



SHAC 2021 Annual Report

Introduction

The activity described in these pages represents the collective work of a huge army of people. Participating in SHAC@ groups, doing interviews for our YouTube channel, speaking to the press, contributing material for our website, attending protests, sharing our social media, and getting involved in our campaigning.

Their efforts have meant that SHAC has punched far above its weight in 2021, and has had an incredible impact since our last Annual General Meeting.

We cannot thank all individually, but we acknowledge everyone's contribution here. In particular, we would like to thank the members of the SHAC Committee who have helped focus our work where it is most needed, provided practical help and advice, and have been great people to work with.

Under their stewardship of our Committee, and with the help of all contributors, we know that SHAC will continue to build on the achievements of the last twelve months.

SHAC@Groups

Landlord specific groups are a vital element of our work. Currently functioning are those for Hyde, Hexagon, Clarion, OHG-Riverside, and L&Q, which meet monthly. Two others, Housing for Women and THCH, are dormant.

The group meetings allow tenants and residents of each landlord to provide each other with peer support, and plan campaigning so that SHAC is member-led. Many journalists have commented on the high regard that interviewees have for SHAC, and the extent to which it is a 'grass-roots' campaign group. The SHAC@ groups are the main drivers behind these strengths.

Attendance at any given meeting is in the low twenties at the maximum, with a small group of regular participants. However, members like to know that SHAC@ meetings are taking place and drop in when they can.

SHAC Disability Visibility Group

This initiative followed an article on our website by Carl Davis, and a public meeting which generated a great deal of positive comment from attendees. Progress is slower than we might like due to workloads, but the agreed actions included the Charter and building alliances with other disability groups so that we don't duplicate work. We will continue with this very important work in 2022.

- Set up SHAC Disability Visibility group led by Jacqueline Parkes with extensive input and support by Carl Davies.

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- Added resources to a dedicated web page.
- Launched Disability Charter Scheme in consultation with members.
- Published several articles on disability themes.

Rent & Service Charge Group

We have been trying to popularise the strike tactic. The group brought together those who were already withholding part of their rent or service charge in protest, and those who wanted to begin doing so. There is some hostility to this tactic (as opposed to just disinterest), as some feel it endangers tenants and residents by putting them at risk of eviction. We have not found this to be the case. Landlords have not used legal action against strikers. We also took legal advice on how strikers could mitigate any risks.

The biggest success was for the Bellway tenants and residents, but press interest is increasing significantly and we have plans to raise awareness of the tactic and the support we provide next year.

- Numerous articles on strikers.
- Occasional group meetings.
- Resources for strikers on dedicated web page.

Public Meetings organised by SHAC

We organised seven public meetings in 2021, with an eighth taking place later in December. Attendance has varied from around 30 to over 80, with the highest being for the Service Charge meeting.

These events are the biggest factor in drawing new members to SHAC and registrations peak whenever a public meeting takes place. For example, the three meetings in September drew in 140 new members. We will continue organising public meetings in 2022.

1. **Safer Homes Conference** – 21st January with Phil Murphy and Truus Jansen
2. **Hitting Where it Hurts** – 25th May
3. **Scales of Injustice** - 21st June with David Renton
4. **Service Charges and How to Challenge Them** – 9th September with Martin Boyd and Ed Spencer.
5. **The Disability Visibility Charter** – 15th September - finalisation and launch
6. **The Social Housing Stigma** – 21st September with Dr Amanze Ejiogu and Dr Mercy Denedo

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7. **Political Demands** – 30th November, originally Lucy Powell, but with Stephen Timms and Vicky Foxcroft
8. **Strike On!** – 20th December, on organising a rent or service charge strike.



Protests

Despite Covid making in-person protests much harder than we would wish, SHAC has either organised or supported six protests over the last year.

The most high-profile was the UKHA protest in November, which was well-attended, supported by a number of different groups, and attracted press interest. The event's location was ideal as it allowed us to blockade the road, although we anticipate the organisers learning from their mistake.

We should consider how we approach the event next year, maybe starting the alliance building with other groups earlier to take account of the fact that it can take a while for their own committees to agree support and help mobilise members

- **SHAC - One Housing Group – Guilty!** 4th December 2020
- **Justice for Tower Hamlets Community Housing Residents** - 7 April 2021
- **Action on Empty Homes and Occupation of City Homes** - 18 April
- **SHAC - Clarion: See Us, Hear Us** - 7 May
- **Action on Empty Homes protest** – 5th June – SHAC banner gets its debut on national TV.

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- SHAC - UK Housing Awards – 25th November

Online Campaigns

We would always supplement in-person protests with online campaigning to maximise impact. In 2021, we organised four sustained campaigns. The most successful was 'Clarion: See Us, Hear Us', also known as the Wall of Protest, where participants were sent a flag, photographed it, then returned the flag to reduce costs. It resulted in over 70 images on our website which we posted periodically on social media as new images came in. It was a thorn in the side of Clarion. It also attracted some press interest thanks to Wendy Charlton's contact with the local paper in Tottenham. We supplemented it with a campaign subverting Clarion's *More Than* PR event.

- Clarion: See Us, Hear Us
- Clarion: More Than ...
- L&Q: Fix Our Broken Homes
- Housing for Women: Not What She Expected
- Service Charges – publication of the SHAC Report into HA abuse of service charges in April.



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Political – alongside Public Meeting on 25th November

One of our aims of the last year was to form a network of councillors and MPs who we can work with on more strategic and permanent change in the protections available to tenants and residents. It was slow to build but we are now gaining some traction in this area of work.

At the Political demands meeting, Stephen Timms suggested trying to get an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) launched specifically on housing associations. We also agreed to draw out council-specific demands from our political policy papers, and ask our members to press these on those seeking support in the May 2022 elections. Finally, we agreed to support any campaigners who fielded candidates supporting our demands, which some groups are considering.

Government has launched an inquiry in the Regulator of Social Housing and we were invited to submit a written response, which we are working on. We have also been invited to give evidence in person the committee on the 17th January.

- Met with Apsana Begum MP who submitted a written question to Housing Minister Robert Jenrick.
- Met with Lucy Powell MP, Shadow Housing Minister, who submitted two questions to Housing Minister Michael Gove, and one to the Department for Work and Pensions

Supporting Housing Campaign Groups

The support we provide to other campaign group both extends our reach and influence, and raises our profile. It is also a two-way process, with SHAC members benefitting from the experience and insight of others.

We held at least 22 meetings with different groups, some of which are regular collaborators, for example with Fuel Poverty Action and the New Economics Foundation. We will continue this work in the coming year.

- Tenants and residents from Notting Hill Genesis – exploring potential SHAC@ group
- Tenants and residents from Southern – exploring potential SHAC@ group
- Southwark District NEU branch on the housing crisis.
- West Midlands Socialist Party public meeting on housing issues and TUSC manifesto.
- Unite's 'My Collective Voice' public meeting on housing, specifically aimed at the Labour Party.
- Homes for All – Housing and Health Emergency Summit, led the HA workshop.
- New Economics Foundation – co-hosted workshop on housing associations.
- London Renters' Union - disability event.
- Shelter - Jack Spooner at Shelter – collaboration

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- Living Rent Foundation - Jack Harrington - collaboration
- London Renters' union head office - collaboration.
- GLATUC – the housing crisis
- Newham Trades Council – the housing crisis
- Clarion Clare House tenants - campaign training.
- Residents of Shoreham - campaigning advice on opposing regeneration.
- Residents of East End Homes - campaign advice from SHAC.
- Residents of Hyde's Sandalwood Court, Maidstone - service charge strike.
- Teesside Housing Action – Campaigning against Thirteen Group removal of concierges.
- Residents of Rochdale Boroughwide Homes – Campaigning against regeneration.
- High Trees Action Group – Illegal water charges, highlighting this as a national issue.
- Collaborated with Fuel Poverty Action on their dossier which focussed on a Peabody estate. An article was published in The Times featuring their dossier.
- Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers on the housing crisis.

Press Coverage

We are increasingly approached by the press for help with interviewees or for comments on articles. This work is helping provide SHAC with a higher profile, and helps get our messages out to the public.

- SHAC article published on Red Brick website – 23 February - **Guilt by Associations**
- Eddie Nestor - BBC Radio London – 3rd March
- Dotun Adebayo – BBC Radio London - April
- Tottenham Community Press – Wendy Charlton interviewed - **Rent Strike Victory.**
- The Big Issue – Ride Out the Recession – co-signed an open letter which was published in 'The I News' - **The Big Issue founder warns Government must step in to pay rent arrears to prevent 'mass homelessness crisis.**
- Eddie Nestor show – BBC Radio London - 25 October.
- The Big Issue - 23 November 2021– SHAC comment on their article **Smoke alarms will finally be required in social housing – almost five years after Grenfell**
- Left Foot Forward – 26 October - **Government should fund construction of 100,000 new green council homes every year, says LGA**
- The Big Issue – 26 November - **Social housing tenants block roads in protest outside £345-a-head UK Housing Awards**
- Inside Housing – 1 December - **Residents of G15 landlord go on service charge strike as bills skyrocket**

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7 further articles or broadcasts in the pipeline

- BBC London – Tarah Welsh - disrepairs
- BBC National – Phil Hendy – service charges
- BBC local radio - Sussex and Surrey
- The Tribune – service charge strikes
- The Guardian - 'Made in Britain' project about Affordable housing in the UK
- Open Protest Network – Documentary on rent strikes
- SHAC / Platform Films – Documentary on the commercialisation of housing associations

Fundraising

The Treasurer's report will provide a more detailed outline of our finances but we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has donated or helped secure a donation for SHAC. We have had a very successful fundraising year, and this work also helps raise awareness of the role of housing associations.

As suggested by our members, we did a special appeal to help cover the costs of the UK Housing Awards protest, which was successful.

The generosity of donors is humbling, and it represents an essential contribution to our work.

- Appeals to various Unite branches and committees, BFAWU, and NEU, as well as individual supporters.
- Larger donations include Unite Thirteen Group branch (£250), Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers (£250), Basildon and Thurrock trades council (£150), Unite Executive (£1,000).

Our Website

Our website is multi-purpose, providing resources, getting our messages out, enabling registration, celebrating our work, and promoting events. We have a pipeline of articles which should be published in the next two weeks.

We would also like to thank Carl Davis for regular contributions on the theme of disability, and would be keen to work with other regular contributors.

- A total of 63 articles published on SHAC's website.
- Shared on our own social media and other housing, campaigning and political groups.

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- Articles of particular interest:
 - Expose on Riverside – hiding gas safety leaks from the Regulator.
 - Expose on Riverside – Forming a group to change the laws, making disrepairs claims harder.
 - Hyde ignoring children using scaffold to climb on the roof of a tower block – prompted remedial action.

Our Media

Our social media is used to attract new members and amplify our messages.

We post links to our articles and YouTube channel not just on our own Facebook page, but on the FB pages of around 60 other tenant and resident groups, housing campaigns, community campaigns, and trade unions. All of these help extend our reach.

We are starting to use the YouTube channel more as dynamic content attracts more viewers. It can have other positive effects, for example the interviews with Demi and Emma prompted contact from The Guardian.

- **Website Since January**
 - 41 followers, up from zero.
 - Almost 44,000 views
 - Almost 21,000 visitors
- **Facebook:** From 827 members in December 2020 to 1,388 in December 2021
- **Twitter:** From 2,050 at the start of January to 2,403 now
- **YouTube Channel:**
 - Started pushing over the last 2 months
 - Started with short film on L&Q disrepairs which got 187 views
 - Short about UK Housing Awards protest got 477 views

Membership Growth and Distribution

Our membership continues to grow. We are increasingly attracting private and council tenants and residents who say that they find the resources and articles useful, and have attended some of the meetings relevant to their tenure.

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