



**Economy and Enterprise  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date** Thursday 29 November 2012  
**Time** 10.00 am  
**Venue** Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

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**Business**

**Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend. Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement.**

1. Declarations of Interest, if any
2. Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties, if any
3. Performance Reporting: Durham City Homes, Dale & Valley Homes and East Durham Homes - (Pages 1 - 100)
  - (i) Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
  - (ii) Annual Reports – Durham City Homes, Dale & Valley Homes and East Durham Homes.
  - (iii) Presentations by the Manager, Durham City Homes and the Chief Executives of Dale & Valley Homes and East Durham Homes.
4. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
21 November 2012

To: **The Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillor J Moran (Chair)  
Councillor A Naylor (Vice-Chair)

Councillors J Armstrong, B Arthur, A Barker, B Brunskill, C Carr, J Cordon, B Graham, J Hunter, P Jopling, R Liddle, C Potts, J Rowlandson, P Stradling, Andy Turner, M Wilkes, M Williams and A Willis

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr T Batson, Mrs O Brown, Mrs A Harrison, Mr A Kitching, Mr D Lavin and Mr JB Walker

**Special Economy and Enterprise  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**29 November 2012**



**Performance Reporting: Durham City  
Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East  
Durham Homes**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide members with the opportunity to receive performance information in respect of Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes.

**Background**

- 2 With the establishment of the new Unitary Durham County Council on 1 April 2009, there became a mixed economy of former Council housing across County Durham with the County Council retaining the ownership and management of the former Durham City housing stock (Durham City Homes).
- 3 In addition, the County Council also owns the former District housing stock in Wear Valley and Easington. Management of this stock is undertaken by two Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), namely Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes.
- 4 As a result of these changes, Durham County Council is landlord for around 19,000 homes in County Durham. Durham City Homes, our in-house organisation manages some 6100 homes with Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes managing 4300 and 8,500 respectively.
- 5 Members will recall that one of the key recommendations of a previous Overview and Scrutiny Review of Durham City Homes was to establish a mechanism whereby members of the Council could receive performance information from Durham City Homes and compare this with comparable information from the two ALMOs.
- 6 Accordingly for the last two years, the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received the Annual Reports of Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes, together with presentations detailing key performance information in relation to their respective organisations.

### **Current Position**

- 7 Presentations are to be given at the meeting on 29 November 2012 by Simon Bartlett, Manager of Durham City Homes, Peter Chaffer, Chief Executive of Dale and Valley Homes and Paul Mains, Chief Executive of East Durham Homes.
- 8 Copies of the Annual Reports for the respective organisations are appended to this report.

### **Recommendations and reasons**

- 9 That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the Annual Reports of Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes and note the detailed performance information provided within their respective presentations.

### **Background papers**

Annual Reports of Durham City Homes, Dale and Valley Homes and East Durham Homes

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**Contact: Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer**  
**Tel: 03000 268 140**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** – Any financial implications are detailed in the respective Annual Reports

**Staffing** - Any staffing implications are detailed in the respective Annual Reports

**Risk - None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** - Any disability Equality and Diversity issues will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

**Accommodation** - None

**Crime and Disorder** - None

**Human Rights** - None

**Consultation** - None

**Procurement** - None

**Disability Issues** – Any disability Discrimination issues will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

**Legal Implications** - None

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**Durham**  
County Council



# Durham City Homes **Annual Report 2011/12**

Altogether better council housing in Durham City





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## Key:

Throughout this report, you will see that we often use smiley faces to show how we are performing against the targets we have set ourselves.

Our Tenants Panel like and support this approach.

The faces mean:



We are meeting or exceeding our target.



We are close to our target.



We failed to meet our target.

Where possible we have compared our performance to other housing providers. You will see here that we refer to different quartiles, these mean:

**Upper quartile** – is the performance position of the top 25% of providers in the country.

**Median** – is the average performance of providers in the country.

**Lower quartile** – is the performance of the bottom 25% of providers in the country.

Other figures provided in this report are sourced from local surveys we undertake during the year.

# Welcome & Introduction



During the last year we have made significant progress in developing and improving the services we provide for tenants and leaseholders of Durham City Homes.

I am particularly pleased by the work some tenants have undertaken in scrutinising the work we do

and making suggestions to help us improve the services we provide. You can find out more about this on page 11.

I am also very encouraged by the work undertaken across the County in taking forward the stock options project which is looking at the future management and financing options for all Council housing in the County. A final report to the Council's Cabinet is expected later in the year outlining the potential way forward.

Throughout this report you can find out about how Durham City Homes has performed during the year, along with areas where further work needs to be done. I hope you find the report useful and interesting. I am sure you will agree that the work undertaken by staff and tenants continues to improve across the services we provide.

Councillor Clive Robson  
**Council Cabinet Member for Housing**



Welcome to the third Annual Report from Durham City Homes and Durham City Homes Tenants Panel.

During the last three years I have had the privilege of chairing the Tenants Panel and during this time we have made great progress in helping shape and

influence the services that you receive as a tenant or leaseholder of Durham City Homes.

This report sets out some of the key achievements that have been made during the last year as well as some of the areas where we would like to see improvements made.

The report has been written with the support and input of tenants. I hope you find it informative and an enjoyable read.

John Kelley  
**Chair Durham City Homes Tenants Panel**

# About our Homes

**Durham City Homes** is the part of Durham County Council which manages council housing in the Durham City area. We manage approximately 6,000 homes spread across 33 discrete locations. The biggest concentration of housing is in the village of Brandon, with over 1,000 homes. We also manage a large number of council properties in Framwellgate Moor, Esh Winning, Gilesgate and Ushaw Moor.

The map below shows the approximate number of homes we manage by village:

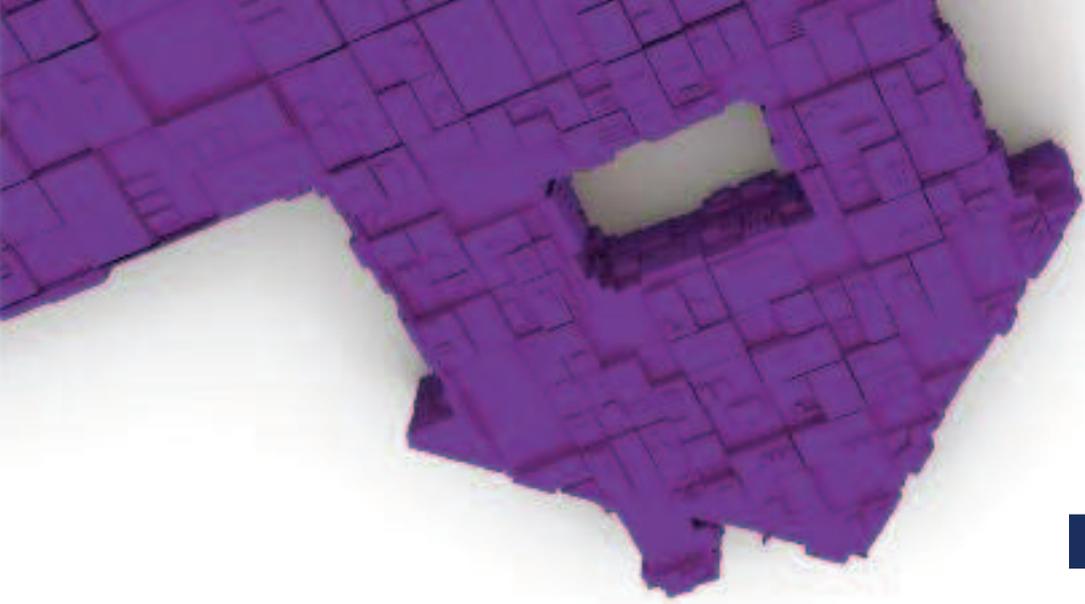


Of the 6,000 homes we manage across the area, there are:

Type and number of homes (as at 1st April 2012)	Number of bedrooms					
	Bedsit	1	2	3	4	5
Houses (3,572)	0	1	1593	1897	80	1
Flats (514)	2	364	124	23	1	0
Bungalows (1,915)	0	1057	830	27	1	0

The average weekly rent for each of our homes in 2011/12 is shown below:

	Number of bedrooms					
	Bedsit	1	2	3	4	5
Average Rent	£42.74	£54.47	£60.35	£66.67	£71.80	£75.76
The average weekly rent in 2011/12 was:	£61.12					



# National standards and local offers

On 1st April 2012 the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was closed and the responsibility for regulating social housing in England was transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

To coincide with the closure of the TSA and the transfer of its functions to the HCA a review of the TSA's former National Standards was carried out.

On 1st April 2012 the HCA refreshed and updated the National Standards. The standards are now divided into two groups; consumer and economic standards.

Within each of the groups there are a number of requirements relating to the services we deliver for tenants and leaseholders. For each of these requirements we must agree 'Local Offers' with tenants and leaseholders.

Durham City Homes' tenants and leaseholders have called their 'Local Offers' – Local Service Standards. The standards set out the minimum level of service tenants and leaseholders can expect of us.

The consumer and economic standards include:

## Consumer standards

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and community

## Economic standards

- Governance and financial viability
- Value for money
- Rents

The economic standards do not apply to local authority landlords but do apply to all other providers. However, we have in this Annual Report provided some information about how we have performed in these areas.

This report tells you how we have performed against your local service standards, which we agreed with the Tenants Panel in 2010/11. It also sets out some of the work the Panel has asked us to take forward in the year ahead.

# Consumer standards

## Tenant involvement and empowerment

This standard includes:

- Customer service, choice and complaints.
- Involvement and empowerment.
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.

### Customer service, choice and complaints

Providing excellent quality, accessible and responsive services is key to everything we do. We strive to ensure that the services we provide meet your needs and that you have a choice and a say in the services we provide for you.

When we get things wrong, we will say we got it wrong and we will learn from our mistakes, ensuring that the services we provide continue to improve.

Your <b>customer service, choice and complaints</b> local service standards 2011/12	How well we did
● Answer telephone calls within 60 seconds	
● All customers seen within 15 minutes	
● All complaints responded to within 10 days	

Our Tenants Panel have told us they want these standards to stay the same for 2012/13.

### A closer look at our performance:

- We answered 69% of telephone calls within 60 seconds.
- We scored 5 out of 10 on satisfaction with how we handled your complaint. Our target was 6.
- We scored 7.1 out of 10 for satisfaction with the quality of customer service we provide for you. Our target was 7.
- We dealt with 93 complaints about the services we provided.
- We received 17 compliments about the services we provided.
- We know that 78% of you are satisfied with the overall service we provide. This was a fall from the previous years satisfaction and lower than our target of 84%.
- We know that 71% of you are satisfied with how we deal with your enquiries, which is the same level of satisfaction achieved in the previous year.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We reviewed our 'out of hours' customer contact arrangements. You can now contact us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- We changed our free-phone telephone number (0800 068 0013) so that you get straight through to a Customer Service Advisor.
- We introduced text reporting for repairs.
- We reviewed our internal procedures to speed up how we manage your complaints.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will continue to work with County Council colleagues to improve response times when answering telephones, which we think is an important factor in the fall in customer satisfaction.
- We will review our complaints process and the types of complaint we receive to improve customer satisfaction, maximise tenant involvement and improve communication between tenants and our repairs staff.
- We will increase the capacity of our Estates and Tenancy Team so that we have more staff to respond to the needs of our customers.

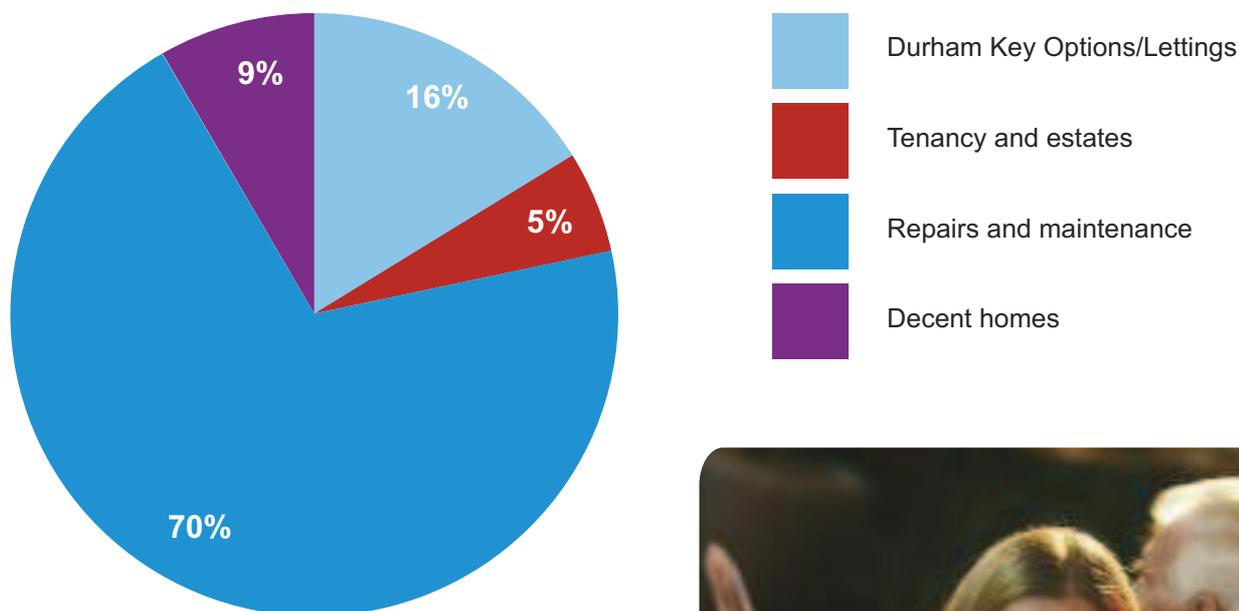


**A closer look at complaints:**

There are a number of stages in the Council's complaints process. Your initial complaint is known as a stage 1 complaint, this type of complaint is responded to by individual managers with responsibility for the service you complained about. If you are not satisfied with their response you can proceed to a stage 2 complaint. These complaints are investigated by the Council's Corporate Complaints Team.

In 2011/12 we received 93 'stage 1' complaints from customers about the services we provide.

The chart below provides a breakdown of these complaints by service area:



We recognise that on some occasions the services we delivered fell short of our usual high service standards. As a result we paid £10 compensation to 16 complainants where we failed to deliver what we said we would in our local service standards.

We responded to all stage 1 complaint's within 10 days. 6 of the 93 complaints progressed to stage 2 of the complaints process.

The majority of complaints were in relation to repairs (65 complaints). Although this number appears high, it is important to highlight that we completed over 25,000 repairs in 2011/12. The complaints have told us that we need to improve communication between tenants and our operatives who carry out repairs. We have included this as an area for improvement in 2012/13.



## Involvement and empowerment

You are at the heart of everything we do. We want you to continue to have a say in and help shape the services we deliver for you. During 2010/11 we made significant progress working with tenants and other customers to improve and strengthen our involvement opportunities, enabling tenants to make a real contribution to the decision making processes we have in place.

### Involving you:

Getting involved does not mean that you have to give up lots of your free time if you don't want to. You can become involved by simply filling in one of our customer surveys or providing feedback. Alternatively, if you have a little more time to spare you may like to get involved in one of our more formal involvement groups like the Tenants Panel, Home Service Improvement Group or Tenant Scrutiny Panel. The ways you can get involved are listed below.

- Attending an event or drop-in.
- Being part of a focus group.
- Being on a Service Improvement Group.
- Becoming a member of our Non-Executive Board.
- Filling in a survey.
- Going on an Estate Walkabout.
- Joining the Tenants Panel.
- Joining the Readers Panel.
- Joining the Tenant Scrutiny Group. (Formerly known as the Reality Checkers)
- Joining a Residents Group.
- Joining a Working Group.
- Making a complaint or compliment.
- Making a suggestion.
- Reading Tenant Matters.
- Registering on our involvement database.
- Attending a neighbourhood meeting.

### Your **involvement** local service standards 2011/12

### How well we did

- Hold at least 10 meetings of the Tenants Panel per year
- Give you at least 20 working days notice of meetings of the Tenants Panel and Service Improvement Groups
- Give attendees the agenda and other papers for meetings of the Tenants Panel and Service Improvement Groups at least 5 working days prior to the meeting
- Publish 3 copies of Tenant Matters every year



Our Tenants Panel have told us they want these standards to be strengthened in 2012/13 to include Tenant Scrutiny.

### New standards for 2012/13:

In addition to the above service standards we have also committed to:

- Supporting our Tenant Scrutiny Group in undertaking 4 tenant scrutiny exercises per year.

### A closer look at our performance:

- We held 12 meetings of the Tenants Panel.
- We held our annual Tenants Matter conference, which about 200 customers attended.
- We recruited 15 tenants to our 'Reality Checkers' (Tenants Scrutiny) Group.
- We supported our 'Reality Checkers' to complete 5 scrutiny exercises.
- We know that 57% of you are satisfied with the opportunities for you to get involved. This is higher than the previous year's satisfaction of 52%.
- We know that 49% of you were satisfied that we took your views into account. This was a fall from the previous years satisfaction and lower than our target of 65%.
- We scored 7 out of 10 for satisfaction with our involvement work. Our target was 7.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

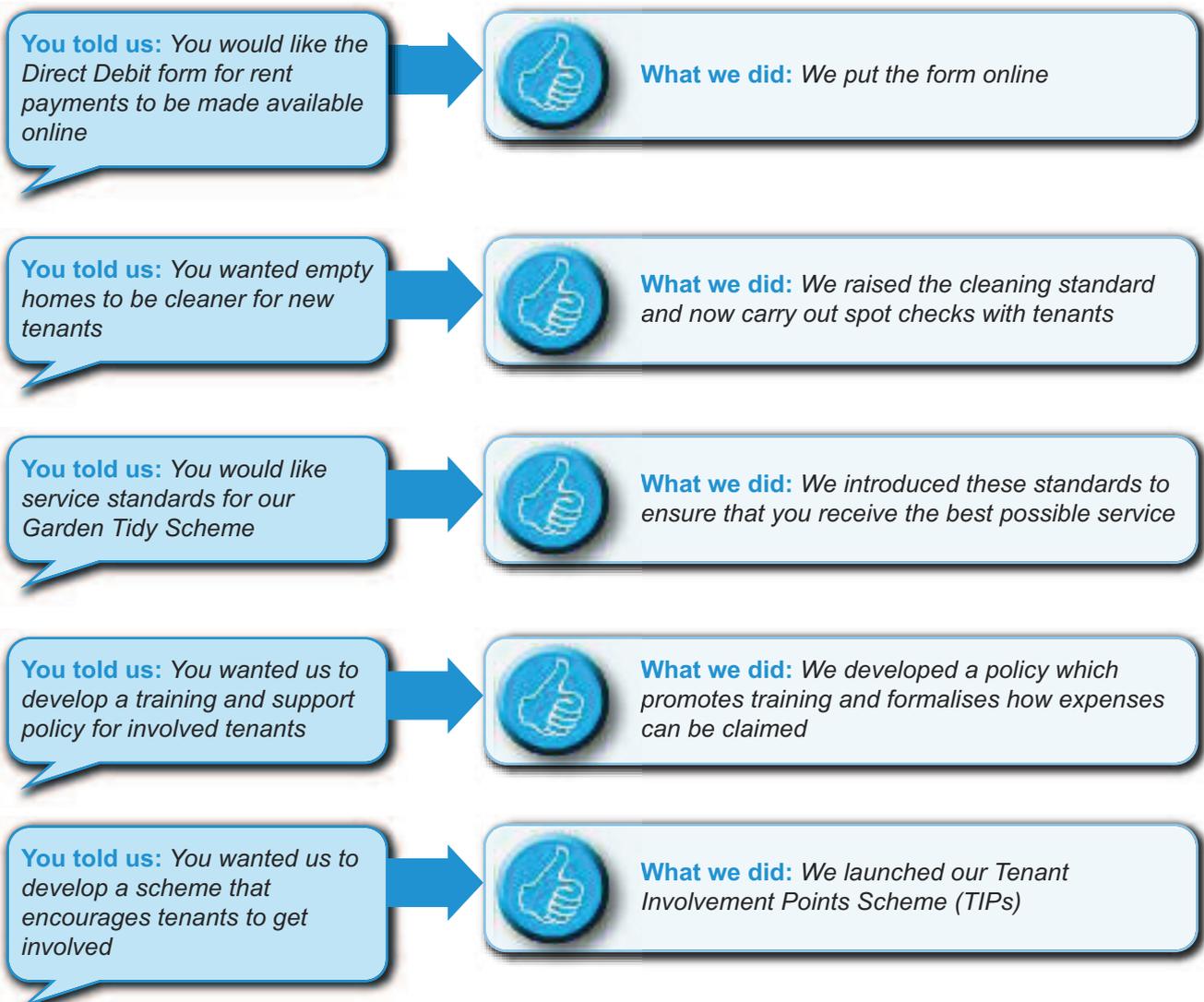
- We launched our Tenant Incentive Points Scheme (TIPs) in September 2011 which rewards you for getting involved in the work we do.
- We established our first Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
- More tenants joined our Tenants Panel.
- We streamlined our Service Improvement Groups.
- We reviewed our area involvement mechanisms and agreed to launch Neighbourhood Meetings in 2012/13.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will develop Tenant Scrutiny further to ensure that your views are taken into account.
- We will launch a new Tenant Training Programme ensuring all involved tenants have access to appropriate training and support.
- We will hold another Tenants Conference building on our previous success.

### Some of the changes we made as a result of your suggestions and involvement:

We consider all the suggestions you make very carefully and where possible we implement these. A few changes we have made as a result of your feedback are listed below:



## Tenants making a difference...



Audrey, Mary and Colin are three members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel who have made a massive contribution towards the work of Durham City Homes during the last year.

All three have been actively involved in the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and have worked with other tenants to look at a range of services and make suggestions about how services could be improved.

**Audrey** remembers coming along to her first session and not knowing what to expect. Audrey said; *"I decided if I didn't like it I wouldn't come back but I loved it and have been involved in every exercise"*.

**Mary** who represents tenants on the North East Procurement (NEP) Customer Panel, came along to see how she could get more involved. Mary said; *"I'm really enjoying the work we do and find it very interesting and rewarding. I've learnt a lot about Durham City Homes and how it operates"*.

**Colin** highlighted that; *"If it wasn't for the scrutiny group who would hold Durham City Homes to account? This is a valuable activity and has helped me to understand more about Durham City Homes and how I can contribute to improving services"*.

In 2011/12 the Panel have looked at the following services:

- Empty property management.
- Estate management.
- Repairs and maintenance.
- Decent Homes.
- Aids and adaptations.

Getting involved in Durham City Homes can also have other benefits as Audrey said; *"As a result of being involved I have gained a place on a locally run NVQ training course. I would not have achieved this without getting some experience with Durham City Homes first"*.

If you would like to get involved and make a difference please contact us using our details provided on page 31.

## Some of the changes we made as a result of suggestions from our Tenant Scrutiny Panel:

**You told us:** You would like us to introduce tenant welcome packs



**What we did:** We now put tenant welcome packs in empty properties before they are let

**You told us:** To let new tenants know where their water and gas stop taps are



**What we did:** We now put stickers in empty properties showing stop tap locations

**You told us:** There should be cleaning in communal areas



**What we did:** We are introducing cleaning to communal areas

## Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

During the last year we have made significant progress in improving our knowledge about who our tenants are and if they have any specific needs or requirements.

### A closer look at our performance:

At the end on 2011/12 we had collected demographic details for over 90% of our tenants.

This information told us that:

- More than 50% of tenants are female.
- 4% of tenants are under 25 years of age.
- Almost 99% of tenants identify themselves as “White”, with nearly all these identifying as “White British”.
- Of the remaining 1% who do not identify as “White”, the largest minority ethnic communities are Asian and Roma Gypsy Travellers.
- 2% of tenants identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- Over 70% of tenants identified themselves as Christians.
- 15% of tenants said they had no religion.

We do not have specific Local Service Standards for diversity as we are committed to ensuring we treat all customers fairly, with respect and that we respond to their individual needs across all the services and service standards that we deliver.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We published our Equality and Diversity staff guide.
- We completed our Local Government Equality Action Plan.
- We published our Young People’s Action Plan.
- We complied with the Equality Framework for Local Government.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will develop a ‘hard to reach’ Involvement Statement and Action Plan.
- We will publish our Equality and Diversity Statement and Action Plan to underpin everything we do.

## Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve tenant involvement and empowerment in 2011/12. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
● Continue to improve, expand and increase the variety of ways to get involved	
● Involve more tenants in the groups we have in place	
● Increase the diversity of involved tenants	
● Look at changing meeting times to meet tenant needs	
● Let more people know about what we are doing	

### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to:

- Increase the diversity of involved tenants.
- Improve advertising of estate walkabouts and feedback to tenants on actions identified during walkabouts.
- Further explore area and locally based involvement mechanisms.
- Explore options for customer involvement in complaints management in line with national guidelines.

# Your home

This standard includes:

- Quality of accommodation.
- Repairs and maintenance.

## Quality of accommodation

As at the 31st March 2011 all the homes we manage met the governments' 'Decent Homes' standard. We are committed to maintaining this standard to ensure that current and new tenants live in good quality accommodation which is safe, modern and meets current standards.

**Your Decent Homes local service standards 2011/12**

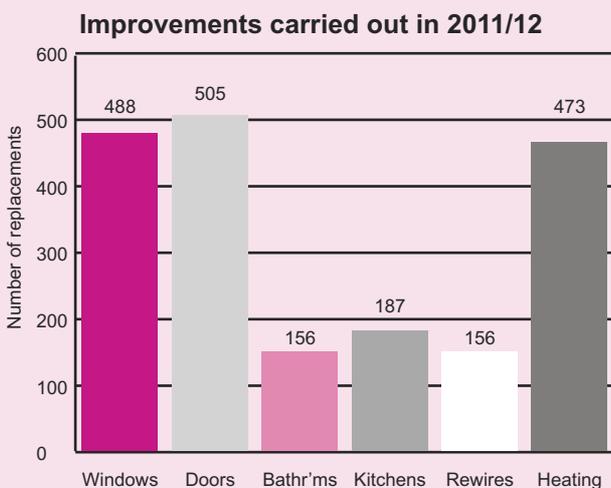
- Publish the programme of Decent Homes work every year
- Write to you three months before any works are due to start
- Visit every home to undertake a full survey of work required and talk to you about the choices available
- Give you at least 21 days verbal notice before work starts on your home, followed by a copy of the works programme
- Give you the contact details of your site supervisor 2 weeks before the works starts
- After the works have been completed we will check 100% of all completed improvements to make sure they have been completed to a good standard

**How well we did**

Our Tenants Panel have told us they want these standards to stay the same for 2012/13.

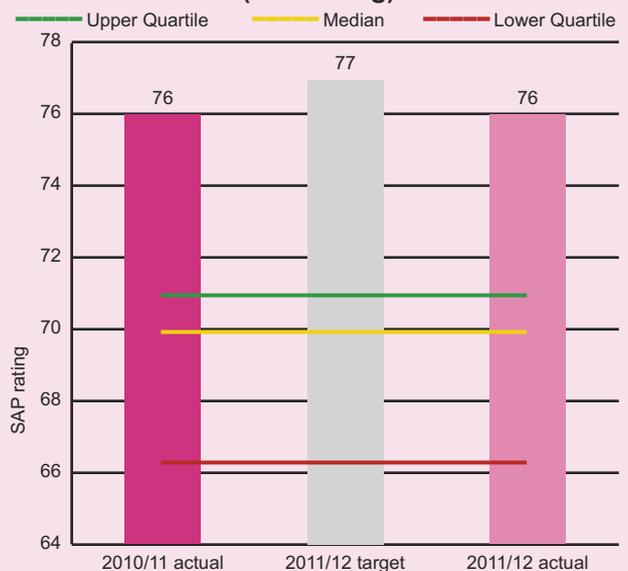
### A closer look at our performance:

- 664 homes were made decent in 2011/12. The type of improvements carried out is shown below:



- 68% of you are satisfied with the quality of your home.
- We completed 100% of all Decent Homes work within 15 days.
- We scored 7.7 out of 10 for satisfaction with our Decent Homes work. Our target was 8.

### Average energy efficiency of our homes (SAP rating)



- We scored 6.2 out of 10 for satisfaction with our external painting programme. Our target was 8.25.
- We scored 6.7 out of 10 for satisfaction with our decoration voucher scheme. Our target was 8.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We published our first Asset Management Strategy which sets out how we will manage the investment needs of our homes.
- We published our Decent Homes Information Pack which is given to all tenants whose homes are having refurbishment works completed.
- We introduced a new 'welcome pack' for all new tenants. The pack includes basic household items to give new tenants a little extra help setting up their home.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will review our Decoration Voucher Scheme with tenants to improve customer satisfaction.
- We will publish our first Affordable Warmth Strategy.
- We will deliver our first Renewable Energy scheme at Woodland Road Bungalows, Esh Winning. This will inform our future approach to renewable energy sources.

## Repairs and maintenance

In 2011/12 we completed over 25,000 repairs to the homes we manage and we serviced over 6,100 gas and solid fuel fires. You have told us that the repairs and maintenance service is one of the most important services we provide. Our responsive repairs service aims to undertake repairs promptly and efficiently, making sure that we get the repair right first time.

In addition, our Adaptations Service completed 549 alterations and improvements for tenants requiring additional support to live in their homes.

There are three service standards for this theme:

- Repairs.
- Gas and solid fuel.
- Adaptations.

Your <b>repairs</b> local service standards 2011/12	How well we did
● Complete emergency repairs within 24 hours, if a repair is reported before 12 noon (Monday-Friday) it will be completed the same day	
● Arrange an inspection appointment within 7 working days if we can't identify the repair over the phone	
● Respond to a report of a gas leak or carbon monoxide alarm activation within 2 hours	
● Complete urgent repairs within 7 working days	
● Complete routine repairs within 20 working days	
● Complete planned repairs within 60 working days	
● Check 10% of all repairs to make sure they have been completed to a satisfactory standard	
● Offer an appointment within 5 working days to discuss a repair that you are responsible for but would like us to do	
● Decide within 10 working days whether to approve or reject your application to carry out your own improvements	

Your **gas and solid fuel** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Complete a safety check when you move into your new home
- Service your heating appliance every 12 months
- Send you a letter with an appointment for our engineers to call when it is time for your gas service
- Give you a copy of the safety certificate when the service is completed
- Check any smoke and carbon monoxide alarms we have fitted, at the same time as your gas or solid fuel appliance service
- Check 10% of all gas servicing to make sure it has been completed to a good standard



Your **adaptations** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Assess all request for support within 30 working days of the request being received by us
- Give you 7 calendar days verbal notice followed by written notification before starting any minor works at your home
- Complete all minor adaptations within 30 working days of the initial assessment
- Give you 7 calendar days written notice before starting major adaptations work on your home
- Complete all major adaptations within 60 working days of the initial assessment

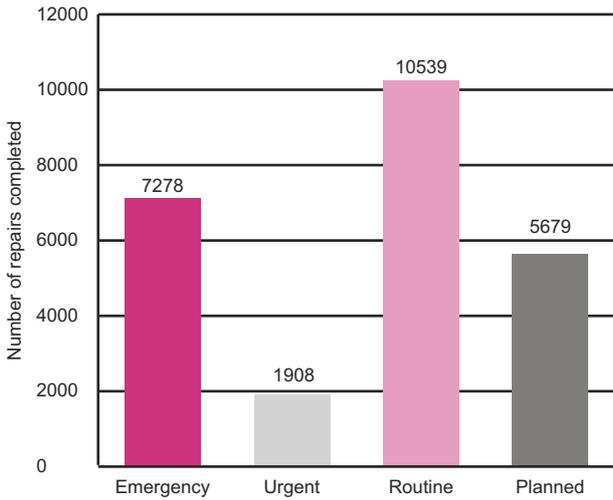


Our Tenants Panel have told us they want each of these standards to stay the same for 2012/13.



**A closer look at our performance:**

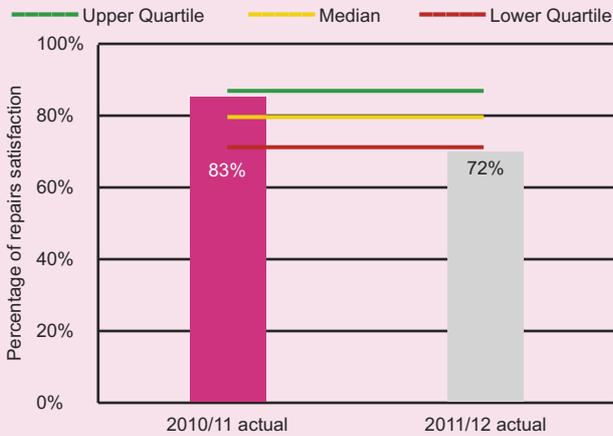
**Types and numbers of repairs completed**



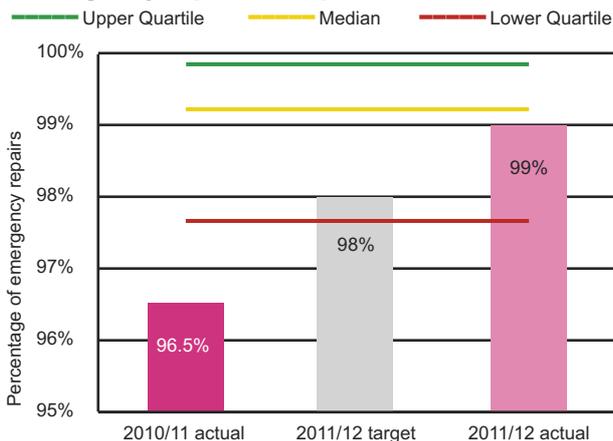
Of the 25,404 repairs completed in 2011/12:

- 29% were classed as an emergency and were repaired within 24 hours.
- 8% were classed as urgent and were repaired within 7 working days.
- 41% were classed as routine and were repaired within 20 working days.
- 22% were large scale 'planned works' and were repaired within 60 working days.

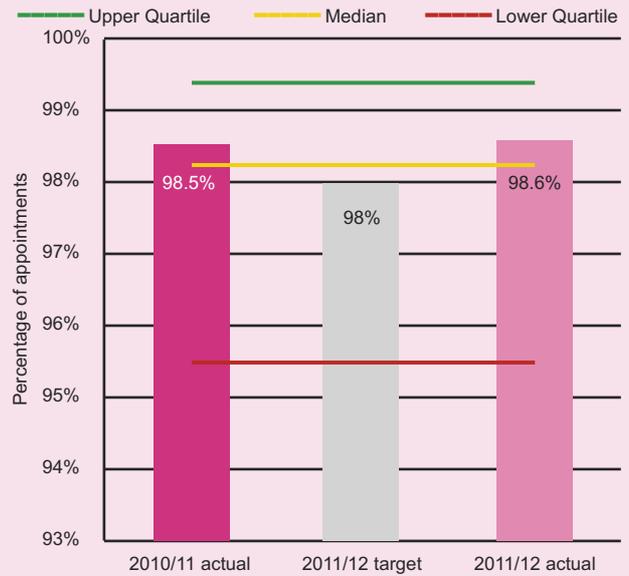
**Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance**



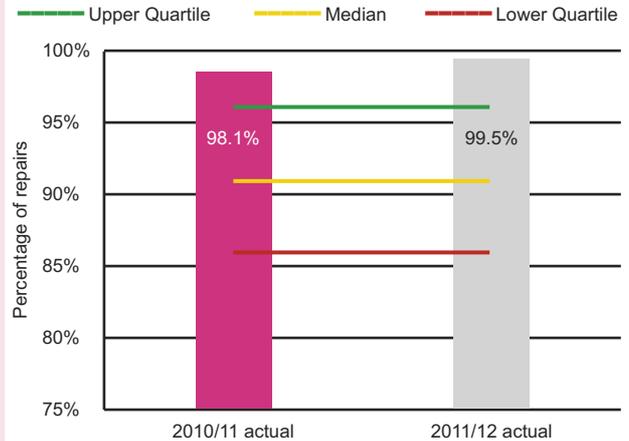
**Emergency repairs completed within timescale**



**Percentage of repair appointments made and kept**



**Percentage of repairs right first time**



**Percentage of homes with a valid gas safety certificate**



- We scored 9 out of 10 for satisfaction with our Adaptations Service. Our target was 9.
- We scored 8.9 out of 10 for satisfaction with our Gas Servicing Programme. Our target was 9.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We expanded the ways in which repairs can be reported with the introduction of text reporting.
- We published our first Repairs and Maintenance Policy which formalises how we deliver the repairs service.
- We started a major programme to improve fire safety in the communal areas of flats, including fitting fire doors to tenants' flats, installing new emergency lighting, new flooring and decoration.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will take a robust approach to recovering the cost of deliberate damage to our homes through our Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- We will explore the potential of introducing a 'handy person scheme' for everyday minor repairs.
- We will improve communication with tenants to reduce the number of complaints we receive about the repairs service.



## Home standard

### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve the quality of their home and repairs service in 2011/12. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
● Ensure our homes are modernised to a consistently high standard	
● Work with others to explore the opportunities for building new homes	
● Explore the potential use of greener energy sources	
● Introduce more streamlining of services and standards	
● Aim higher and improve what we already do	
● Carry out more environmental improvements	

### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to:

- Work with others to explore opportunities for building new homes.
- Improve communication with tenants regarding repair works.
- Continue to improve the energy efficiency of our homes and reduce tenants energy bills.

# Your tenancy

This standard includes:

- Allocations and mutual exchange.
- Tenure.

## Allocations, mutual exchange and tenure

When we talk about allocations we mean the way in which we let homes and mutual exchange refers to tenants swapping homes with each other. Tenure refers to the type of tenancy you have.

There are two service standards for this theme:

- Lettings.
- Furnished tenancies.

Your <b>lettings</b> local service standards 2011/12	How well we did
● Assess your housing application within 10 working days from the date that you gave us all the information we need	
● Let you know the result of your appeal against our banding decision within 10 working days from the day you give us all your evidence to support the appeal	
● Advertise our available homes every week (except Xmas and New Year)	
● Make an offer over the phone within one working day of the close of bidding	
● Allow you one working day after offering you a home to decide whether to accept it or not	
● Contact everyone registered on Durham Key Options at least once a year to check they still need a home	

Our Tenants Panel have told us they want these standards to be strengthened in 2012/13 to include our 'Lettable Standard' and scrutiny work.

### New standards for 2012/13:

In addition to the above service standards we have also committed to:

- Ensuring your new home meets our 'Lettable Standard' at the time of offer.
- Ensuring tenant scrutinisers attend our monthly empty property inspection meetings.



## Your furnished tenancy local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Have furniture delivered on a convenient day within 5 working days of you asking for it
- Repair or replace a faulty cooker we have supplied to you within 2 working days
- Collect furniture within 5 working days of you asking us to
- Replace any furniture that needs changing due to wear and tear within 5 working days of you telling us about it (to be deleted for 2012/13)
- Make an inventory of the furniture in your package every 6 months. This means we list the furniture and its condition (to be deleted for 2012/13)

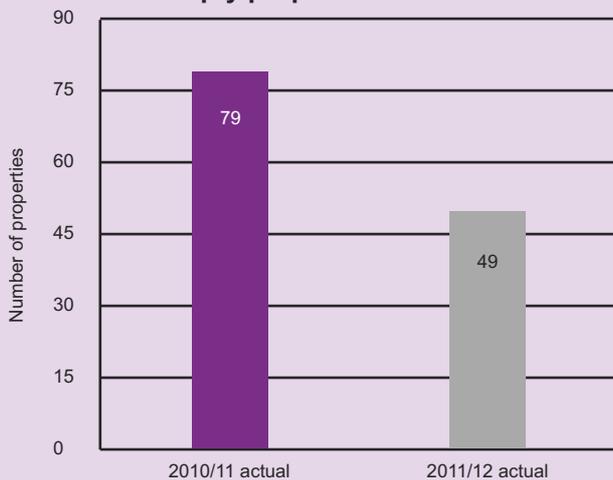


### Changes to the standards for 2012/13:

Our Tenants Panel asked us to delete the last two standards, we agreed to this.

### A closer look at our performance:

#### Number of empty properties available to re-let

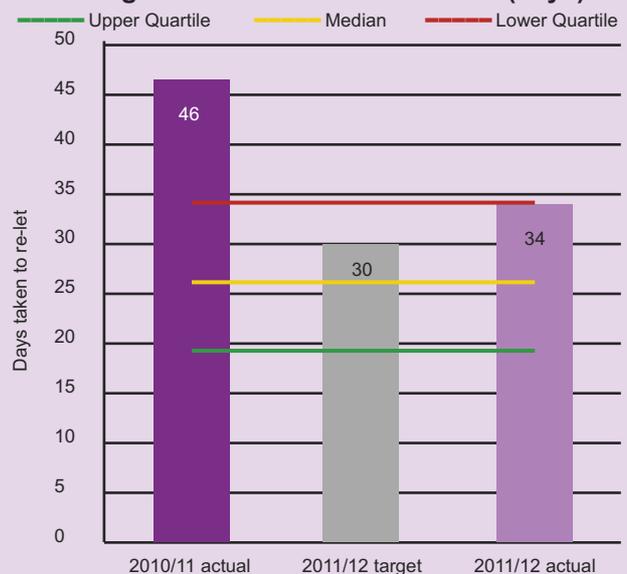


- We let 547 homes in 2011/12.
- 2112 applicants were registered with Durham Key Options as at 31st March 2012.
- We scored 7.4 out of 10 for satisfaction with the quality of services provided to new tenants. Our target was 7.5.
- 86% of applications to Durham Key Options were made active within 28 days of us receiving all the necessary information.
- 8% of new tenancies lasted less than 12 months.

#### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We introduced a new County-wide Tenancy Agreement.
- We distributed a new 'Tenants Handbook' to all tenants.
- We reviewed and made some changes to our Furnished Tenancy Scheme including supporting 'Smaterbuys' which enables tenants to access low cost household items.

#### Average time taken to re-let a home (days)



- We introduced our new Tenancy Sustainment Service to offer additional support to tenants.

#### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will appoint a Welfare Benefits Advisor dedicated to Durham City Homes to give advice to prospective and existing tenants.
- We will publish an easy to read 'Tenancy Agreement'.
- We will continue to work with colleagues to reduce the time it takes to relet empty homes, including reviewing our 'Lettable Standard'.
- We will continue to develop our Tenancy Sustainment Service to reduce the number of new tenancies that end within 12 months.

## Tenancy standard

### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve in 2011/12. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ensure tenancies are sustained with good quality support being given to tenants</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Make sure tenancy-related problems are resolved quickly</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Look at ways of supporting new and existing tenants</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ensure that homes are well managed by both us and tenants, using tenancy enforcement action when necessary</li></ul>	

### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to:

- Resolve tenancy-related problems quickly.
- Put mechanisms in place to support tenants to manage the impact of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit.



## Your neighbourhood and community

This standard includes:

- Neighbourhood management.
- Local area co-operation (working in partnership with other agencies).
- Anti-social behaviour.

### Neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour

We are committed to working with you, other tenants, residents and partners to make sure the area where you live is safe, clean and enjoyable. When problems do occur we want to make sure you have easy access to the services that can provide advice and support to try and help you resolve issues quickly.

There are four service standards for this theme:

- Tenancy and estate management.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Racial harassment and hate crime.
- Domestic abuse.

Your **tenancy and estate management** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Visit you within 4 weeks of you moving into one of our properties to discuss any concerns you may have with your property, your neighbours and the local environment
- Visit all new introductory tenants again before the first anniversary of moving into their new home
- Publish the outcomes of estate walkabouts in Tenant Matters
- Remove offensive or racist graffiti from our buildings within 24 hours of it being reported to us
- Refer any complaint (for example graffiti, litter, abandoned cars, fly-tipping) to the agency responsible for dealing with it within 2 working days
- Secure abandoned or insecure properties within 24 hours of being told about them
- Remove syringes from our estates within 24 hours of being told about them



Your **anti-social behaviour** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Contact you and begin investigating your complaint within 24 hours for high priority cases or within 3 working days for routine cases
- Where we cannot resolve your concerns at the first point of contact we will provide you with a written action plan within 3 working days



Your **racial harassment and hate crime** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Speak to you within 24 hours of you telling us so we can gather more information to help us investigate it properly
- Remove offensive or racist graffiti from our buildings within 24 hours of it being reported to us
- Agree an action plan with you within 24 hours and keep you informed of progress until the case is closed



Your **domestic abuse** local service standards 2011/12

How well we did

- Speak to you about your complaint within 24 hours of you telling us, so we can gather more information to help us investigate it properly
- Agree an action plan with you within 24 hours and keep you informed of progress until your case is closed



Our Tenants Panel have told us they want each of these standards to stay the same for 2012/13, but that they would like to see new standards introduced for communal areas, the environment and our garden tidy scheme.

### New standards for 2012/13:

We have agreed the following new standards with our Tenants Panel for 2012/13:

#### Communal areas

For this standard we have committed to:

- Providing, checking and updating, on a quarterly basis, notice boards in all communal blocks, including publishing details of cleaning schedules, Housing Officer inspection's and planned estate walkabouts.
- Inspecting the communal areas of blocks of flats with tenants at least 4 times a year.
- Repairing communal lighting within 7 working days.
- Repairing communal doors within 7 working days.
- Removing offensive or racist graffiti from communal areas within 24 hours of it being reported to us.

#### Environment

For this standard we have committed to:

- Holding at least 35 estate walkabouts a year.
- Publishing the outcomes of the estate walkabouts in Tenant Matters, (formerly part of the tenancy and estate management standard).
- Responding to reports about environmental issues within 24 hours of being told about them.
- Referring any complaint (for example, about graffiti, litter, abandoned cars, and fly-tipping) to the agency responsible for dealing with it within 2 working days, (formerly part of the tenancy and estate management standard).
- Cutting the grass every two weeks between April and October (weather permitting) on communal grassed areas on our estates.
- Undertaking a litter pick on grassed areas on our estates every two weeks.

#### Garden tidy scheme

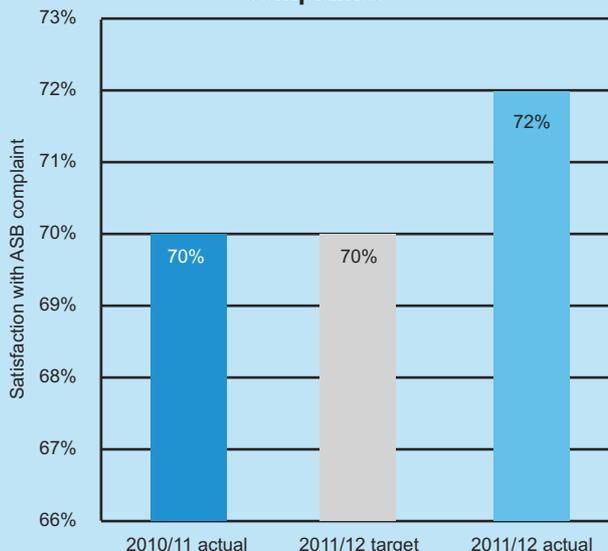
For those tenants who pay for the garden tidy service we have committed to:

- Cutting your grass (including grass collection) every two weeks between April and October (weather permitting).
- Strimming grass edges twice per season (usually June and September).
- Cutting hedges once per year (usually August/September).

### A closer look at our performance:

- 83% of tenants told us they were satisfied with their neighbourhood, this is less than our target of 88% and less than 2010/11 performance of 87%.
- We scored 6.7 out of 10 for satisfaction with the estate management services we provide. Our target was 7.
- We evicted one tenant as a result of their behaviour.
- We agreed 5 Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts.

#### Satisfaction with the way we handled ASB complaints



### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We published and implemented our first Neighbourhood Policy.
- We started to talk to tenants about improving communal areas and how they are managed, including starting improvement works at Churchill Square flats.
- We developed a common approach to managing council owned garages with East Durham Homes and Dale and Valley Homes, including demolishing a garage site at Brandon improving the local area for residents.



### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will improve satisfaction with your neighbourhood by appointing more Housing Officers to deal with those neighbourhood issues which matter the most to you.
- We will do work to understand more about victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour, this will help us shape services to meet local needs.
- We will develop a customer support referral map; ensuring customers get the help they need as quickly as possible.
- We will roll out neighbourhood meetings to engage with tenants and other residents.



### Neighbourhood and community standard

#### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve in 2011/12. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
● Continue to reduce anti-social behaviour	
● Create a nice environment to live in	
● Make sure we deal with any issues you have quickly	
● Establish local groups to promote community pride and tackle local issues	

#### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to:

- Improve the maintenance of and appearance of empty properties and their gardens.
- Improve partnership working across the Council to address neighbourhood and community issues.
- Create a nicer environment for people to live in by carrying out environmental improvements.

# Economic standards

These standards do not apply to Durham County Council as your landlord. They are for other social housing providers, like Housing Associations. However, we have provided some information about the work we have undertaken in these areas.

## Value for money

We are committed to ensuring that we achieve excellent value for money in the services we provide and through the way in which we spend your rent. We have in place robust procedures to make sure that we commission services and buy goods which are of good quality but are a reasonable cost.

Through our business planning process we aim to achieve excellence in service delivery whilst maximising the opportunities to save money to reinvest in the services that matter the most to you.

In 2011/12 we made significant progress in delivering better value for money for tenants.

### A closer look at our performance:

- We know that 74% of you are satisfied with the value for money you get for your rent.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- As a member of the North East Procurement Group (NEP) we continued to procure contractors for our capital programme through the group. This resulted in significant savings to be reinvested into the capital programme throughout the year.
- We secured over £70K external funding to invest in a renewable energy scheme at Esh Winning.
- We introduced changes to our home security packs including the introduction of service charges for security alarms fitted to tenants home.
- We introduced service charges for the Garden Tidy Scheme meaning only those tenants who receive the service pay for it.
- We reduced the number of weeks homes were empty from an average 6 weeks in 2010/11 to 4 weeks in 2011/12 saving us £63K in potentially lost rent.
- We converted 3 former communal rooms into homes. This has reduced our running costs and increased our rental income.
- We closed Brandon House and Oversteads House, former sheltered housing schemes. This significantly reduced our overheads and lost rental income.

- We developed a new strategy for the management of empty garages which will bring about long term savings in terms of rent loss as the most unpopular garages are demolished.
- We reviewed our Service Level Agreements to make sure we maximised value for money.
- We set up a Value for Money Working Group.
- We reviewed our furnished tenancy scheme and made some changes to the packages available to tenants.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- Our approach to achieving excellence in service delivery whilst maximising value for money is embedded across all the services and functions we provide.
- We will review our value for money strategy and complete a self assessment of how well we are doing.



## Value for money standard

### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve value for money. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Make it a priority to involve you more in contract decisions</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Involve you more in the financial decisions we make</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Involve you more in the management of contracts we award</li></ul>	

### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to continue to involve tenants in:

- Contract decisions.
- Financial decisions.
- Contract management.

## Your rent

The rent standards focus upon how your rent is set and what you are charged. The County Council follows the national formula set by government for the rent it charges tenants.

In this section you can find out about your rent local service standards and our performance in this area.

Your rent local service standards 2011/12	How well we did
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Send you a rent statement every 3 months</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Give you at least 28 calendar days' notice of any rent or service charge changes</li></ul>	
If you owe money, for example, if your rent account is in arrears, we will:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Respond to any enquiry from you within 5 working days</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Send you a reminder, if appropriate, within 14 calendar days if you miss a payment</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Tell you the amount due, how you can pay it and what will happen if you don't repay the debt</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Confirm any payment arrangement we make with you to clear any arrears, in writing within 3 working days</li></ul>	

Our Tenants Panel have told us they want this standard to stay the same for 2012/13.

### A closer look at our performance:

- We collected 97.1% of rent owed to us in 2011/12 compared to 97.6% in 2010/11.
- We collected £52,945 former tenant arrears in 2011/12.
- 31% of tenants paid their rent by Direct Debit.
- We evicted 15 tenants for rent arrears.
- We scored 7.8 out of 10 for satisfaction with our rent service. Our target was 8.
- 5% of tenants owed us more than 7 weeks rent.
- In 2011/12 the amount of current tenant rent arrears owed to us was £623,000 this was significantly higher than the previous year at £472,000. The increase was caused through the introduction of a new computer system for Housing Benefits, which resulted in claims not being processed as quickly as we would have liked. The new system is now up and running and the backlogs are being cleared. We expect the current rent owed to us to reduce in the coming months.

### Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We un-pooled service charges from housing rents. This means that the cost of the additional services we provide for some tenants is separate from the rent they pay for their home. As a result of doing this only the tenants who receive these services pay for them. Examples include our Garden Tidy Scheme and our Window and Communal Cleaning Programmes for some flats.

### How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will strengthen our Income Recovery Team with the addition of an officer dedicated to increasing the amount of former tenant rent arrears and sundry debts we recover.
- We will explore the potential of providing on-line access to your rent account and statements.
- We will introduce text messaging for our rents service.

The Tenants Panel have not set any priorities for improving performance in this area.



# Governance and financial viability

When we talk about governance, we mean the arrangements we have in place to make sure that our services are well managed and that the decisions we make are clear, well informed and open to external scrutiny and challenge. Financial viability is about making sure we manage our money efficiently.

Durham County Council has overall responsibility for the delivery of landlord housing services in Durham City. The Council's Cabinet make all major decisions regarding housing in Durham City. The Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee support the Cabinet's role through scrutinising the decisions they make and suggesting recommendations.

## To support the Council's political decision making framework, we have in place:

**Durham City Homes Non-Executive Board** – the Board is made up of an equal numbers of tenants, independent members and Durham County Council Councillors. The Board supports the delivery of Durham City Homes' Delivery Plan and makes recommendations to the Council's Cabinet.

**Tenants Panel** – all tenants are welcome at this monthly meeting. The meeting provides tenants with the opportunity to hold us to account, scrutinise the work we do and help shape the services we deliver.

**Service Improvement Groups** – our 'Home' Group works towards improving services relating to repairs, decent homes and other issues impacting upon tenants. All tenants and leaseholders are welcome to attend.

**Neighbourhood meetings** – we are currently in the process of setting up these meetings to provide a forum for tenants, leaseholders and other residents to have a say about the services and activities we deliver in their local area.

**Other involvement options** – we have in place a menu of involvement which supports the work of the above groups ranging from attending focus groups to simply giving us your feedback. Contact our Involvement Team to find out more.

## A closer look at our performance:

- We held 12 meetings of the Tenants Panel.
- We held 4 meetings of our Non-Executive Board.
- We were released from monitoring by the former TSA/HCA following sustained action to improve the services we provide.

## Our achievements in 2011/12:

- We established our Tenant Scrutiny Group (Reality Checkers).
- We ran 5 tenant scrutiny exercises and implemented tenant suggestions (see page 11 for further details).
- We completed Training Needs Assessments for our involved tenants.
- We delivered training for tenants including; presentation skills, reporting writing and meeting skills.

## How we plan to improve in 2012/13:

- We will review the 'Terms of Reference' for all the groups we have in place to make sure their roles and responsibilities are clear.
- We will publish a new 'Tenant Training Programme', ensuring that the training needs of individual tenants are met in order for them to be able to perform their role effectively in the work they do with us.



## Governance and financial viability

### Service improvements our Tenants Panel asked us to make in 2011/12:

In 2010/11 we asked our Tenants Panel what they would like us to do to improve governance and financial viability. The table below shows the main improvements members of the Panel asked us to do and how well they think we have performed in delivering these improvements.

The Tenants Panel asked us to:	Tenants Panel Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop their scrutiny role further</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Make sure we give you the right support and training to maximise your role in scrutinising the services we deliver</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Ensure that you are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the different groups we have in place</li></ul>	

### Tenants Panel priorities for 2012/13:

The Tenants Panel have told us that their priorities and areas for improvement for 2012/13 under this standard are for us to continue to:

- Develop Tenant Scrutiny.
- Ensure that tenants are given support and training to maximise their role in scrutinising the services delivered.
- Ensure tenants are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the different groups we have in place.



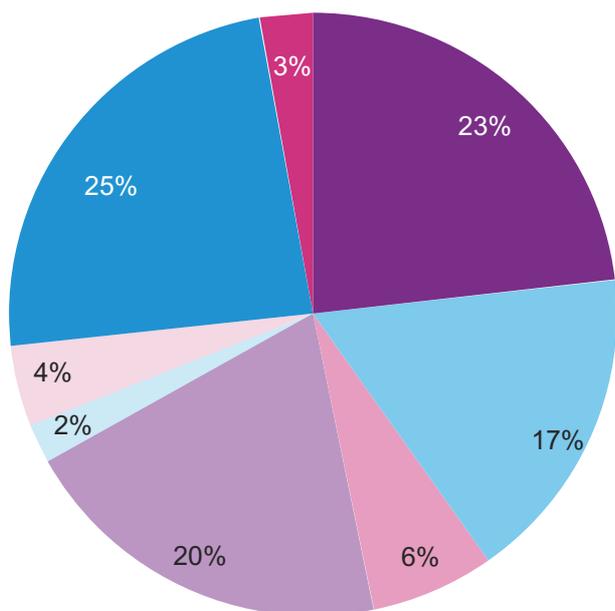
# How we spent your money

## Where the money came from in 2011/12:

	£
Council house rents	£18,927,511
Other rents	£225,165
Service charges	£164,246
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£19,316,922</b>

## What the money was spent on in 2011/12:

	£
Repairs and maintenance	£4,504,369
Housing management	£3,355,668
Payments to the Government (Subsidy)	£1,229,061
Depreciation	£3,793,330
Corporate and Democratic costs	£350,537
Interest	£853,807
Contribution towards capital works	£4,624,975
Other	£605,175
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£19,316,922</b>

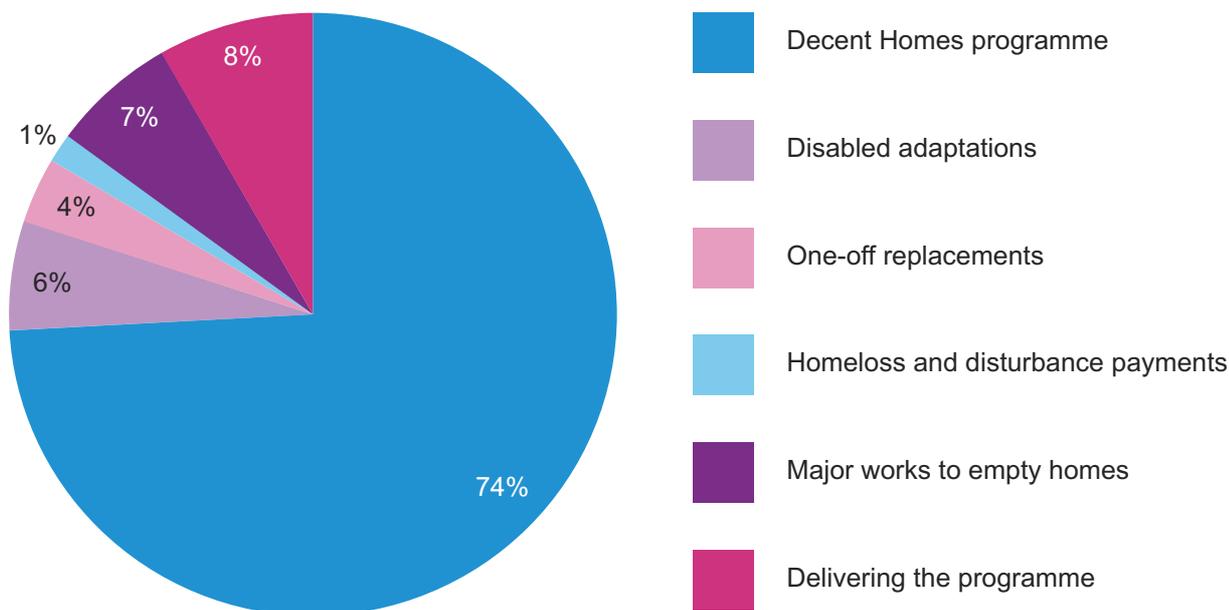


### Capital expenditure in 2011/12:

Every year we carry out improvements to our homes. These works are funded through the Government's Major Repairs Allowance and the Housing Revenue Account.

#### What the money was spent on in 2011/12:

	£
Decent Homes Programme (including heating)	£4,617
Disabled Adaptations	£0,368
One-off replacements	£0,231
Decent Homes Decants	£0,082
Empty Homes	£0,423
Supporting the programme	£0,513
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£6,234,000</b>



#### Some of our spending priorities for 2012/13:

- We will continue to make sure our homes meet the Decent Homes standard with over £6m being invested in this area.
- We will continue to provide disabled adaptations for qualifying tenants; we have allocated £420,000 for this work.
- We have allocated over £170,000 to contribute towards environmental improvements.
- We have allocated £100,000 to undertake fire safety improvements.

# How to contact us

**In writing:** Durham City Homes  
Lumley House  
Whitfield Court  
St John's Road  
Meadowfield Industrial Estate  
Durham  
DH7 8XL

**In person:** The above office is open to the public from 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am until 4.30pm on Fridays. Please note this office is for Durham City Homes enquiries only and not for other Durham County Council services.

**By email:** [durhamcityhomesadmin@durham.gov.uk](mailto:durhamcityhomesadmin@durham.gov.uk)

**By telephone:** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  
0191 301 8470  
0800 068 0013

(Calls to an 0800 number are free from a BT landline, charges from other suppliers and mobiles may vary).





**Information produced by**

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your

# DALEMail

can do, will do

for the customers of **DALE & VALLEY HOMES**



Issue 21 September 2012

[WWW.DALEANDVALLEYHOMES.CO.UK](http://WWW.DALEANDVALLEYHOMES.CO.UK)

## Welcome to your annual report

Last year we, the editorial panel, told you about the progress we had made in ensuring the annual report was customer friendly because it is our job to oversee all the newsletters and leaflets you receive from Dale & Valley Homes.

Making it more customer-friendly meant a new design with a clearer layout, no jargon and working in partnership with staff on the content and format.

This year, following positive feedback from customers about larger print used in Dale Mail, this report is also in a larger print size. There is no need for the magnifying glasses some people received with last year's edition!

Larger print means we have had to trim down the content to the essentials.

We feel the report still shows how the company is delivering our services, how satisfied customers are with this, where money has been invested in improving your homes and neighbourhoods, and plans to continue improving in the coming year.

We hope you find this year's report as readable, informative and interesting as we have found it.



*Kathleen and Terry Hadden have switched*

### Digital switchover

By the end of September the terrestrial TV signal in the North East will be switched off.

To continue watching your television after then you must switch to a digital service - cable, satellite or Freeview.

Help is available for some older or vulnerable people (see back page).



**Use the information below to contact us if you want to know more about anything in this magazine**

**Find us on**



**Facebook and Twitter**



**@DaleValleyHomes**

Call us:

0800 0830333 (free from a landline)

or 0300 2000194 (cheaper for mobile phone users)

or 01388 770979

Write to us:

Freepost

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# How did we do in 2011-12?

This year saw the introduction of new services, improved levels of customer satisfaction, reduced costs, greater input from customers in the development and scrutiny of services. The company was ranked nationally as the 11th-best not-for-profit organisation to work for in the Sunday Times Top 100 companies list.

Here are some more of our achievements this year.

- Two new services introduced - garden maintenance and intensive housing management - to help customers stay in their homes.
- Energy efficiency advisors employed with extra funding to help people keep warm for less money.
- We trained all our staff in customer care.
- Numbers of homes below the decency standard were reduced to only 2.3% of our stock.
- Customer guarantees were introduced to help us deliver the excellent services customers are looking for.
- New homes at Greenside Place and Park Avenue Close (phase 1) were completed on time.
- With the help of Durham County Council's under-occupation scheme we helped six customers move to smaller properties.
- We increased our opening times for customers to contact us by telephone, taking calls from 8am on weekdays.
- The proportion of customers satisfied with their neighbourhood rose by 6% to 87%.
- We reduced costs and made efficiency savings, offering a better service for less.



## Listening to customers

Involving customers is very important to Dale & Valley Homes. We believe it is essential that we give customers a say in the services they receive in order to ensure they are continually improved and represent value for money.

Customer satisfaction with the outcomes of their involvement is well ahead of target at 76%. Here is an idea of the people who were involved this year.

- Tenant board members(5)
- Wear Valley Customer Panel (25)
- Scrutiny group (8)
- Residents associations (40+)
- Mystery shopping (27)
- Working groups (20+)
- Neighbourhood inspections (16)
- Focus groups (50)
- Surveys (152)
- Social activities (58).

To join in contact us in one of the ways listed on page 2



## Customer satisfaction survey

Last year we published some information on customer satisfaction with things like our overall service and customer involvement.

This information comes from a survey called the STATUS Survey, which is only carried out every two years.

Because we do not have new figures for these things we are not reporting them this year, but we will publish the results of a new survey next year.

If you have received a survey please return it for your chance to win a prize.

### Customer comments

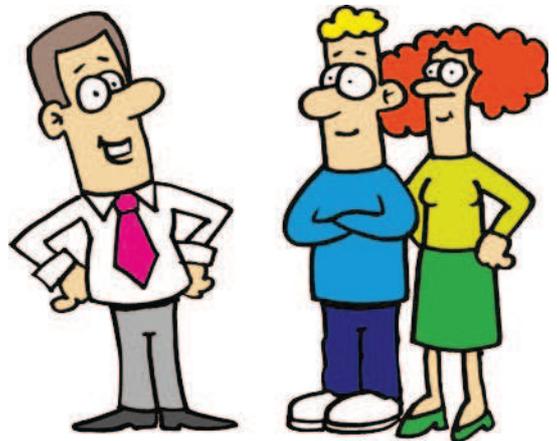
“The garden service is excellent, the two gentlemen are very pleasant and chatty and I think they are very nice people.”

# Getting better in 2012-13

Working with customers, we have come up with these improvements

which we will be working on in the coming year.

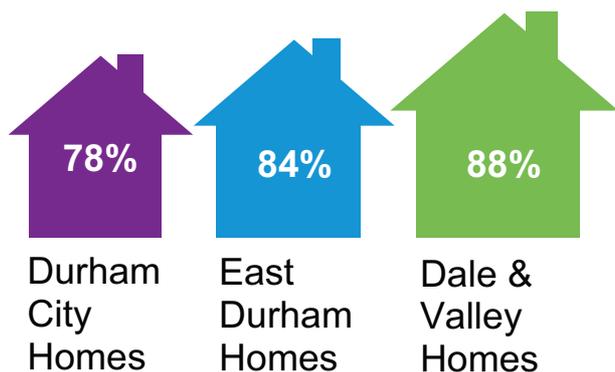
- Ensure customers continue to lead and shape services.
- Assess the impact of the scrutiny group on service delivery and value for money.
- Increase our involvement in improving the economic and social well-being of local communities.
- Improve the popularity and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods.
- Actively support Durham County Council in the stock options process to maximise the benefits to customers and ensure that customers exercise their right to participate in any future ballot, having been given appropriate information to make an informed choice.
- Enable staff to have accurate customer insight information when reviewing and developing services.
- To achieve the Customer Service Excellence award.
- To be recognised as an excellent employer.



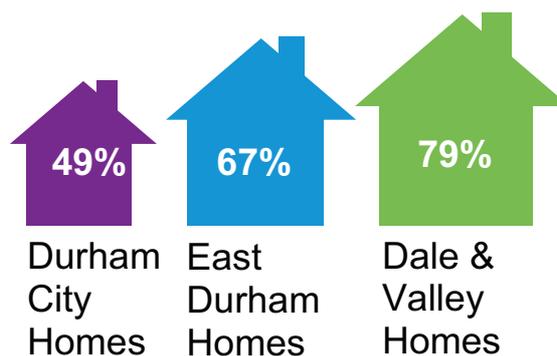
We believe the most important challenge facing us this year will be in responding to the impact of welfare reform legislation and the move to Universal Credit. This is a significant change for many customers and we recognise the need to provide timely, accurate and readily understandable information and advice to customers.

# How do we compare with other local providers?

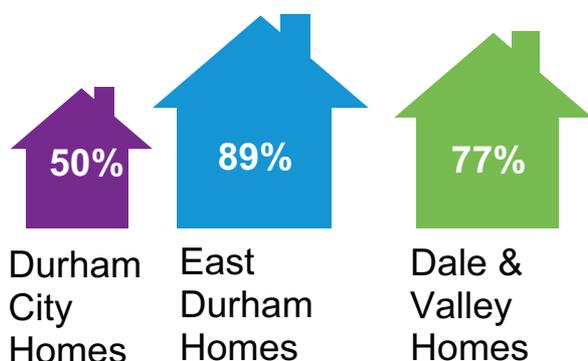
There are two other housing management organisations contracted by Durham County Council to manage landlord services. These are Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes. Below is some information on our relative performance.



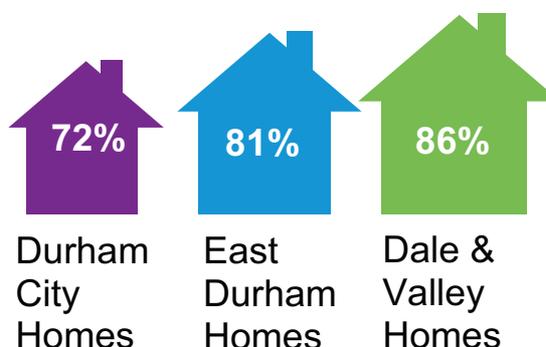
Customer satisfaction with overall services.



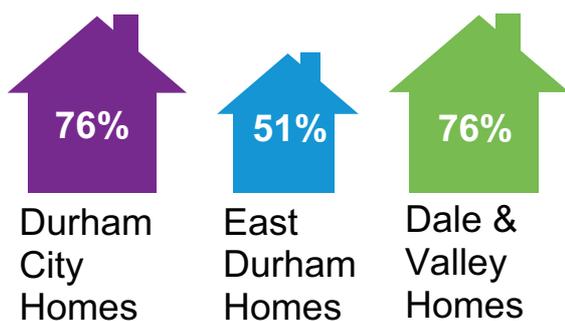
Satisfaction that tenants' views are taken into account.



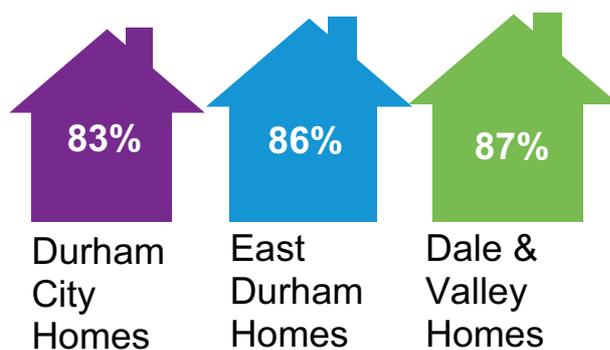
Percentage of customers satisfied that staff could deal with their problem.



Customer satisfaction with the repairs service.



Customers satisfied with the outcome of their anti-social behaviour case.



Customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.



# Performance

## Explanation

These statistics compare how Dale & Valley Homes performed in the year ending April 2012 with targets we have set for ourselves and with how the company performed the previous year.

They also show how the company performed compared with the best Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) in the country, where possible.

A green house shows the indicator is on target or better.



An amber house shows that the indicator is within ten per cent of the target.



A red house shows that we are more than ten per cent adrift of the target.



### Average time taken to respond to complaints (working days)

2011-12 14.5

Target 14

2010-11 13.6

Top ALMOs 5.2



### % repairs complete right first time

2011-12 86.9

Target 88.5

2010-11 88.1

Top ALMOs 94.7



### % total responsive repairs completed in target

2011-12 96.4

Target 98.3

2010-11 97.4

Top ALMOs 98.9



### % homes with gas safety certificates

2011-12 100

Target 100

2010-11 99.93

Top ALMOs 100



### Tenant satisfaction with repairs - percentages

2011-12 89.3

Target 90.5

2010-11 90

Top ALMOs n/a



### % of customers satisfied with outcome of their anti-social behaviour complaint

2011-12 76.3

Target 78

2010-11 78



# - how are we doing?



## % non-decent homes



2011-12 2.3

Target 2.5

2010-11 6.3

Top ALMOs n/a

## % of rent arrears against rent due



2011-12 2.07

Target 2

2010-11 1.22

Top ALMOs 1.29

## Customer satisfaction with tenancy management



2011-12 80.9

Target 80

2010-11 78.7

Top ALMOs n/a

## Rent collected as % of rent owed



2011-12 99.4

Target 99.5

2010-11 101.1

Top ALMOs 99.9

## Former tenants' arrears as percentage of rent due



2011-12 1.7

Target 1.3

2010-11 1.33

Top ALMOs 0.74

## Appointments kept as a % of appointments made



2011-12 97.3

Target 98

2010-11 97.8

Top ALMOs 99.3

## % of customers satisfied with major improvement works



2011-12 93.3

Target 91.5

2010-11 91.5

## Rent lost from empty homes as % of rent due



2011-12 1.1

Target 1.2

2010-11 1.25

Top ALMOs 0.75

## Satisfaction with aids and adaptations



2011-12 95

Target 98.5

2010-11 98.5

Top ALMOs n/a

# Action on complaints

**Do you feel confident that, when you're unhappy with a service you've received and complain, that something will be done about it?**

Dale & Valley Homes welcomes all feedback from customers, good and bad, as a way of finding out what may be going wrong with services and having the opportunity to put things right as quickly as possible.

We are pleased to report that the number of complaints is actually very low, with only ten formal complaints in 2011-12. They were all successfully resolved at the first stage in our complaints process.

There were also no common themes or surprises in the issues you raised with us. The largest number, three, being about outstanding repairs.

It often took us longer to resolve cases than we would have liked, on average 14 working days, with only 30% of cases concluded within the target time-scales.

Because we value being able to resolve problems quickly and so customers are satisfied with the solution, we asked the scrutiny group to look at how we manage and respond to complaints.

They made some interesting recommendations, which we have been putting into action.

We realised that we should be less concerned with the formal process, for example by rushing to meet deadlines for a response, and instead focus on achieving a positive outcome for the customer, especially in more complex cases.

Following the report we have ensured our staff and some of our contractors have received additional training on customer care and complaints handling. We're pleased to report that satisfaction with the way we handled complaints doubled to 92.3%.



## Customer comments

“ Cannot praise Dale & Valley Homes enough. They were so helpful, politer and friendly to me from offering me the house to handing me the keys. The service was next to none. They have got to be the friendliest people in our county. They couldn't help me enough. God bless each and every one of them, sincere thanks. ”

## Customer comments

“ - I would like to end on a positive note though. I am really very happy in my new home. I am wanting it to be nice and make me proud to live here. The service from DVH was great and I am pleased to be a tenant of yours. Thank you. ”

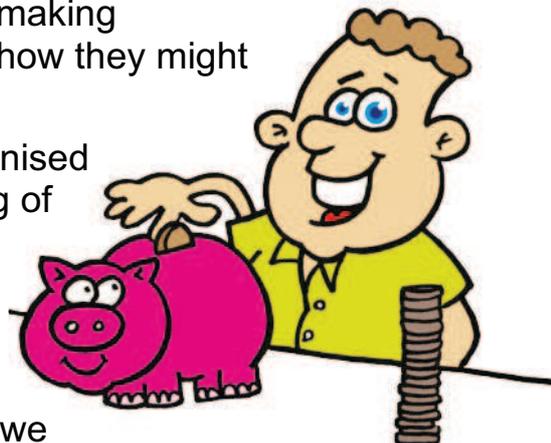
# Update on the scrutiny group

The scrutiny group has had a very successful and productive first year, recently being described by an external assessor as being “excellent- a class above the rest”.

Working with the finance and audit committee, managers, tenants and staff; we, the scrutiny group, aim to ensure that Dale & Valley Homes is well managed, provides the services needed or desired by customers and is held to account if it does not do so.

Having undergone extensive training and using our experience as tenants, we felt confident in scrutinising a number of services and making recommendations as to how they might be improved.

This year we have scrutinised the reporting and logging of repairs and the handling of complaints. Our findings are now being implemented by staff.



When looking at repairs we sat next to staff and visited Gentoo’s offices in Crook as part of our review. We recommended publicising an alternative number to the 0300 one (which costs more from mobiles), providing more information to customers when they report repairs and giving staff the flexibility to make appointments taking account of any specific needs of the customers.

For complaints we recommended that Dale & Valley Homes needed to concentrate more on resolving the often complex complaints rather than being concerned about meeting rigid time-scales. We also suggested additional customer care training for staff with reference to complaints.

Following receipt of our report satisfaction with the way complaints were managed increased significantly.

Lesley Mellis



Betty Todd

David Boal



Ben Hobbs

Chris Smith



Sarah Glendinning

## Scrutiny in the coming year

What have we planned for the coming year? We’ve just finished a review of empty homes which has been very interesting and worthwhile. Following this we intend to look at:

- value for money
- anti-social behaviour
- decent homes
- neighbourhood inspections
- communication.



## Value for money

Dale & Valley Homes currently defines value for money as doing the same for less, more for the same or, at best, doing more in terms of delivering better outcomes for customers for less money.

Put simply, we aim to improve outcomes and reduce costs wherever and whenever possible.

2011-12 saw a £400,000 reduction in our management fee from Durham County Council. The money was instead used to finance improvements to homes under the Decent Homes programme.

The reduction may have raised some concerns with customers that services might suffer. The reverse has in fact been the case, with levels of service being broadly maintained or improved in some key areas.

More importantly, satisfaction with the overall service provided by Dale & Valley Homes increased to by 10% to 88%.

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# Financial facts about repairs and maintenance

**Would you be surprised to learn that we spent £2,040,700 on responsive repairs to customer's homes over the year? We also spent a further £478,796 on servicing the gas appliances and more than £4,000 carrying out urgent works to trees.**

There was additional expenditure on other things such as servicing solid fuel appliances and stair lifts that meant we spent £2,684,987 over the year maintaining the 4,260 homes we manage.

The Decent Homes programme and other capital works to homes are funded directly by Durham County Council.

In 2011-12 they provided £6,827,000, less than last year's £8.9 million, because the programme is coming to an end.

Decent Homes work achieved the highest levels of customer satisfaction so far at 93.3%.



## Achievements for the year:

- 570 homes had decent homes works completed
- 100% of homes had a current gas safety certificate
- highest ever level of customer satisfaction.



### Customer comments

Just to say the service I received from beginning to end was excellent. I really appreciate it. Any problems had was seen to immediately. The staff's treatment to me was simply excellent. Thank you.😊😊

# Customer involvement and empowerment

There is a growing number of local resident and tenant organisations working in partnership with Dale & Valley Homes to improve their neighbourhoods.

We also have the Wear Valley Customer Panel, which is made up of customer representatives from across the Wear Valley area.

Its purpose is to gain and share knowledge around social housing issues to all residents.

## The Customer Panel said..

This year we've been working hard with Durham County Council on their stock options appraisal, ensuring the interests of *Members of the Customer Panel visit The Store in Stanley*

We have also been trying to spread the word and raise awareness of the impact the Government's welfare reforms are likely to have on many tenants' weekly budgets.

Members have increased their knowledge by attending a range of events and training courses on subjects such as Universal Credit, the Customer Excellence Award, neighbourhoods strategy and financial management strategy.

We responded on behalf of customers to consultation on subjects including anti-social behaviour, tenants' right to control and right to transfer, and social housing regulations.

For the first time we recognised a member's commitment with a Customer Panel Attendance Award.

For the coming year we are organising a team building day to draw up a new action plan.



## Customer Panel achievements

### Stock Options

Three officers have attended meetings about the future of social housing in County Durham.

### Action plan 2011-12

We have continued support local residents associations, organised our first garden competition and recruitment drives. Preparations have been made towards website and Facebook pages for the Customer Panel.

### Impact

Members of our panel have inspected empty homes and have been involved in groups looking at repairs services.

### Events and activities

A joint welfare reform event was held in partnership with County Durham Residents Association, visits to new build properties at Greenside Place and Park Avenue Close, attendance at 2D Community Fair,



## Your benefits will be capped

From April 2013, the overall amount of benefit you can receive will be capped.

The Government will add up how much money you get from a range of benefits, including: housing benefit, jobseeker's allowance, employment support allowance and child benefit.

**The maximum amount of benefit you will receive from April 2013 will be:**

- £500 per week for single parents
- £500 per week for couples with or without children
- £350 per week for single people without children.

This will not apply if:

- you receive Pension Credit or Working Tax Credit
- a member of your household is claiming Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or the support element of Employment Support Allowance.

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# Welfare

## how will it

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 there will be changes in the way Housing Benefit is calculated for claimants below pension credit age (61 years at present) living in a home rented from the council or from a housing association.

This means there will be restrictions on the size of home Housing Benefit will pay for, based on who lives in the property.

If someone is below pension credit age and is assessed as having more bedrooms in their home than is necessary, according to the new rules, they will be considered to be under-occupying that property and Housing Benefit will no-longer cover the full rent.



**Kevin and Sally have two children, Lucy who is 8 and Jack who is 6.**

**Current rules.** Their home has three bedrooms and they receive £75 Housing Benefit a week to cover the full rent.

**New rules.** They would only be entitled to Housing Benefit for a two bed-roomed property, one bedroom for themselves and one for Lucy and Jack, who would be expected to share a room as they are both under 10 years. The family will have a 14% reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit paid, meaning £10.50 per week less. Housing Benefit will only pay £64.50 and will have to pay the remaining £10.50 themselves.



**Stuart and Isabel have two children, Jenny who is 9 and Alice who is 6.**

**New rules** Stuart and Isabel would be entitled to Housing Benefit for a three bedroomed property; one bedroom for themselves, one for Jenny and one for Alice, and one for M

**Harry and Ann have a two bedroomed property. Harry is employed and Ann is a single parent. Harry receives £143 per week.**

**New rules.** A 14% reduction will be applied because they will be under-occupying the property. A non-dependant child allowance will also be applied because Harry is employed. Total deduction is £36.65. £143 - £36.65 = £106.35 weekly rent of Harry and Ann. Remaining £36.65

# e reform

## t affect you



### What will Housing Benefit cover?

- The new rules will allow one bedroom for:
- every adult couple (married or unmarried)
  - any other adult aged 16 years or over
  - any two children of the same sex aged under 16 years
  - any two children aged under 10 years
  - any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
  - a carer who does not live with the claimant but provides them or their partner with overnight care.

have three  
who is 12 Max  
e who is 6.

and Isabel  
o Housing  
bed-roomed  
oom for  
r Jenny and  
Max.



ne live in a 3-  
house with a son aged 18,  
oyed. Their rent is £180

A 14% (£25.20) reduction is  
use they are considered to  
uppying by one bedroom.  
dent reduction of £11.45 is  
because their son is 18.  
ons are £25.20 + £11.45 =  
.35 will be paid towards the  
f £180.  
ne will have to pay the  
6.65 themselves.

### How can we help?

Dale & Valley Homes is working with Durham County Council to assess who may be under-occupying their home. Please remember that the new rules only affect those who are under pension credit age (61 years at present).

**If you are over 61 years and are under-occupying your home, you will not have the 14% or 25% reduction applied.**

Please contact us if you want to talk about your individual circumstances. We also have a helpful leaflet we can send you.



### What options do I have?

If you are under-occupying your home here are some ways to consider dealing with the situation.

- Move to smaller accommodation or stay where you are and make up the shortfall in rent.
- Ask non-dependants to contribute towards the additional rent.
- Take in a lodger (you have a right to do this if you are a secure tenant but you must tell us immediately).
- Increase hours of work. If you are working you may consider increasing your working hours, if possible, to make up for the shortfall in rent.
- If you are not working, finding a job could help you pay the extra rent.

**If you think you might be under-occupying your home and wish to talk about your circumstances please contact us in one of the ways on page 2.**

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# Customer guarantee promise

## Decent Homes

We said we would give customers whose homes are receiving major works a diary to fill in every day so they can see how work is progressing.



Target 98%  
Performance 91%

We said we would complete decent homes work within 20 working days.



Target 95%  
Performance 77.2%

## Repairs

We said we will carry out repairs as soon as possible with a maximum time of 24 hours for emergencies, five working days for urgent cases and 20 working days for routine repairs.



Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours.



Target 99.8%  
Performance 99.9%

Routine repairs completed within 20 days.



Target 97%  
Performance 93.5%

Urgent repairs completed within 5 working days.



Target 99%  
Performance 98.7%

Urgent and routine repairs carried out right first time.



Target 88.5%  
Performance 86.9%

# es - did we meet our s to you?

...more on page 16

## When you move home

We said we would give a brief description of properties in newspaper adverts and more detailed information on the website.

Customers who felt the property matched what was advertised.



Target 90%

Performance 92.7%

We said we would publish the outcomes of allocations every month on our website, in the office and through our customer contact point.

Customers satisfied with the literature given to them when applying and whilst on the housing register.



Target 65%

Performance 87.2%



We said we would confirm your housing registration within 5 working days and give you more information on how Durham Key Options works.

Customers who were registered in 5 days.



Target 99%

Performance 99.9%

Customers who received a Durham Key Options application pack including all the relevant information.



Target 98%

Performance 100%



## Managing your tenancy

We said we would give all new tenants a handbook to explain our services.

Tenants who received a handbook.



Target 98%

Performance 78.6%

Were satisfied with information provided when signing up.



Target 90%

Performance 94%

Customers who said we were responsive to any problems when they moved into their new home.



Target 78%

Performance 79.9%

# More of our guarantees

## In your neighbourhood



### Customer comments

“ We have recently moved into Park Avenue Close and would like to express how happy we are. The facilities are first class and staff have been so helpful. It has made our lives much easier, the fact that the doors are wide enough for the wheelchair is so useful. There already is a sense of community which we are enjoying very much. Not only are the apartments great but the location is superb. Keep up the good works and once again many thanks. ”

### Customer comments

“ Excellent service from all the team at D&V Homes. From being offered the property to moving in. Everything went perfectly. Thanks again to everyone at Dale & Valley Homes. ”

**We said we would produce an action plan with you when you reported anti-social behaviour to us and keep you informed of progress resolving the situation.**

**Cases that have had an action plan.**



Target 100%  
Performance 100%

**Customers who felt we had kept them informed of the progress of their case.**



Target 90%  
Performance 89.5%

**Customers who felt we had clearly explained what we would be doing in their case.**



Target 95%  
Performance 83.8%

# How we will improve things

Some of our indicators are red - meaning they are more than ten percent away from where we would like them to be.

We work to constantly improve performance and satisfaction in all areas but these red indicators need special attention. Here we explain why they were so far below our targets.

## **Decent homes completed within 20 working days.**

We experienced difficulties at Stanley Way when the contractor initially under-estimated the extent of the works required. This meant having to reschedule works which lead to us taking longer than planned.

## **Not all new customers received a handbook.**

Every new customer was actually given a handbook when they signed their tenancy but not all of the information was up to date. We were in the process of reviewing the handbook before sending a copy to all customers.

## **Customers who felt we had clearly explained what we would be doing in their case.**

We identified a need to train staff to be able to give realistic and meaningful advice to customers on how long it might take to resolve any problem at the time it was reported.



## **Do you need a helping hand?**

Helping hands is a free service offered to vulnerable customers of Dale & Valley Homes.

The service offers general help around the home for our customers who find it difficult to carry out these routine jobs themselves.

We can do small jobs in and around your home including:

- replacing light bulbs
- putting up shelves
- putting up curtain rails and poles
- assembling up to two pieces of flat pack furniture
- bleeding radiators.

To find out if you qualify, if your job is appropriate and to book an appointment please contact us in one of the ways on page 2.



# Neighbourhood

these are the dates when we will be looking

## Training update

Over recent months free training has been offered to customers.

These courses have included food safety, communication and report writing.

We will be running these courses again so, if you are interested in attending any of them, please contact a member of the customer insight team.

Training arranged within the next three months will include report writing, communications, forming a committee and making your meetings work.

As well as these courses we have ongoing 'roll on, roll off' courses which you can start at any time.

These include IT, get the skills get the job, maths and English.

If you are interested in attending any of these courses or would like further information please contact a member of the customer insight team in one of the ways listed on page 2.

	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Liz Graham</b> <b>(01388 770949)</b>			
Howden-le-Wear	9th		
Escomb/Witton Park/ Witton-le-Wear	18th		
South Church	11th		13th
St Andrew's Rd/North End Gdns/McCullagh Gdns	22nd	19th	17th
Hunwick		8th	
<b>Natasha Meite</b> <b>(01388 770950)</b>			
Stanley Way	10th	14th	12th
Low Mown Meadows	3rd	7th	5th
Wolsingham		26th	
Frosterley & Stanhope		22nd	
St John's Chapel & Wearhead		1st	
Rookhope	26th		
Bankfoot Grove	4th		7th
<b>Jill Forbes (01388 770955)</b>			
St Helen Auckland	3rd	7th	5th
West Auckland (upper)		14th	
West Auckland (lower)	10th	21st	12th
Henknowle	31st		19th
<b>Craig Sams</b> <b>(01388 770956)</b>			
Woodhouse Close ( lower)			5th
Woodhouse Close (middle)		21st	
Woodhouse Close ( upper)	10th	14th	12th

# inspections -

coming at your area in the next three months

**Terry Longthorne**  
(01388 770954)

Wear Valley View

Hall Lane

Sunnybrow

Bourne Way, St Thomas

Close, Rosedale, George/

York/Clarence/Oakenshaw

**Sarah Dowson**  
(01388 770956)

Tees Walk

Grey Gardens

York Close

Buckingham Tce/

Cambridge St

Coundon Grange/Eldon

Lane

**Lynn Hanson**  
(01388 770957)

Bishop Auckland Town

Centre

**Janan Kay**  
(01388 770929)

Watergate estate, Crook

**Steve Green**  
(01388 770942)

Crook town centre

Oct

Nov

Dec

16th

25th

22nd

20th

30th

27th

18th

16th

5th

2nd

6th

9th

8th

5th

14th

10th

22nd

19th

17th

10th

5th



## Join the scrutiny group

Dale & Valley Homes' scrutiny group has been running for more than a year.

The group has already reviewed stage 1 complaints, reporting and logging of repairs and the empty property process.

Staff have already implemented some important recommendations for changes and are looking at how they can make others a reality.

There are **two vacancies** on the scrutiny group.

If this sounds like something you would like to be involved with or if you would like more information please contact Amy Glendinning - see page 2 for contact details.

Full training and support is provided for new members.

If you would like to attend an inspection please contact the neighbourhood officer so we can inform you of the arrangements and any changes.



# Win shopping vouchers in our competition

## Are you involved with our work?

There are many ways you can be involved with our work at Dale & Valley Homes. Some ways take up a lot of time while others are less demanding. Here is a list of involvement methods.

### Strategic involvement

- Tenant board member
- Tenant scrutiny group
- Customer inspector
- Wear Valley Customer Panel

### Regular Involvement

- Residents associations
- Mystery customer scheme
- Working groups
- Neighbourhood inspections

### Irregular Involvement

- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Dale Mail
- Social activities

If you are interested in being involved in any of these ways please contact us in one of the ways listed on page 2.

Answer the questions below and you could win shopping vouchers to spend on a treat for yourself or your family. This quiz is a special on benefit reform. All the answers can be found in this edition of Dale Mail.

Make sure your entries reach us by Friday, October 19.

■ How much is the benefit cap for single parents?

.....

■ When will the new Housing Benefit rules come in?

.....

■ What percentage reduction will be applied if you have one spare bedroom?

.....

■ How much is the non-dependent reduction?

.....

■ At what age are adults entitled to their own room?

.....

■ What type of tenant can take in a lodger?

.....

Name

.....

Address

.....

Telephone

.....

Return your entry by **Friday, October 19, 2012** to:  
Reader competition  
RSBR-UREH-HYTX  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Dale & Valley House  
27 Longfield Road  
South Church  
Enterprise Park  
Bishop Auckland  
Co Durham  
DL14 6XB

# Introducing our new board members

Four positions on our board have been reviewed recently because all board members are only appointed to serve for a fixed period.

The positions reviewed this year have been two customer representatives and two independent members.

Terry Dean from Greenside Place in Crook is the new customer on the board. Terry works for Durham County Council.

Derek Beard has been re-appointed as a customer representative.

There was no election for customer representatives this time because the number of applicants was the same as the places available.

Former customer representative Colin Race has resigned.

The two independent representatives appointed this time are John Flynn and Anthony Garnett.

Both have served on the board for a number of years and wanted to continue their work ensuring Dale & Valley Homes is a well managed, customer-focused company.



*Terry Dean*



*Derek Beard*



*John Flynn*



*Anthony Garnett*



*L to R Shirley Longthorne receives her prize from Joanne Wright*

## Competition winner

Shirley Longthorne has lived in Buckingham Terrace, Leeholme, for more than 40 years, since she moved to this area from Nottingham.

She is a keen competition enthusiast, entering those in her favourite magazines.

Success in the Dale Mail quiz is the first time she has won and Mrs Longthorne was planning to buy herself a treat with the shopping voucher prize.

You could win a prize by entering the competition in this edition. See page 20.

Second prize went to Mrs K Haddon from St Mary's Close, Woodhouse Close.



# Improvement Before and a

## How you have helped us

Your involvement means a lot to us. Here are some things that have helped us decide recently.

- A review of the way we deal with empty homes is planned.
- Repairs identified by the customer within the first weeks of moving in will be fast tracked.
- The lettable standard is to be reviewed and a wheelie bin included because customer expectations have risen.
- We will investigate the possibility of decorating hard-to-let properties to make them more appealing.
- Neighbourhood inspections to be used as an indication that a property may be in a poor state and need work.
- We will investigate the possibility of having customer reps do monthly spot checks on ready-to-let properties and monitoring properties taking longer than 6 weeks to repair.
- Investigate if the number of inspections carried out by Gentoo and D&VH on empty properties can be reduced.

The issues on this page were raised from neighbourhood inspections recently carried out on the Henknowle Estate in Bishop Auckland.

The issues were raised by members of the residents association and forwarded on to the appropriate department of Durham County Council by the neighbourhood officer. Representatives from Durham County Council also attended some of the walk-about.

If you would like to attend the neighbourhood inspections, the next one is scheduled for **October 31, 2012, at 10am. Please meet at the lower lay-by in Norfolk Place.**



Dilapidated bench in Dorset Place.



The bench has now been removed

# ts in your area after pictures



## Anti-crime experiment for Woodhouse Close

Victims of crime will be given the chance to come face-to-face with those responsible as part of a new scheme to reduce bad behaviour in Bishop Auckland.

The Woodhouse Close Restorative Project is being set up to provide an alternative way of dealing with anti-social behaviour and minor crimes.

Similar schemes elsewhere have been successful, changing the behaviour of criminals and meeting the needs of victims.

Staff from Dale & Valley Homes are among those trained to use the method.

Diane Maughan, safer neighbourhood coordinator, said: "This approach gives the victim the opportunity to tell the offender about the impact of their behaviour."



Vandalised wall at the rear of Dorset Place Community Centre.



The wall after repairs.



A vandalised wall seat adjacent to The Manor pub.



The seat after it had been repaired.



## Don't lose your TV channels.

### If you're 75 and over or eligible disabled you can get help switching to digital TV.

The switch to digital TV is coming, so you need to get ready. The Switchover Help Scheme has helped hundreds of thousands of people switch to digital and can provide everything you need to keep watching your TV.

- Easy-to-use equipment
- An approved installer to supply and install the equipment for you
- A 12 month aftercare service including a free helpline

This service is available for just £40 all-inclusive or is free if you're eligible and on certain income-related benefits.

Everyone who is entitled to help will receive an information pack from the Help Scheme.

But if you'd like to apply now, call us free on 0800 40 85 900

**B B C** The Switchover Help Scheme  
is run by the BBC

 **switchover  
help scheme**

# Open house

2011/12



Don't bin it, read it



**Win £50**  
of Asda vouchers

How we have  
met Decent  
Homes Standards

New welfare  
reforms – all you  
need to know

# Welcome to your annual report

Customers are at the heart of everything we do.



Our Annual Report Editing Panel



For customers, by customers

## Put together by you...

This report is for customers to show you how we are meeting the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) standards, how we performed in 2011/2012 and what we need to do to improve our services to you.

We wanted customers to be involved in writing and designing the report and this is what we did:

- Held a consultation event with members of all our service review panels to evaluate the HCA standards and the report's content.
- Set up a special 'Annual Report Editing Panel' group with customer volunteers from the service review panels.
- The panel then helped to:
  - design the report
  - review the draft content
  - 'sign off' the final version.



Junior Estate Officer walkabout - see page 23



Thornley Primary School event - see page 9



How to get involved - page 11

## Inside OpenHouse

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Very important - please read!

Get involved...



[www.facebook.com/EDHomes1](http://www.facebook.com/EDHomes1)



[@EastDurhamHomes](https://twitter.com/EastDurhamHomes)

Our vision: "Working together to deliver quality homes and a better environment for all"

Freephone 0800 032 0835 | 0191 518 5497

3

# A year in pictures...



**MAY  
2011**

The prize draw for tenants who kept their first appointment for a gas or solid-fuel inspection was won by Olive Horton who received a cheque for the value of her fuel bill for the last year!



**APRIL  
2011**

Action for Blind People presented us with an award recognising the support we give to a visually impaired employee.



**JUNE  
2011**

We held our third annual football tournament.

**JULY  
2011**



Our staff helped Blackhall Guides paint their hall, as part of their new 'MAD' (Make a Difference) day initiative.



**AUGUST  
2011**

The official signing of the Shotton neighbourhood agreement took place. It aims to improve the residents' quality of life in the Shotton area.



**SEPTEMBER  
2011**

Our new outlet in Seaham opened for business.



**OCTOBER  
2011**

Trainees from East Durham took their first steps on the ladder of a career in building through a project supported by us, East Durham Area Action Partnership and Kier.



**NOVEMBER  
2011**

Community clean-up week!

**DECEMBER  
2011**



We were nominated for 3 TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Awards 2012.

**JANUARY  
2012**



We held a number of drop-in sessions with the credit union across East Durham to help people with benefits, saving and budgeting advice.

**FEBRUARY  
2012**



Our board director, Margaret Oswald, was shortlisted for the Housing Heroes Awards 2012, in the category of 'Inspirational Board or Cabinet member of the Year'.

**MARCH  
2012**



The National Doorstep project, run by our repairs and maintenance partner Morrison, gave residents tips, advice and equipment to help deal with bogus callers.

Freephone 0800 032 0835 | 0191 518 5497

# 1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

---



## Customer service, choice and complaints



### **This standard says we should:**

- offer choices, information and communication that suit the diverse needs of our tenants, when meeting all the service standards we have set
- have a complaints process that is clear, simple and accessible, so that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

### **What we've done**

- We have ensured you can contact us in several ways, including online, by phone, post, fax, text, email and Typetalk, or in person at our head office or customer outlets. We publish our full contact details and opening times in all our documents.
- We have listened to our customers and as a result have developed clear service standards (called 'local offers') for all our service areas. Our 'Providing Services Fairly' standard ensures all our customers can use all our services regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.
- We opened a new customer outlet at St John's Square, Seaham in September 2011.
- We have listened to our customers through surveys, meetings, service review panels, and by responding to feedback and complaints.

**89 service improvements**

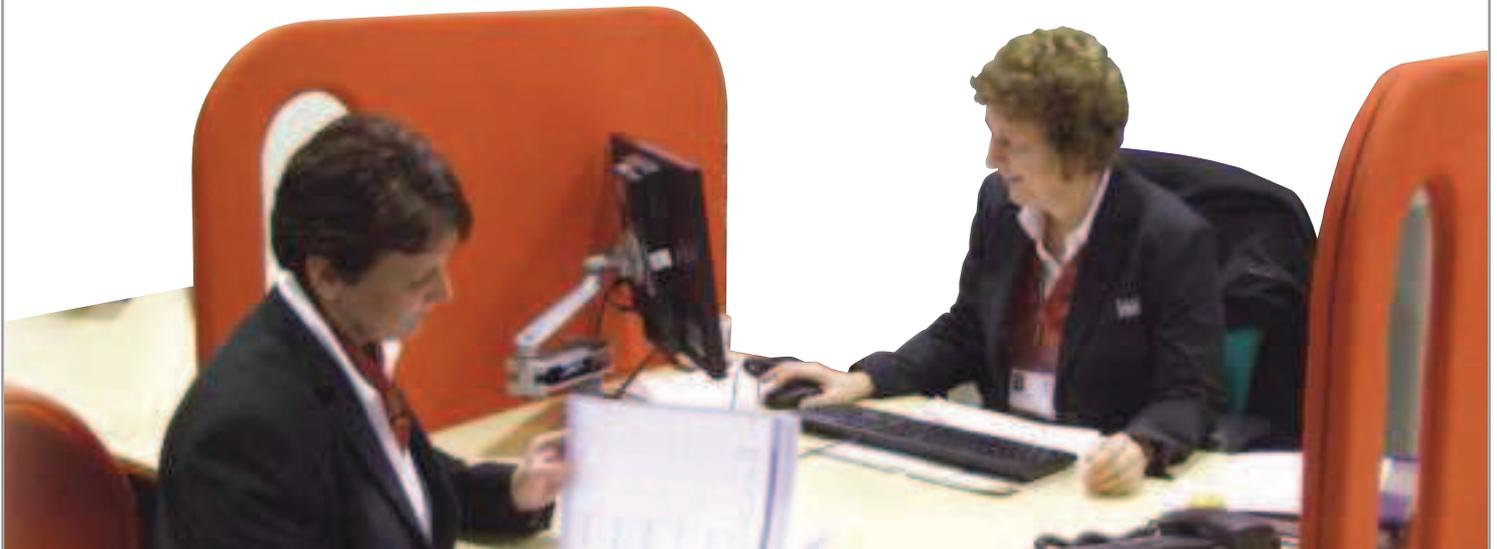
As a result, we have introduced 89 service improvements and made 34 changes to policies and procedures.

- As a result of our mystery shopping group, we have made 14 improvements to service and one policy change including cleaning windows as part of our caretaking service and completing reported repairs within agreed timescales.
- We continued to achieve the 'Customer Service Excellence Standard' by fully meeting all 57 compliance requirements.
- In 2011/2012 we resolved complaints more quickly, meeting the target response time.
- We published information about our services, improvements and performance in our customer newsletter Insight, on our website and on posters in our head office and outlets.
- We have developed a customer service training programme for staff.

- During 2011/12 we answered 97% of inbound calls, resolved 96% of customer queries at first contact and on average resolved complaints in 7.5 days.

### What we'll do next

- Focus more on customers' experience of our services, ensuring we provide excellent levels of customer care and make it easier for customers to use our services.
- Continue to monitor and improve our performance.
- Maintain our 'Customer Service Excellence Standard'.
- Launch an online 'Self Service Portal' so you can view your rent and repairs history, make a payment online, update us with changes in your circumstances and send us instant messages.



# 1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard



## Getting involved

### **This standard says we should:**

ensure we give tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- creating their landlord's housing policies and their priorities for future planning
- making decisions about how housing services are provided, including setting service standards



The Customer Involvement Team



Thornley Primary School event

- checking and monitoring their landlord's performance and making recommendations to their landlord about improving performance
- managing their homes, where applicable
- managing repair and maintenance services, such as when ordering and doing repairs, as agreed with landlords, and sharing any savings
- agreeing service standards (called 'local offers') for providing services.

### What we've done

- In 2011/12 our customer inspection and improvement panel inspected 3 services: estate management, anti-social behaviour and how we communicate with tenants about repairs. From these inspections, the panel made 59 recommendations to the Board – 35 have already been introduced.

- Changes we have made because of the panel's recommendations include upgrading CCTV cameras to enable the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team to gather more evidence, introducing letterbox locks for ASB victims, and employing an extra member of our contractor Morrison's staff in our contact centre.
- In 2011/12, 6 tenants successfully completed the Community Action Level 2 Award offered by the Chartered Institute of Housing. Two panel members are working towards the Level 3 qualification in Resident Scrutiny.
- We have held 2 successful 'Make a Difference' (MAD) days. We worked with Thornley Primary School to improve their garden and outdoor teaching area, and with Blackhall Guides to improve their meeting venue.
- We decorated and made improvements to Westlea Grove Community Centre through a community project with our partners.
- The Housing Partnership has been operating successfully from Murton Resource Centre and is offering services to local residents, including IT facilities, advice, and directions to other services.
- We have reviewed our Compact and renamed it the 'Customer Involvement Agreement' as our customers suggested.
- In 2011/12 we awarded 'quick fix it' grants totalling £4,800 to 13 community projects.

Thornley  
Primary School  
Garden

Quick Fix It  
grants totalling  
£4,800

# 1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard



## What we'll do next

- Review the success of our Customer Inspection and Improvement Panel and make recommendations for improvement.
- Work closely with our tenants and residents associations, in line with the Localism Act, to ensure we help them improve their local areas.
- Review our STAR incentive scheme to ensure it still offers good value for money.
- Develop a neighbourhood plan and ensure customers are involved in shaping it.
- Develop our social media sites to include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, to communicate with our customers and provide news and event information.



The Housing Partnership



## Get involved!

### Would you like to help shape our services?

There are plenty of ways you can get involved, and how much time you give is entirely up to you. We can support you with transport, and you can collect rewards for giving up your time.

### You could...

- join the customer inspection and improvement panel (CIIP)
- join the Housing Partnership
- attend service review panels
- take part in mystery shopping
- form a tenant and resident association
- join the editing panel.

### To find out more...

- visit the 'getting involved' page of our website
- call **0800 032 0835** from a landline or **0191 518 5497** and ask to speak to a member of the Customer Involvement Team
- text the word 'Involve' to **07786 207 745**
- email [customer.involvement@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk](mailto:customer.involvement@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk)

Freephone **0800 032 0835** | **0191 518 5497**



# 1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

## Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of our customers

### **This standard says we should:**

show how we respond to tenants' needs in the way we provide services and communicate with them.

### **What we've done**

In 2011/12 we have:

- helped customers fill in forms
- provided an interpretation service if a customer's first language is not English
- provided information, on request, in different languages or in different formats such as large type, Braille, CD or audio tape

- used plain English
- taken into account any additional needs customers may have
- provided customers with support, if they need it, so that they can access our services and get involved
- taken calls using Typetalk
- whenever possible arranged for customers to speak to or be visited by a member of staff of the same sex as them, if they wish
- provided induction-loop systems
- visited customers at home if they couldn't get to our office
- provided customers with a sign-language service
- offered customers who have told us they need large print the choice of a large bar magnifier or an A4-sheet magnifier
- provided customer-care kits in our offices and for staff to take with them when visiting customers. The kits include magnifiers, easy-hold pens and signature strips.
- We have developed a new, clearer vision for our future that will help us continue to develop equality throughout our company.





- We have developed 3 equality objectives with our staff, customers and partners. We have published these objectives and will report our progress against them annually. Our equality objectives are as follows:
  1. Ensure we treat all individuals fairly, and with dignity and respect.
  2. Ensure that the opportunities and services we provide are accessible to all.
  3. Ensure we provide a safe, supportive and welcoming environment for staff, customers, board directors, partners and visitors.
- We have developed our new Single Equality Scheme that tackles the issues associated with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. This is available on our website.
- We have continued to improve access to our outlets so that more disabled people, pregnant women and people with young children can use them more easily. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service has recognised our work as 'best practice', and we were finalists in their annual awards.
- We have collected information about our customers that will allow us to assess which groups of people use our services. We have used

this information to take action to deal with the areas of our business where certain groups are not accessing our services, and we will continue to do this.

- As a result of our annual customer services day we implemented a number of customer suggestions including making Estates' staff uniform more visible and increasing the promotion of our handyperson service.

### What we'll do next

- We are introducing a system called Customer Knowledge, which is more effective in letting our staff know about any additional support needs a customer has. It will automatically produce information in that customer's chosen format, such as large print.
- Continue to improve the accessibility of our offices, customer access points and communal areas in our flat blocks.
- Review our practices and procedures to ensure they meet our duties under equality and human rights legislation. This will help us provide excellent customer services.
- Review the way we buy goods and services so that we meet our public-sector equality duties and ensure we provide the best possible value for money.
- Work towards the National Centre for Diversity's 'Leaders in Diversity' accreditation.



## 2. Home standard



### Quality of accommodation, repairs and maintenance



Before Decent Homes work



A kitchen after Decent Homes work

### The standard says we should...

- ensure tenants' homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard and that we should maintain their homes to at least this standard
- meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- provide a 'right-first-time' cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to our tenants' homes
- meet all applicable statutory requirements for the health and safety of our tenants in their homes.

### What we've done

- In 2011/2012 we carried out Decent Homes work on 1,288 properties – this means 39% of our homes are now up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Nine out of 10 customers were satisfied with our Decent Homes work.
- We originally aimed to improve 950 homes in 2011/12. However, we received an extra £3 million of funding from the Government so we revised our target to 1,164 homes, which we exceeded.
- In 2011/2012 we made 890 adaptations to properties and 9 out of 10 customers were satisfied with this service.

1,288 homes were improved

**Actual waiting time only 10.74 weeks**

- In 2011/2012 our target waiting time for major adaptations was 16 weeks – the actual waiting time was only 10.74 weeks. For minor adaptations, our target waiting time was 3 weeks – the actual waiting time was only 2.37 weeks.
- We secured £572,102 from the Carbon Energy Savings Programme (CESP) and Carbon Emissions Reductions Target (CERT) programmes for energy-efficiency improvements in our homes.
- We recycled 95% of our waste that would otherwise have gone to landfill.
- In Shotton we completed 2 fencing projects and removed a canopy to improve the look of the estate and help prevent anti-social behaviour.
- We have completed Phase 1 of the environmental scheme in Peterlee to improve estates. We have also taken on local young people as trainees.
- We worked with our customers to agree a Partnership Improvement Plan to improve our services. This means the partners we work with have agreed standards that they can monitor their performance against.
- During 2011/12 we installed new energy-efficient boilers in 1,749 homes. We also installed air-source heat pumps to 8 properties in Castle Eden that are not on the gas network.
- We successfully carried out annual gas-safety checks on all our homes.

**1,749 homes got new boilers**

- During 2011/2012 we completed 33,770 reported repairs, a fall of 1,688 from the previous year.
- We installed new UPVC fascias and guttering at 46 homes in Wheatley Hill. This means they are no longer part of our regular re-painting programme.
- We did asbestos surveys on 2,999 properties – we have now surveyed 89% of all our properties.
- We have done decoration work to 17 flat blocks, which included extra work to ensure they meet fire risk and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.
- Nearly every tenant that had Decent Homes work received a decoration voucher to help towards the cost of re-decorating.
- 99.15% of repair appointments were kept.
- 95.87% of repairs were ‘right first time.’
- 99.95% of emergency repairs were completed on time.



Accessible shower

**2,999 properties surveyed**

**99.95% of emergency repairs**

## 2. Home standard



### What we'll do next

- Continue to deliver the Decent Homes programme, aiming to have 1,500 more homes brought up to the Decent Homes Standard in 2012/13.
- We plan to raise all our homes to the Decent Homes Standard, but we still need about another £37m – we are currently looking at other funding options. When we start this work will depend on us receiving the extra backlog funding from the Government, and the outcome of the stock options consultation.
- Continue the Peterlee environmental scheme – we aim to look for ways of working with Durham County Council and other agencies to make use of the best funding opportunities available to us and to create training opportunities for local people.
- Investigate using more renewable energy.
- Work with customers and our partners to investigate ways of enhancing our work programmes by improving the materials we use or our working methods.
- Continue to provide new energy-efficient heating systems, firstly for properties with out-of-date or solid-fuel systems. This will release more money from the CESP, CERT and Green Deal programmes.
- Continue to promote the importance of gas and solid-fuel servicing.
- Do internal Decent Homes work to high-cost empty properties to limit disturbance to our customers.



Improved access



Before Decent Homes work



A bathroom after Decent Homes work

The Government has extended its target for making all homes decent to 31 March 2015. In 2011/12 we received £16 million extra funding from the Government, and just under £48 million over the next 3 years, which will be split as follows:

**£16 million extra funding**

2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	Total
£12,000,000	*£10,600,000	*£26,286,219	£48,886,219

*\*Note: the final 2 years' figures are not definite yet*

**Our partners**



## 3. Tenancy standard

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### Allocations, rent and tenure



#### This standard says we should...

- let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way, taking into account the housing needs and wants of current and future tenants
- give our tenants opportunities to exchange their tenancy with another tenant through internet-based mutual-exchange services
- offer tenancies or terms of occupation that are suitable for the accommodation our customers need and in ways that ensure we use our available housing efficiently and help maintain communities
- charge rents in line with the Government's aims and general guidelines, as set out in the 'direction to the regulator' of November 2011.

#### What we've done

- Last year we re-let 757 properties. 559 of these went to new tenants, 198 went to existing tenants and 41 were exchanges.
- We have advertised homes across the county weekly and on the Durham Key Options website.
- Durham Key Options has made available a 'Housing Options Wizard' on their website, which provides advice on available housing options, including shared ownership, private rented and mutual exchanges. The wizard can also give advice on mortgage rescue, debt help and homelessness.

We re-let  
757  
properties

- We offer advice on housing options in County Durham, and are registered with the national HomeSwapper mutual exchange service, which lets you swap your home with another tenant.
- As well as being able to access Durham Key Options through Digital TV, an 'app' has been developed for iPhone and Android smartphone users to download.
- In 2011/12 we started to promote 'Smarterbuys' to our customers. Customers can register with 'Smarterbuys' to buy essential items for their home at discounted prices, with a range of payment options to choose from.
- We have made an agreement with the Illegal Money Lending Team to award priority to applicants who are fleeing violence from a loan shark.
- Durham Key Options became a partner with Accent Homes – this has widened the choice of homes you can bid on.
- We encourage you to move into a smaller home if you have more space than you need. We give you a higher priority banding to enable you to do this quickly and to free up larger properties for people who need them.
- We have promoted our empty homes standard, which our customers have agreed and monitor. This clearly shows the standard that you can expect when you accept a new home from us.



- We manage your homes, but the council sets the rent you pay. We have provided a leaflet 'Your guide to how your rent is calculated', which shows how rents are set. This leaflet is available from our outlets and on our website.
- It took an average of 23 days to re-let a home.
- In 2011/12 we made only 7 evictions for rent arrears, less than half than the previous year. This is a direct result of the support we offered tenants about paying their rent.

**23 days  
to re-let a  
home**

## 3. Tenancy standard



- To make paying rent as convenient as possible, we now offer a wide range of ways for customers to pay, including:

- by direct debit or standing order 
- by phoning us and using a debit or credit card
- by text message
- over the internet via our website
- through our Allpay automated telephone payment service, 24 hours a day
- at the local post office, local shops and garages offering PayPoint, using an Allpay swipe card.

- During 2011/12 we gave free welfare debt advice to 1,644 customers. This advice identified over £500,000 in housing or other welfare benefits for customers.

1,644  
customers  
received free  
debt advice

- We continually work with Financial and Capability North East (Fincan) and the Durham County Financial Capability Forum to keep up to date with ensuring that everyone can access the relevant financial help. This has enabled us to provide the most up-to-date and useful financial advice to customers.



Beware of loan sharks!

- The National Federation of Arm's Length Management Organisations recognised the events we held with the Durham County Credit Union and Illegal Money Lending Team as good practice. The events led to more customers using the credit union and volunteering to work with the service.
- In partnership with Lloyds Bank and the National Skills Academy for Financial Services, 3 of our staff have gained a Level 3 qualification that will enable them to teach financial capability to customers.
- In 2011/12 our vulnerable applicant officer helped 304 people with additional needs to successfully get a new home.
- In 2011/12 we secured 60 charitable fund grants for our customers, worth £8,000.
- During 2011/12 181 customers received extra support in the first year of their tenancy.
- In partnership with Centrepoin, our Lifewise project has provided workshops to help 148 younger people develop life skills.
- In 2011/12 we provided 179 furniture packs to help people set up their homes.
- We worked closely with East Durham Partnership and our partner, Morrison Facilities Service, to recycle and reuse furniture.
- During 2011/12 a tenancy sustainment customer has accessed training at the Shaw Trust and 3

customers volunteered with East Durham Partnership.

- A tenancy sustainment officer was seconded to the Family First project. The officer returned to East Durham Homes and now helps customers through the complexity of the job market and finds them basic-skills training.

## What we'll do next

- Review the Durham Key Options policy to take into account the effects of welfare reform, particularly for customers who will need to move because their current home is too large.
- Explore all the ways we can reduce the effects of welfare benefit reforms for our customers.
- Review the way we assess the provision of furniture packs following the welfare benefit changes. We will develop alternative options for customers to buy furniture using more affordable credit.
- Review the Durham Key Options property paper to assess whether it continues to offer good value for money.
- Work with the council, to review the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless families.
- Reduce the amount of time it takes to re-let a property.

## 4. Neighbourhood and community standard

Estate management, partnership working and anti-social behaviour



### This standard says we should...

- keep our neighbourhood and communal areas clean and safe
- work in partnership with our tenants, other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so
- co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in East Durham
- work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in our neighbourhoods.

### What we've done

- Keeping estates tidy is one of the top 10 priorities for our customers. Last year we carried out 160 estate walkabouts, 62% of these with customer representatives.
- We have made 12 environmental improvements as a result of our estate walkabouts. We have made 5 environmental improvements as part of the Neighbourhood and Community Service review panel meetings.

160 estate walkabouts

149 customers used our handy-person service

- In 2011/12 we helped 149 customers with our handy-person service. This service does small repair and maintenance jobs for tenants who are over 60 or are registered disabled (or both).
- We have employed 2 estate apprentices, giving them the opportunity to learn and gain work experience.
- In consultation with customers we are now working in partnership with Krystal Cleaning Services, which provides the cleaning service to communal areas of our flat blocks. This has improved the service.
- We continue to use QC space in Peterlee for tipping green waste and recycling. They are closer to our offices, so this saves us money.
- We have introduced the role of 'junior estate officer' to encourage younger people to participate in our work and to build on the current links to schools in the area.
- We launched a competition to find the best-kept garden at an East Durham Homes property – sponsored by local contractor Daisy Landscaping.
- We arranged for 6 handrails to be fitted on public footpaths at Peterlee and Murton, as a result of estate walkabouts. Fencing has been installed to the car park at Hovingham Close Peterlee, to help prevent vehicles parking there illegally.



Handy-person service in action



New handrail at Oakerside Drive



Before

Canopy removed at Alcote Drive to prevent anti-social behaviour



After

## 4. Neighbourhood and community standard



- We have held a community clean-up day, when we encouraged tenants to do litter-picks and provided skips for people to dispose of rubbish.
- Working in partnership with Thornley Chapel, we have painted the inside of the building.
- In 2011/2012 our Neighbourhood Enforcement Team dealt with 466 reports of anti-social behaviour. Almost 93% of these cases were successfully resolved, and we made 3 evictions.
- We carried out 4 injunctions, and issued 16 demotion notices and 475 warning letters.
- Forty-two of our frontline staff attended training on domestic violence and reporting hate crime, which has led to an increase in the number of cases tenants refer to the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team.
- We have supported East Durham football tournaments for 14-16-year-olds, which helps discourage anti-social behaviour.
- Dennis Gilbertson, a tenant, has completed training in Victim Support and he now supports victims of anti-social behaviour on our estates. Dennis was shortlisted for a TPAS award for his commitment to the service.
- Following an inspection by our Customer Inspection and Improvement Panel, we put in place several new schemes, including improving the way we provide noise-checking equipment and promoting the anti-social behaviour service through Facebook and Twitter.
- We made 162 referrals to support agencies and work with several partners to tackle anti-social behaviour, including:
  - **The Fire Service** – to help prevent arson through education
  - **STEP (Support Tenants, Eviction Prevented)** – to offer support for people who are causing anti-social behaviour
  - **UNITE mediation services** – to help resolve neighbourhood disputes
  - **Victim Support** – an independent national charity that helps people cope emotionally with crime
  - **Derwentside Domestic Abuse Service (DDAS)** – to offer support to victims of domestic abuse.
- We have introduced risk assessments, which are completed for all victims of anti-social behaviour to ensure an action plan is put in place.
- We have given workshops on anti-social behaviour and hate crime to local schools.

93% of cases successfully resolved

## What we'll do next

- Review the communal flat block cleaning contract and the handy-person service.
- Review the estate champion scheme and identify areas for improvement.
- Develop further the support work and training for local people to become 'buddies' for victims of high-level anti-social behaviour or hate crime.
- Provide life locks to victims of domestic abuse. The lock allows victims to make safe any room in their home that has a door, giving them extra time to contact the police. The lock is as small as a mobile phone and is easy to fit and remove.
- Buy extra CCTV and sound-recording devices, as a result of more tenants needing to collect evidence of anti-social behaviour. This will enable victims to get the evidence they need more quickly, which can help resolve cases much more easily.



Junior estate officers at work



New fencing at Hovingham Close car park

## 5. Value for money standard



### This standard says we should...

- have a complete and carefully designed and planned approach to achieving good value for money when meeting our organisation's objectives
- assess how well our assets and resources are performing, taking into account the interests of all interested parties and our commitment to them, and make this information available to them in a clear and accessible way
- manage our resources economically, efficiently and effectively to provide good-quality services and homes
- continually plan for and provide improved value for money
- show how we are looking to achieve good value for money and give customers the opportunity to influence how we provide services.

**We are always looking for ways to save money and be more efficient by doing things differently. Giving good value for money is central to everything we do and we actively seek suggestions from our staff and customers about how to save money. We use any efficiency savings to make further improvements to our services or to invest more in your homes.**

### What we've done

- In 2011/2012 our VFM (value for money) target was £707,258 – we actually saved £855,993.
- Our Value for Money Service Review Panel is made up of customers and staff, and is chaired by a tenant. They meet quarterly to review procedures and ensure we promote and provide good value for money. This year the panel has made savings in several areas of our work, including reviewing our taxi supplier.
- Our Customer Improvement and Inspection Panel looks at value for money as part of their service reviews and have made suggestions for how we can make savings.
- In 2011/12 we saved £322,441 as a result of the repairs and maintenance contract we agreed.
- We saved £159,320 when providing aids and adaptations as part of our Decent Homes work.
- Our environmental policy has brought about a number of changes that have resulted in savings, such as double-sided, one-colour printing, introducing Dyson hand dryers, turning off heating earlier, and installing light sensors in toilets and kitchen areas. We saved £2,642 as a result.

£855,993  
saved

£322,441  
saved

£159,320  
saved

- This year we saved £19,079 by changing the provider we use for cashing cheques and banking cash.
- We saved £17,000 by reviewing our insurance policy and negotiating a better rate.
- Efficiency savings allowed us to reinvest in several new initiatives and to plan for the future. Reinvestments we made in 2011/2012 helped us improve services to customers and included:
  - £157,650 in growth areas in 2011/2012
  - £800,000 extra into our property improvement programme to bring more homes up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

£19,079 saved

£17,000 saved



## What we'll do next

- In 2012/2013 the Value for Money Service Review Panel will look for savings in:
  - *printing and graphics*
  - *areas highlighted from the 2011/2012 Housemark best practice report.*
- All parts of our organisation must meet certain efficiency targets for 2012/2013, including:
  - *various IT projects to improve our systems and create savings*
  - *reviewing our energy usage in line with our environment policy*
  - *using outside contractors to clean flat blocks.*
- Review our day-to-day spending to prioritise investment into the improvement of your homes.

## 6. Governance and financial viability standard



### This standard says we should...

- ensure we have effective governance arrangements that enable us to achieve what we want for our current and future tenants effectively, openly and in an accountable way
- ensure that our governance arrangements:
  - *comply with all relevant laws*
  - *comply with the documents that set out those arrangements, and all regulatory requirements*
  - *are accountable to tenants, the regulator and relevant stakeholders*
  - *safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the social housing sector*
  - *have ways to manage risk effectively and ensure we are working efficiently*
  - *manage our resources effectively to ensure we can continue our work.*

### Who we are

East Durham Homes is a private, not-for-profit company controlled by a board of 15 directors. East Durham Homes is owned by and reports to Durham County Council. It is an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which means we are not required to meet this standard, but we measure our performance against it.

- Our board of directors is made up of equal numbers of tenant or leaseholder board directors (or both), council representatives and independent members.
- The board has 4 sub-groups, called panels, that focus on improving key areas. Panel meetings are open to the public. The panels are:
  - *customer service*
  - *equality and diversity*
  - *finance and human resources*
  - *audit and risk.*
- Board meetings take place every other month in community venues throughout the East Durham area. They are open to the public and are promoted in our newsletter Insight and on our website.

## What we've done

- Board director Margaret Oswald was shortlisted for the Housing Heroes Awards 2012, in the category of 'Inspirational Board or Cabinet member of the Year'.
- We raised £2,314 for the Chairs Charity. For 2010/2011 this was the County Durham Society for the Blind and partially sighted. To raise money, staff arranged several events including dress-down days, tombolas, raffles, a cake sale, quizzes and a race night.
- Simon Ramshaw of Anthony Collins Solicitors assessed the board and ranked it as one of his 'personal top 2' companies.
- We have completed a self-assessment against the National Housing Federation Code of Governance, and results show we have complied with most of the code.

## What we'll do next

- Aim to achieve an 'Excellent A+' rating in the full board appraisal.
- Recruit new board directors who represent the community and have skills in finance, housing and support, asset management and development, and business.

**Raised  
£2,314 for  
charity**



Margaret Oswald (pictured centre)



Chair's charity cheque presentation

## 6. Governance and financial viability standard



Meet our 2011/2012 Board Directors... (at 31 March 2012)

### Tenant/leaseholder representatives



Marion Brunskill



Michael Fortune



Margaret Oswald



Jennifer Shutt

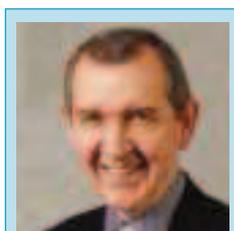


Thomas Wareing

### Independent representatives



Michael Bell



Keith Gallagher  
Chair



Rachael Howard

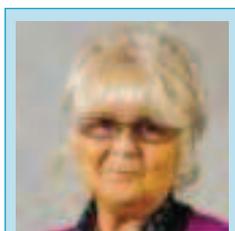


Paul Morgan  
Vice Chair



Ian Youll

### Council representatives



Geraldine Bleasdale



Edna Connor



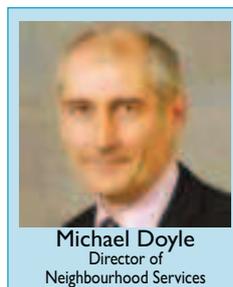
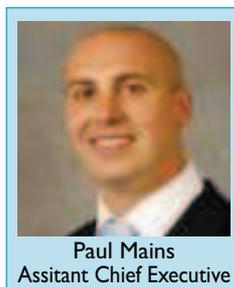
David Boyes



Dennis Southwell

### Executive Management Team

In 2011/12 the day-to-day running of East Durham Homes was managed by the Chief Executive, Paul Tanney, with a team of 3 directors.



## Make a difference!

### Would you like to play a key role in improving the area?

We are always on the look-out for committed, enthusiastic, community-minded people to join our Board of Directors.

If you are interested you can find out much more by visiting the 'Board information' page of our website, emailing us at [governanceunit@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk](mailto:governanceunit@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk) or calling the Governance Unit on **0800 032 0835**.

# Financial summary 2011/12



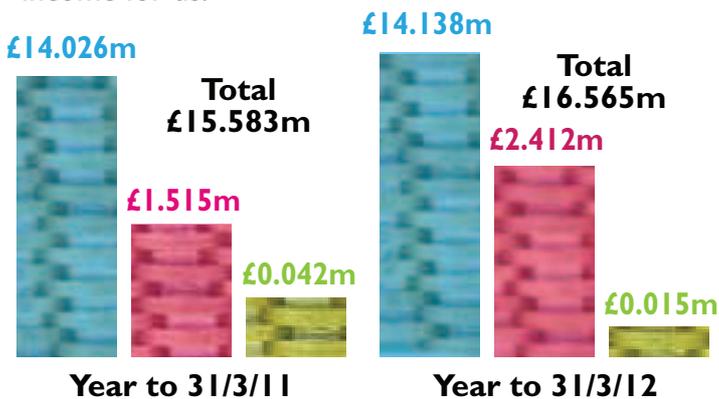
## Introduction and background

East Durham Homes Limited is a company limited by guarantee; the company's sole member is Durham County Council. East Durham Homes was incorporated on 20 February 2004 and started trading on 1 April 2004. East Durham Homes is an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) of the County Council. The company's main activities are the day-to-day management and maintenance of the council's housing in East Durham.

## Results for the financial year

### Income

We had a turnover of £16.56m (2011: £15.58m). The bar chart shows the activities that generated income for us.



- Management fee for day-to-day management and maintenance of the council's housing stock
- Income for managing and completing improvement work to the council's housing stock
- Income for services to organisations other than the County Council

*This shows that we get 99.9% of our income from the council.*

### Operating costs

The operating costs for the period were £16.092m (2011: £11.92m). The breakdown of our costs is shown in the following graph:



- Repairs and maintenance (including managing repairs and improvement work)
- Housing management
- Central services (including office accommodation, finance and communications)
- Pension adjustments

### East Durham Homes' costs

Most of our income comes from the council. The council pays the management fee and provides some of the income for improvement work to council homes, from the Housing Revenue Account. The income to the Housing Revenue Account comes mainly from rents and government housing subsidies, both of which depend on the number of properties the council has. The number of properties the council has falls every year as a result of the Right to Buy, and the fact that some of the properties that people don't want to live in have to be demolished.

We are committed to providing services that give good value for money, and we will continue to review our costs to ensure that the organisation can continue its work. During the financial year ended 31 March 2012, we put in place several schemes to reduce our ongoing organisational costs, to ensure the company can continue in the long term.

### Position for the financial year

In this financial year we had a deficit (loss) of £7,288 (2011: £2,879,828 surplus) after taking into account exceptional items, interest and tax. This includes disclosing the company's pension liability, as required by Financial Reporting Standard 17 (FRS17).

If we exclude our pension liability, then for this financial period there is a surplus of £142,712 (2011: £29,928). Our reserves have increased slightly – £2,134,052 as at 31 March 2012 (£1,991,340 as at 31 March 2011). This information is in the balance sheet. The reserve is for emergencies, contingencies and business planning. We intend to use some of the reserves to help us provide our Decent Homes programme.

### The Board of Directors are satisfied that the company is a going concern.

A summary of the company's income and expenditure account and the balance sheet is overleaf. The audited financial statements provide the detailed analysis for the period. A copy of the financial statements is available from the Financial Controller, East Durham Homes, 2 Meridian Court, Whitehouse Business Park, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 2RQ.



# Financial summary 2011/12



## Income and expenditure account

	Period 1.4.10 to 31.3.11 £	Period 1.4.11 to 31.3.12 £
<b>Turnover</b>	15,582,663	16,565,711
<b>Operating costs</b>	(11,923,517)	(16,091,641)
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	3,659,146	474,070
<b>Attributable to:</b>		
Operating surplus before exceptional items	211,146	-
Exceptional items	3,448,000	-
	3,659,146	474,070
<b>Interest receivable</b>	26,306	26,306
	3,685,452	509,873
<b>Interest payable and similar charges</b>	(800,000)	(510,000)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAX</b>	2,885,452	(127)
<b>Tax</b>	(5,524)	(7,161)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	2,879,928	(7,288)



**Balance sheet**

	At 31.3.11 £	At 31.3.12 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		
Tangible assets	154,574	132,512
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors	754,731	753,296
Cash at bank and in hand	3,941,064	4,352,802
	4,695,795	5,106,098
<b>CREDITORS</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	2,859,029	3,104,558
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	1,836,766	2,001,540
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	1,991,340	2,134,052
<b>CREDITORS</b>		
Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	-
	1,991,340	2,134,052
<b>PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES</b>		
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	13,470,000	16,680,000
<b>RESERVES</b>		
Other reserves	(13,470,000)	(16,680,000)
Income and expenditure account	1,991,340	2,134,052
	1,991,340	2,134,052

# Changes to welfare benefits...



Very important - please read!

## ...how will they affect you?

The Government has recently received approval for its plans to make some changes to welfare benefits and payments over the next two years. The changes which have now been passed as law will affect housing benefit, which means they may affect how much housing benefit you get and how it is paid.

### Do you have more bedrooms than you need?

From April 2013, housing benefit to cover rent payments will be based on the size of property you and your household need. This means that if you have more bedrooms than you need, your housing benefit may not be enough to cover all your rent.

### Do other adults live in the household?

If another adult over 18 lives with you, they are normally expected to make a contribution towards your rent. This means the welfare benefit you may

be entitled to will be reduced. The amount other adults are expected to contribute depends on their circumstances.

The amount that welfare benefits can be reduced by increased in April 2011. We expect this to continue to increase annually up to 2014.

### Will there be a limit to the amount of benefit you can receive?

Yes. From 2013 the amount you will be able to receive in total from a combination of benefits will be £500 a week.

### What is universal credit?

Universal credit is a single payment that will replace jobseeker's allowance, income support, employment and support allowance, housing benefit, working tax credit and child tax credit.

Universal credit will be introduced in October 2013 for new claimants and existing claimants who have significant changes in their circumstances. It will be paid direct to you, monthly in arrears. It will include the amount for your rent and you will no longer be able to have this paid direct to us.

**If you have any questions about the changes to welfare benefits, please contact us.**



## And finally...

### ...a word from our Interim Chief Executive and Chair



We hope you've enjoyed our 2011/12 Annual Report for tenants. We are really proud how much our customers have helped shape the report this year, and all the achievements we have made with our customers over the last year.

2011/12 was a really successful year for East Durham Homes. We have continued to make substantial investments in your homes and as a result we have made major inroads into our Decent Homes backlog.

At East Durham Homes customers are at the heart of what we do and we have continued to work closely with our customers to develop service delivery and improve performance throughout the year.

This year and beyond will see many challenges, particularly in light of government changes around welfare reform, which will bring about changes in welfare benefits and the way benefits are paid to our customers.

Durham County Council is also carrying out a Stock Option Appraisal to explore the future management of council homes and how best to meet the investment needs for all of the stock over the next 30 years. With your continued support we feel we're in a good position to make the most of these challenges and the opportunities they bring.

If you want any further information about what you've seen in this report, please do get in touch with us using contact details at the back.

**Paul Mains**, Interim Chief Executive



My term as a Board Director with EDH ends at the AGM on 27 September 2012. I have had the privilege to be Chair of the company for the last 5 years and have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the role, albeit there have been many challenges.

There still remains the major challenge of the Stock Options Review but I am confident that the outcome will be positive for EDH, its staff, tenants and stakeholders.

I would like to thank my fellow Board Directors, all the staff at EDH and all the tenants I have been involved with for their support and encouragement. I have made many new friends during my time on the Board, I wish everyone associated with EDH well and I will continue to promote the interests of the company at all times.

**Keith Gallagher**, Chair of East Durham Homes

# Contacts...

For more information, please contact us at:

## East Durham Homes

2 Meridian Court, Whitehouse Business Park,  
Peterlee, County Durham SR8 2RQ

Freephone: **0800 032 0835**

Direct dial: **0191 518 5497**

You can use this local-cost, direct-dial number from your mobile phone to avoid premium charges, which your network provider may charge for calling freephone numbers.

Text: **“enquiry” to 07786 207 745**

Typetalk: **18001 then the telephone number you require**

Fax: **0191 518 5349**

Email: **enquiry@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk**

Website: **www.eastdurhamhomes.co.uk**

Our contact centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and from 8am to 12 noon on Saturday.

Please note: for emergencies outside normal office hours, you can contact us on **0800 032 0835**.

## Customer outlets:

### Peterlee Customer Outlet

29 Yoden Way, Castle Dene Shopping Centre,  
Peterlee SR8 1AL

### Seaham Customer Outlet

St John's Square, Sophia Street, Seaham SR7 7JE

## Opening times:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday – **8.30am to 5pm**

Wednesday – **10am to 5pm**

Friday – **8.30am to 4.30pm**

Saturday – **9am to 12 noon**

**Remember**  
we can also  
arrange to visit  
you at home if  
you can't get  
to one of  
our offices.



[www.facebook.com/EDHomes1](http://www.facebook.com/EDHomes1)



[@EastDurhamHomes](https://twitter.com/EastDurhamHomes)



[www.carbonbalancedpaper.com](http://www.carbonbalancedpaper.com)  
CBP00011671009125339



All our publications can be provided in large print, audio tape or CD, electronically via email or in Braille. We can also provide an induction loop, BSL interpreter, same-gender interview or home visits if required. Please contact us on 0800 032 0835.

This document is our Annual Report and Accounts for 2011/2012. If you would like us to provide this information in your first language, or you would like us to provide a translator and meet with you to discuss its contents, please contact us on 0800 032 0835. We can also provide same-gender interviews and home visits when required.

**Arabic** هذه الوثيقة هي عبارة عن تقريرنا السنوي والحسابات الخاصة بالعام 2011/2012. وإذا أردت الحصول على تلك المعلومات بلغتك الأولى، أو أردت إجراء مقابلة مع توفير مترجم لمناقشة محتوى هذه الوثيقة، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على 08000320835. كما يمكننا التنسيق لتتم المقابلات وفقاً للنوع (رجال فقط أو نساء فقط)، هذا بالإضافة إلى المقابلات المنزلية عند الطلب.

**Bengali** এই নথিটি হল আমাদের 2011/2012 সালের বার্ষিক রিপোর্ট ও অ্যাকাউন্টস। আপনি যদি চান যে, আমরা আপনার মাতৃভাষায় এই তথ্যাবলী প্রদান করি বা আপনি যদি চান যে, আমরা একজন অনুবাদক প্রদান করি ও আপনার সাথে এর বিষয়বস্তু নিয়ে আলোচনা করি, সেক্ষেত্রে অনুগ্রহ করে, আমাদের সাথে 0800 032 0835 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন। এছাড়াও প্রয়োজন অনুযায়ী, আমরা সম-লিঙ্গের সাক্ষাৎকার ও বাড়িতে যাওয়ার ব্যবস্থাও প্রদান করি।

**Chinese** 本文件是我们的 2011/2012 年度报告及财务报表。如果您希望我们用您的母语为您介绍这些信息，或者希望我们为您提供一名译员与您讨论本宣传册的内容，请拨打电话 0800 032 0835 联系我们。如果需要，我们还可以安排与您相同性别的工作人员与您面谈和上门拜访。

**French** Le présent document nous sert de rapport annuel et de comptabilité pour l'exercice 2011/2012. Si vous souhaitez en recevoir le contenu dans la langue de votre choix, ou bénéficier des services d'un traducteur ou d'un interprète pour en parler, veuillez nous contacter en composant le numéro 0800 032 0835. Nous pouvons également vous accorder un entretien avec des personnes de même sexe que vous et des visites à domicile en cas de besoin.

**Hindi** यह दस्तावेज़ वर्ष 2011/2012 की हमारी वार्षिक रिपोर्ट एवं खाते है। यदि आप चाहते है कि हम यह जानकारी आपकी प्रथम भाषा में उपलब्ध कराएँ या आप चाहते है कि अनुवादक उपलब्ध कराएँ एवं इसकी अंतर्वस्तु पर चर्चा करने के लिए आपसे मिले तो उसके लिए कृपया 0800 032 0835 पर संपर्क करें। आवश्यक होने पर हम समान लैंगिक साक्षात्कार एवं घर पर भेंट की व्यवस्था भी करा सकते है।

**Polish** Niniejszy dokument stanowi sprawozdanie roczne i rozliczenie za rok 2011/2012. Gdyby chcieli Państwo otrzymać te informacje w swoim języku ojczystym lub też gdyby chcieli Państwo spotkać się z nami w obecności tłumacza by omówić zawartość tego dokumentu prosimy skontaktować się z nami telefonicznie, dzwoniąc na numer: 0800 032 0835. W razie potrzeby możemy też zapewnić spotkanie z osobą tej samej płci oraz wizytę domową.

**Punjabi** ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ 2011/2012 ਲਈ ਸਾਡੀ ਸਲਾਹਾ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਅਤੇ ਅਕਾਊਂਟ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਜਾਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਜਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦਕ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਇਸਦੀ ਸਮੱਗਰੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਲਈ ਸਾਡਾ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਮਿਲਣ ਆਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ 0800 032 0835 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਜਦੋਂ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਸਮਾਨ ਲਿੰਗ ਵਾਲੇ ਨਾਲ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਘਰ ਮਿਲਣ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਮਹਿੰਦੀਆ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

**Urdu** یہ دستاویز ہماری سال 2011/2012 کی سالانہ رپورٹ اور اکاؤنٹس پر مشتمل ہے۔ اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ ہم آپ کو یہ معلومات آپ کی پہلی زبان میں فراہم کریں، یا یہ کہ ہم آپ کے لئے کسی ترجمان کا بندوبست کریں اور اس کے مضمولات پر بات چیت کرنے کے لئے آپ سے ملاقات کریں تو، براہ کرم 0800 032 0835 پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔ ہم آپ کے انٹرویو کے لئے آپ ہی کے جنس کا انٹرویو لینے والی/والی فراہم کر سکتے ہیں، نیز ضرورت ہوئی تو ہم گھر پر بھی حاضر ہو سکتے ہیں۔

**Turkish** Bu doküman 2011/2012 yılı için Yıllık Raporumuz ve Hesaplarımızdır. Bu bilgileri size ana dilinizde sağlamamızı, veya içeriğini görüşmek üzere bir tercüman ayarlamamızı isterseniz lütfen bizi 0800 032 0835 no'lu telefondan arayınız. Ayrıca gerektiğinde aynı cinsiyetten görüşmeler ve ev ziyaretleri de düzenleyebilmekteyiz.



# WIN £50 in Asda vouchers!



## Tell us your thoughts?

We're always looking to improve, so let us know what you thought of 'Open House,' the Annual Report for tenants 2011/12.



What did you like about 'Open House'? .....

.....  
.....

What didn't you like about 'Open House'? .....

.....  
.....

What else would you like to read more about next time? .....

.....  
.....

Do you have any other comments? .....

.....  
.....

### Your details

Name .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Telephone number .....

Email address .....

Send this survey to FREEPOST, East Durham Homes Limited, 2 Meridian Court, Whitehouse Business Park, Peterlee, SR8 2RQ before 31 November 2012 and you could win £50 worth of Asda vouchers!