complete our **ASB policy review** using feedback from residents
- Publish our service standards in an accessible format for residents
- Provide more training and support for staff to help them deal with your reports of ASB
- Continue to work with residents and our partners to improve local areas

# **Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation**

Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO) manages 1,800 council homes in Belle Isle on behalf of Leeds City Council. It is run by tenants of Belle Isle and is the largest estate based TMO in the country.

I'm pleased to share with you a short summary of the work of BITMO. As a tenant-led organisation we rely on the commitment of our tenants to tell us what their priorities are, and to provide leadership through our Board.

If you would like to find out more about BITMO or get involved in our volunteering programme, please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you - www.belleisletmo.co.uk

#### **Deborah Kelly (BITMO Chief Executive)**



Percentage of rent collected 96.22%



Investing in your homes





Additional income generated for customers \$386k



Homes with a gas safety certificate 98.97%



Number of complaints received 45



Complaints responded to in timescale 87%

Working with our tenants we have:

- Continued to provide a programme of **FREE tuition in Maths and English** for primary school aged children
- Created a **garden tool library** helping provide gardening tools to people who don't have access to any. We have also provided **skips** to help clear waste for our tenants
- Increased the **frequency of cleaning** in our flats at no extra charge to tenants.
- Improved the CCTV and lighting in areas following concerns about anti-social behaviour, highlighted by our tenants and the Police
- Repurposed a bowling green as a community orchard and planted trees across the estate with the help of volunteers
- Redecorated, carpeted, and refurnished communal rooms in our **Retirement Life schemes**
- Fenced off Belle Isle Circus with improved lighting to come



# New social housing regulation

As a social landlord we are subject to regulation by the **Regulator of Social Housing**. The Regulator sets standards for the **management of your home** and carries out the regulation of landlords against these standards to ensure that:

- We are well governed, financially viable, and offer value for money
- Home are well managed, safe, energy efficient, and of appropriate quality
- Tenants and potential tenants have an appropriate level of choice and protection
- Tenants have an opportunity to be involved in our management and hold us to account
- We act in a transparent manner
- We contribute towards the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of areas.

This Annual Report helps us **share information** with you and makes us more **trasparent** about what we do. We provide many ways for tenants to **influence** how we work and we **value** your input. We give regular updates about how we're **performing** and your views about our service in our **tenant communications**.

The service is led by our **Senior Management Team** who report to **James Rogers** the Director for Housing, Communities, and Environment. We also have a governing body, the **Leeds Housing Board** which includes **tenant members**. Information on the salary of our Director is published on the **Leeds Data Mill**.

**Gerard Tinsdale**, as Chief Officer Housing, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of all landlord services to Council tenants and so is responsible for ensuring overall compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards. He also has overall responsibility for complaint handling. He is supported by:

- **Adam Crampton**, Head of Property Management, who oversees the repairs, maintenance, and investment service. Adam is responsible for overseeing compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard.
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, oversees tenancy and neighbourhood management services and is responsible for overseeing compliance with the Tenancy Standard, the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, and the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard.
- **Jon Andrews**, Health and Safety Lead Officer, who is responsible for monitoring compliance, assessing risks, and reporting any concerns linked to health and safety requirements. If you have reported a health and safety concern to us, and you don't feel we've taken appropriate action, you can email Jon on buildingsafety@leeds.gov.uk

