

Home in on us

Annual report for tenants 2011



Welcome

Welcome from the Chief Executive and Chair

Welcome to East Durham Homes Annual Report for customers.

This report tells you what we've achieved for you, our customers, during last year against the Tenant Services Authority national standards.

2010/2011 was a really successful year for East Durham Homes as we began to make major inroads into our decent homes backlog and went from strength to strength.

This year and beyond will see many changes, particularly with government policy, and Durham County Council's Options Appraisal, but with your continued support we feel we're in a good position to make the most of these challenges and the opportunities they bring.

We hope you enjoy reading this report and, if you want further information, please refer to the contact details at the back.

Paul Tanney, Chief Executive

Keith Gallagher, Chair



Paul Tanney



Keith Gallagher

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Introduction

East Durham Homes Ltd is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) owned by Durham County Council. We are responsible for the day-to-day management of council homes in the former District of Easington.

East Durham Homes Ltd is a private, not-for-profit organisation that was established in April 2004.

Key facts

Number of homes we manage - **8,434**
Number of leaseholder properties - **104**
Number of employees - **147**

To achieve this we will be:

- P**roviding quality homes
- R**egenerating estates and communities
- I**nvolving customers to improve services
- D**elivering excellent services to all
- E**mployer of choice and financially stable

What is this report about?

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the regulator for housing. They require us to produce an annual report to tenants every year to show how well we are doing against their set standards.

The TSA have standards covering:

1. Tenant involvement and empowerment
2. Home
3. Tenancy
4. Neighbourhood and community
5. Value for money
6. Governance and financial viability

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

This report will look at how we are meeting these standards, and if not, what we are doing to improve.

How did we work with customers to produce this report?

Customers are at the heart of everything we do. This report is for customers to show you how we are meeting the TSA standards, how we performed in 2010/2011 and what we need to improve on.

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

- Arranged meetings with the customer service review panels for each service area to review the TSA standards and look at the content for their section.
- Established a special ‘Annual Report Editing Panel’ group with customer volunteers from the service review panels.
- The Annual Report Editing Panel then helped to:
 - design the report
 - review the draft content for the report
 - ‘sign off’ the final version of the report.



■ The Annual Report Editing Panel

2010/2011 highlights in pictures



April 2010



Our handy-persons became available to customers who are 60, disabled or both

May 2010



Our customer STAR's annual prize draw took place to reward customers who have been involved.

June 2010



We held a community blitz week in partnership with

July 2010



Over 200 customers came along to our Summer Fayre.

August 2010



We held a pilot pre-tenancy workshop to help young people who are moving into independent living gain skills in managing money, training/employment, how to get support, and they even had the chance to put a bid for a pack furn

September 2010



Our sixth AGM (Annual General Meeting) took place. We also presented the Chair's charity, East Durham Domestic Violence forum, with a cheque for £1,782.

October 2010



The official opening of the new accessible shower room at Donnini House in Easington.

November 2010



We were finalists in the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group (SLCNG) competition.

December 2010



The resident scrutiny panel were ready to look at our services.

January 2011



A community clean-up week and litter pick took place in partnership with Morrison Facilities Services.

February 2011



We achieved 100% success in gas safety checks.

March 2011



Window and door delight for all customers.

1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard



Customer service, choice and complaints

What we offer

You can contact us by post, fax, text, email, typetalk, online, telephone or in person at our head office or customer outlets.

Our full contact details and opening times are published in all our documents. Our contact centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 12 noon on Saturday. We also offer an emergency out-of-hours service.

You can call our contact centre using our freephone number 0800 032 0835. We also have a direct-dial landline number 0191 518 5497, which you can use when calling from a mobile phone to avoid premium charges.

When you call us

We use a call-handling system with scripting called Keyfax CRM, to ensure all enquiries receive excellent customer service and consistent advice is given. We also use a call-recording system to further improve the quality of responses.

Listening to customers

We have clear service standards (local offers), developed with our customers, in place for all service areas. These standards are published in our leaflets and on our website. We also have a 'providing services fairly' standard, which ensures that all our customers can use

Satisfaction that we listened to your views
67.4%



Number of compliments received
1,581

our services, regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion or sexuality.

We listen to customers through surveys, meetings, service review panels and by responding to feedback and complaints. We also carry out a customer priorities survey every 2 years to identify your top 10 priorities. We use the results to tailor our services to meet your needs. In addition to this we also carried out a STATUS survey during 2010/2011.

We have a robust complaints procedure and carry out regular surveys on all service areas to check customer satisfaction.

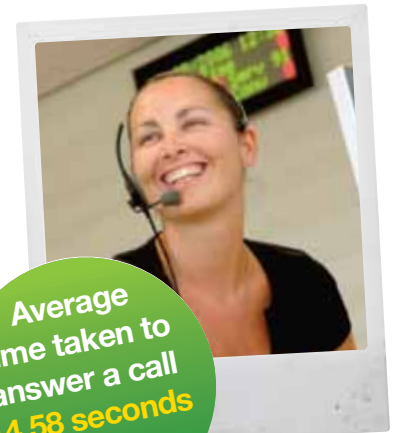
We publish our performance in our customer newsletter Insight, on our website and on posters in our head office and outlets. We also publish details of customer suggestions and how we respond, in the form of 'you said, we did'.

Communicating with you

Our 'Insight' newsletter is sent out 4 times a year. It gives you up to date information about our services and shows how we work with customers and partners to make our services better.

We launched a new website in May 2009, using feedback from customers. The website includes features such as reporting repairs and anti-social behaviour. It is also more user friendly and accessible. Our mystery shopping group regularly check the website and make suggestions for improvements.

Ease of contacting the right person
80%



Average time taken to answer a call
14.58 seconds

Our achievements this year

- **Customer service excellence award** - we were awarded the customer service excellence standard in October 2010, and are only one in a small handful of housing organisations in the North East to have gained this accreditation.
- **Meeting our service standards** - we monitor our service standards (local offers) through our service review panels, which show that on average we met 95% of our agreed standards during the year.
- **Improving response time for complaints** - we have halved the time we take to resolve customer complaints from just over 17 days to just over 8 calendar days.
- **STATUS survey** - we carried out a STATUS survey in December 2010. It showed a number of improvements in our services, and overall satisfaction with us had increased by 11.3% from 2006 to 83.7%.
- **Scripting for service areas** - we now have scripting in place for all frontline service areas to ensure that we deliver a consistency of advice to all customers.
- **Customer journey mapping** - in 2010/2011 we carried out detailed interviews with customers to find out more about their experience of our services. The first service that we looked at was customers' experience of the Durham Key Options service.



Number of complaints received
718



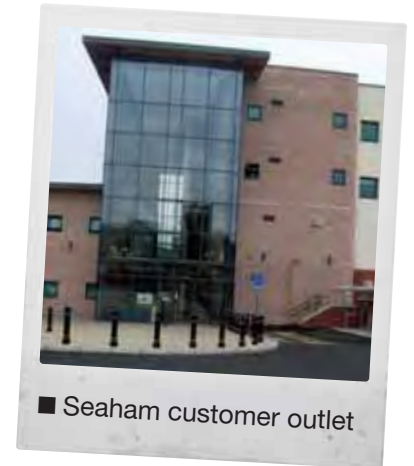
Satisfaction with keeping you informed
84.3%

experience of the Durham Key Options service. From this a number of possible improvements were identified. Four have been implemented and the others are being investigated. In 2011/2012 we will use this process to find out more about customers' views of the anti-social behaviour service and repairs service.

The percentage of customer queries resolved at first contact
(contact centre and outlets)
90.41%

What next?

- **Review of access and customer care strategy** - we are currently developing a new customer experience strategy to build on the progress that we have made in the last few years to improve access to our services and improve customer care. This will focus more on customers' experience of our services, ensuring that we provide excellent levels of customer care and reduce customer effort in using our services
- **New customer outlet at St Johns Square** - we are opening a new outlet at St Johns Square in Seaham in September 2011. Known as Seaham Services Centre, the new building will also house a new library, registrar's office and other Durham County Council services.
- **Improvements to website** - we have been improving our website to have 'banners' on the home page to promote our key services. We are also looking to develop the website further to include additional self service facilities which will help customer access services.



Seaham customer outlet

Number of days taken to deal with a complaint
8.29 calendar days



Number of calls handled by our contact centre this year
119,672

1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard



Involvement and empowerment - getting involved

What we offer

Customers are at the heart of everything we do. We are continuing to improve the way that you can get involved with us, as you are the key to helping us improve our services and develop new initiatives.

We offer many ways for you to get involved, including the following:

- **Service review panels** - we reviewed our service review panels and we have 7 panels which cover the TSA standards. They are:
 - Tenant involvement and empowerment (access and customer care and customer involvement)
 - Home (property improvements and repairs)
 - Tenancy (Durham Key Options and tenancy management)
 - Income management and sustainment
 - Neighbourhood and Community (anti-social behaviour and estate management)
 - Leaseholders
 - Value for money
- **Housing Partnership** - gives tenants, residents and leaseholders in the area a chance to question their service providers, and to influence the service they receive. The partnership has over 50 members. Meetings are held monthly at our head office, and they have a regular feature in our Insight newsletter.



- **Mystery shopping** - helps us to identify strengths and weaknesses in our services, and highlight areas for improvement. Mystery shoppers test our services to see how well they meet the standards expected, and give us feedback.
- **Tenant and resident associations** – the customer involvement team supports groups who want to set up tenant and residents associations to help improve the area.
- **Young persons forum** - helps us find new and better ways of communicating with young people, and influences our services and how we provide them.
- **Editing panel** - helps us to ensure the information we produce is interesting, informative and clear. The panel also review the content for our Insight newsletter and give ideas on what to include in each issue.



■ The young person's forum

We run an incentive scheme called 'EDH STARS' for customers who get involved. In 2009/2010 2,214 reward stamps were given to customers who got involved, 64 customers collected all 10 stamps and claimed their £50 reward. In 2010/2011 the number of stamps given to customers increased to 2,866 and 62 people claimed their £50 reward this year. We now have a total of 1,423 customers who are involved, ranging from completing a survey to attending meetings.



Number of customers involved
1,423

Our achievements this year

- **Resident scrutiny** – we recruited a panel of tenants in October 2010 to look in detail at the services we provide and make suggestions for improvements. The panel is called the CIIP (Customer Improvement and Inspection Panel) and all members have received training to help them in the role. The panel carried out their first inspection on the estate management service in March 2011, and more than 20 of their recommendations were approved by the board.
- **Training courses for you!** - we offer a range of free training opportunities to help you. Courses available include basic decorating skills, DIY skills, gardening skills, IT skills and minute taking.
- **Finalist in national award** – We were a runner-up in the 2010 NFA (National Federation of ALMOs) annual awards in the 'Best use of communication' category for our Young Person's guide to housing. The guide was produced by our young person's forum and gives information about applying for a home in a cartoon storyboard style.
- **Facebook** – we have developed a facebook page to engage with customers and give you information about our events and meetings.
- **Events calendar** – following feedback from customers we introduced a new 'cut out and keep' events calendar in the centre pages of our Insight newsletter in Summer 2010. The calendar shows all the meetings and events that are taking place in a 4-month period.
- **We can 'quick fix it' for you** – we launched a new community grant called the 'quick fix it' grant to help local community projects. In 2010/2011 we helped 10 community projects totalling £4,410.



- **Housing Partnership Conference** – we supported the Housing Partnership to hold their first community conference. The aim of the conference was to inform tenants, leaseholders and residents about the various issues which either directly affect them or could benefit them.

What next?

- **Active Learning for Residents** – we now offer residents the chance to complete a qualification in housing through CIH (Chartered Institute for Housing). We already have 14 residents that are registered on either a level 2 in Community Action or level 3 in Resident Scrutiny.
- **MAD days** – we have launched a 'MAD day' (Make a Difference Day) initiative to help local community groups with small projects, such as renovating a play park or decorating a community building.
- **Resident scrutiny** – Our CIIP will carry out more inspections on our services.
- **Training programme** – we are looking at an enhanced training programme and opportunities for customers.
- **Customer resource centre** – we will work with the Housing Partnership to open a dedicated customer resource centre.
- **Customer compact** – we will review and develop the customer compact.



1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard



Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of our customers

What we offer

The Equality Act 2010 has a major impact upon the way we provide our services, and we have continued to develop them to suit our individual customers and the needs of the people in East Durham.

We collect customer profile information that addresses the issues of diversity. This helps us to understand our customer's needs and, combined with the training we have provided to all our staff, to tailor our services to meet them.

Equality and diversity training is part of our staff induction process. We also provide training for customer groups, our partners and some of their suppliers.

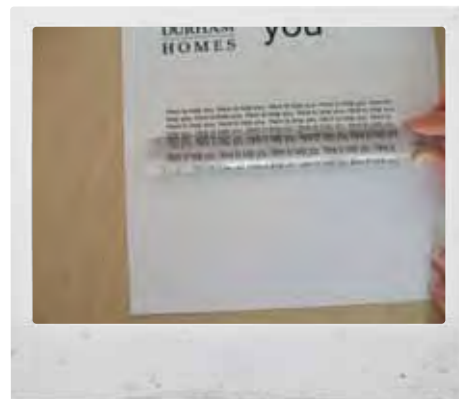
We can provide all our information in alternative formats such as large print, Braille or audio, or translated into another language.

If a customer indicates that they would like large print, we offer them a choice of a large bar magnifier or an A4 sheet magnifier as an alternative.

We can also provide interpretation services on the telephone, or face to face, when English is not a customer's first language.

We have a range of customer-care kits that are available in our offices and for staff to take out when visiting customers. They include magnifiers, easy-hold pens and signature strips.

We also have induction loops at our offices for people with hearing impairments and can take a portable loop when we visit people in their own homes. We can also provide a British Sign Language interpreter when required.



■ Magnifiers

Women make up **59%** of our customers

■ Our customer care kits

Our achievements this year

- **Investors in diversity** - we are working towards the National Centre for Diversity's 'Investors in Diversity' accreditation to make sure our service are as accessible as possible for the whole community.
- **Stonewall Diversity champion.** We are part of Stonewall's Diversity Champion program, which is Britain's good practice forum. It promotes lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace and helps to make our services more accessible.
- **Mindful employer.** We know that many people have mental health issues during their lives and are part of the Mindful Employer initiative, which aims at increasing awareness of mental health at work.
- **Sheltered Housing Units improvements.** A number of improvements have been made to our Sheltered Housing Units to improve accessibility. These include improving accessible toilet facilities, stair-nosings and colour contrasts. We also provided a new flat-floor shower room and dressing area, at one of our units, which is fully accessible.
- **Access to our outlets.** We have started improvement works at our outlets so that more disabled people, pregnant women and people with young children can easily access them.
- **Supporting the traveller communities.** We consulted with the traveller communities, including our own customers. We published a report of our findings and developed an action plan to develop accessible housing services.



- **We have introduced icons on our publications.** We now have icons on our newsletter to tell people how accessible our offices are and how they can contact us.

What next?

- **Customer profile information.** We are introducing a new computer system, which will tell our staff any additional support needs a customer has, and will automatically produce information in their chosen format, such as large print or audio CD.
- **Improved access for our customers.** We will continue to improve the accessibility of our offices and customer access points to make it easier for customers to visit us.

48% of our customers are disabled

Diversity facts

- Women make up **59%** of our customers
- **1%** of our customers are members of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community
- **0.5%** of our customers are not white British
- **35%** of our customers are over 65 years of age
- **48%** of our customers have a disability
- **26** of our customers use Typetalk
- **55** of our customers need chaperoned visits
- We had **20** requests for documents to be translated into another language
- We had **2** requests for an interpreter
- We had **7** customers who have their documents provided on audio CD
- Engaged with **23** different special interest groups across the area
- Working in partnership with Kier and Wates we supported **8** young people as trainees under the Future Jobs Fund

2. Home standard



Quality of accommodation – Property improvements and decent homes

What we offer

The Government set a target of making all homes decent by 31 December 2010. Due to the amount of investment needed in our homes we did not meet this target. We received £10 million of additional backlog funding from the government in 2010/2011 and will receive just under £65 million over the next 4 years, which will be split as follows:

2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	Total
£13,000,000	£15,000,000	£10,600,000	£26,286,219	£64,886,219

Note: the final 2 years are provisional amounts.

In 2010/2011 we carried out decent homes work on 624 properties, which means 23% of our homes are now decent. Our original aim was to improve 950 homes in 2011/2012; however, we are now able to increase this to around 1,164 homes as the Homes and Communities Agency have brought forward £3 million of funding from the 2012/13 programme.

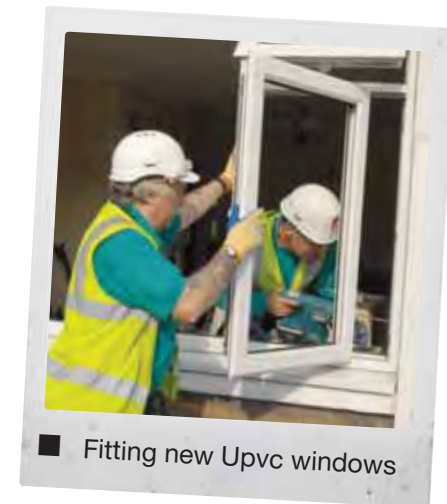
Our plan is to make all our homes decent, but we still have a funding gap of approximately £37m and are currently looking at other funding options. The timescale for this work will depend on receiving the additional backlog funding from the Government, and the outcome of the stock options consultation.

All properties where we carry out decent homes work are improved to the East Durham Homes decent homes standard, which was developed and agreed with our customers.

The number of new heating installations
721

Our 3 decent homes partners are FHM (Frank Haslam Milan), Kier and Wates.

New doors and windows were a high priority for many of you, and during 2010/2011 we installed new Upvc doors and windows in a further 1,698 homes. This completed our major window and door programme, which means double glazed windows are now fitted in around 8,500 council-owned houses in East Durham.



Fitting new Upvc windows

We have an aids and adaptations service to help you stay and live independently in your home.

- Major adaptations – large or complicated adaptations such as a walk in shower facility, ramp or stair lift. An occupational therapist will assess your needs and recommend the right adaptations for your home.
- Minor adaptations – such as grab rails and stair rails can be requested directly from us.
- Minor alterations - other small changes, such as thermostatic radiator valves, or alterations to light fittings, can also be requested directly from us.

In 2010/2011 the target waiting time for major adaptations was 16 weeks and the actual waiting time was only 13.7 weeks.

For minor adaptations, the target waiting time was 3 weeks and the actual waiting time was only 2.26 weeks. In 2010/2011 we carried out a total of 888 adaptations to properties. There were 284 major adaptations and 604 minor adaptations.

Number of homes rewired
569

Our achievements this year

- 624 homes made decent.
- 1,698 homes benefitted from new Upvc windows and doors.
- Started the programme of improvement works to our flat blocks.
- Achieved £184,221 in efficiency savings. Any efficiency savings made are used to make further improvements to our services, or to provide more investment in your homes.
- By carrying out work to improve the energy efficiency of homes i.e. new heating systems, loft insulation etc, we have been able to secure funds from both the Carbon Energy Savings Programme (CESP) and Carbon Emissions Reductions Target (CERT) programmes through Durham County Council.

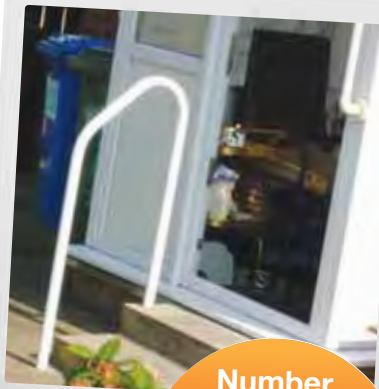
Number of homes fitted with new doors and windows
1,698

Number of modern kitchens installed
649



The amount of money spent on property improvements this year
£16.7 million

Number of homes which have had adaptations
888



What next?

- Continue to deliver the decent homes programme with 1,164 homes to be made decent in 2011/2012.
- Work with customers and our partners to investigate ways in which we can improve the delivery of work either through improvements to materials or in the way that we work.
- Carry out a pilot estate-wide environmental scheme – we will aim to seek ways of working with Durham County Council and other agencies to maximise funding opportunities and create training opportunities for local people.
- Tackle fuel poverty – we aim to start works across the district to provide new energy efficient heating systems which will be targeted at properties with either obsolete or solid-fuel systems. This will

release further funds from the CESP and CERT programmes.

- Undertake a pilot scheme using renewable energy solutions involving solar and air source energy systems.

Number of modern bathrooms installed
566



Number of homes made decent - **624**



2. Home standard



Repairs and maintenance

What we offer

Our partner, Morrison Facilities Services, have been carrying out responsive repairs and maintenance to all your homes since July 2009. To improve the service, we agreed a Partnership Improvement Plan with them and have agreed standards, which they can monitor their performance against.

During 2010/2011 they carried out 35,458 repairs, an increase of 1,806 repairs from 2009/2010.

By offering evening and Saturday morning appointments we can make life that little bit easier when you need a repair to your home. This service also applies to gas and solid-fuel servicing. The repairs appointment times are:

- Monday and Wednesday – 8am to 4pm
- Tuesday and Thursday – 8am to 8pm
- Friday – 8am to 3.30pm
- Saturday – 8am to 12noon.

We will send you confirmation of the appointment made and the type of repair requested.

The waiting times for the repairs and maintenance service were reviewed with your help, and since January 2011 have been:

- emergency repairs – **within 24 hours**
- urgent repairs – **within 3 or 7 working days inline with 'right to repair' legislation.**
- non-urgent routine repairs – **within 30 working days.**



Satisfaction
with repairs
completed
7.79



Number of
warning tapes
and stickers used
in gas safety
checks 28

For a small number of homes where access is a problem, customers were sent reminders about how important the safety checks are, showing examples of what happens if appliances go wrong. In 28 cases warning tape and stickers have been put on the front door to make the message clear during 2010/2011.

All customers have a Tenant Handbook, which has a repairs handbook inside with diagrams and images of the home. When you call us to report a repair, our contact centre has the same diagrams and images that are in the handbook, this helps us to identify the type of repair needed.

All our customers receive an annual gas safety inspection/service. We will write to offer you a convenient appointment, and send a text-message reminder the day before the visit.

Number
of repairs
carried out
35,458



■ Annual gas safety check prize draw winner

Number of
homes with a
gas safety
certificate
100%

Our achievements this year

- **100% success in gas safety** – thanks to the help and cooperation of our customers, and the excellent teamwork shown in our partnership with Morrison Facilities Services, we have successfully carried out the annual check on all homes.
- **Annual gas safety check prize draw winner** – 85% of customers gave us access on the first request to carry out the annual gas safety check. They were entered into a prize draw to win up to £1,000 towards their fuel bills, and the lucky winner was Olive Horton from Horden.
- **Work to make flat blocks more accessible** – we have carried out decoration work on 20 flat blocks, which included additional works to ensure they meet fire risk and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.
- **Fencing works improve estates** – we have carried out 3 fencing projects at Easington, Horden and Blackhall to improve the look of the estates and help prevent anti-social behaviour.
- **Text message service** - During the severe weather last year we sent a text message to 7,500 customers advising them on setting their thermostats and advice for keeping warm.
- 209 homes fitted with high efficiency condensing boilers
- 104 homes fitted with modern kitchens improved to decent homes standard
- 24 bathrooms improved to decent homes standard
- 50 Homes rewired to IEE regulations
- 67 Homes with Finlock gutters relined to stop water leaks



■ Fencing works

- 69 Homes in Seaham with new UPVC fascias and guttering, removing them from the cyclical re-painting programme.
- 227 homes in Seaham benefited from new UPVC doors and porches.

What next?

- We will continue with planned programmes to reduce reactive maintenance.
- Our service improvement plan for 2011/2012 agreed with Morrison Facility Services, will ensure continuous improvement following our peer review in January 2011.
- Introduce estate MOTs as part of batched maintenance.
- Condensate pipes from high efficient boilers have been problematic over the winter period. Where possible we are installing them internally or fitting a hopper-head and fall pipe to reduce possible freezing.
- Tackle fuel poverty – we aim to provide new energy efficient heating systems when replacing old leaking boilers.



■ Example of a condensate pipe



Satisfaction
with gas
servicing
8.23

Average
number of
days taken to
complete a
repair 8.7 days

3. Tenancy standard



Allocations

What we offer

Durham Key Options is the name of the choice-based lettings scheme we use to let our homes. We had a total of 8,434 homes, and from these 733 were re-let last year. 574 of these went to new tenants, 159 to existing tenants, and 42 were exchanges.

We encourage you to move into a smaller home if you currently have more space than you need. To enable you to do this quickly and to release a larger property, we may give you a higher priority banding.

Since October 2009, anyone registered on Durham Key Options can apply for one of more than 35,000 council houses or housing association homes across the whole of County Durham. Homes across the county are advertised weekly in a printed, free-distribution newspaper, and on the Durham Key Options website.

At the end of March 2011 we had 3,762 people on the waiting list for a home.



We offer advice on other housing options in County Durham, and are registered with the national HomeSwapper mutual exchange service, which lets you to swap your home with another tenant.

We follow the Durham Key Options lettings policy which is set by Durham County Council. The policy is available on our website and the Durham Key Options website. We have also produced guides to explain how the system works and how to apply for a home.



Percentage of empty homes accepted on first offer **75%**

We have a local lettings policy where single applicants will not be considered for 2-bedroom houses in Peterlee. Single applicants will also not be considered for 2-bedroom bungalows across the East Durham area, except in certain circumstances. Both local lettings policies are in place to ensure the best use of our housing stock.

In 2010/2011 our homes were empty on average for 22 days. We spend on around £2,298 getting each house ready for a new tenant. Where needed, some elements of decent homes work is carried out on empty homes.

Our empty homes standard, which is agreed and monitored by customers, clearly shows the standard that you can expect when you accept a new home.

Our customers can use a 'Housing Options Wizard', which can be accessed via our Durham Key Options website. It can give you advice on all the housing options available to you, including shared ownership, private rented and mutual exchanges. The wizard can also give advice on mortgage rescue, debt assistance and homeless advice.

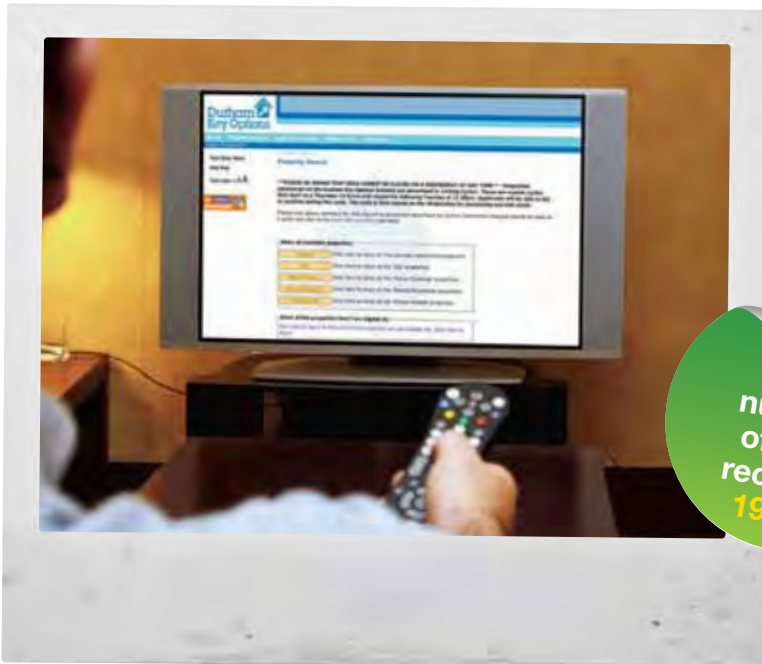


Number of East Durham Homes tenants moving to other areas in County Durham **12**

Our achievements this year

- **Key safe initiative to improve lettings time** – since October 2010 we have been installing key safes when homes become empty. The introduction of the key safe has streamlined the process and has reduced the time previously spent seeking keys prior to works and/or inspections, therefore making the process more efficient and helping to reduce the overall re-let time for empty homes.
- **Digi TV for Durham Key Options** - You can now find a new home on TV at the touch of a button. If you are registered on the Durham Key Options letting scheme, you can now use Digi TV to make your bids. The service is available if you have Sky, Virgin or an interactive Freeview box.

Average cost to repair a home ready to re-let **£2,298**



Total number of bids received **19,650**

What next?

- **Review of allocations policy** - to ensure the lettings policy is addressing housing need and complies with legislation. Changes to welfare reform will also be included in the policy review.
- **Scanning system for housing applications** – we will have a new system which will scan housing applications. This will improve services and should create efficiencies in relation to staff time.
- **New county-wide tenancy agreement** – from April 2011, there is now one standard tenancy agreement for all council owned housing across County Durham.



Average time taken to re-let a home **22 days**

Number of homes let **733**

Number of allocations made from other areas in County Durham **37**

3. Tenancy standard



Rents

What we offer

We manage your homes, but the council sets the rent you have to pay. The council has followed government guidelines on this since they came into effect in April 2002. Rents are reviewed every year and any rent changes take effect in April each year. Our leaflet 'Your guide to how your rent is calculated' shows how rents are set. This leaflet is available from our outlets and on our website.

The average weekly rent for our properties in 2010/2011 was £54.22 (for 52 weeks). In 2010/2011 we collected 99.3% of all rents. Our arrears at the end of 2010/2011 were £580,606, which was above the target for maximum arrears of £520,000. Last year we only made 15 evictions for rent arrears, however 11 of these showed evidence of non-occupation by the tenant.

We 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
(Please note: there is a 2% surcharge for paying by credit card)
- by text message
- over the internet via our website
- through our Allpay automated telephone payment service, 24 hours
- at local shops and garages offering PayPoint, Payzone or e-pay, using an Allpay swipe card
- at the local post office using an Allpay swipe card.



Paying by direct debit is the easiest way to pay, and also saves us money. We

have to pay a fee for every rent payment, and direct debit is the cheapest. For example paying by Allpay card at a post office costs us 42p compared to direct debit which costs just 2p. Any savings made are used to make further improvements to our services.

We will help you if you are having any financial problems which may affect your ability to pay your rent. We will always try to offer help to customers in arrears and will contact them to discuss this.

Our free welfare debt advice service has helped approximately 1,200 customers this year and has identified £96,000 of potential benefits that customers may be entitled to claim.

We work with other agencies and organisations to offer customers advice and help. We call this the Financial Inclusion and Worklessness Partnership. Together we produced a magazine called 'What's in it for me?' to give help and advice on things like welfare benefits and money, banking services, low-cost credit, affordable warmth, and getting training and new skills for employment.

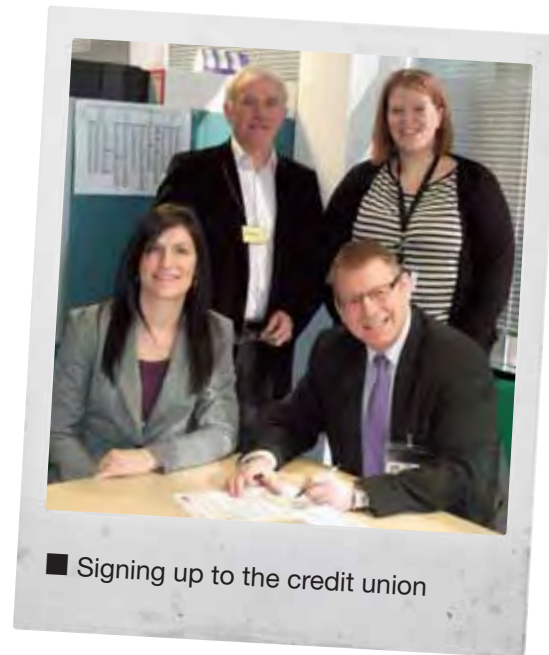
Amount of potential benefits identified by our welfare debt advice service
£96,000



Number of customers who have had welfare debt advice
1,200

Our achievements this year

- **Credit union** - the Durham County Credit Union is now up and running. Customers and staff from East Durham Homes have started saving with the union and 21 have signed up so far.
- **Improving former tenant arrears** - we have an action plan in place to improve the way we deal with former tenant arrears. For example, text messaging has increased the ways that former tenants can pay their debt.
- **Customer support events** - a calendar of themed events was devised for customers around support. The 'Health and Wellbeing Event' took place at the Jubilee Centre, Seaham in November and was aimed at welfare benefit checks and tackling issues such as keeping warm in winter, warding off bogus callers, neighbourhood watch, crime prevention and electrical safety. The event was attended by a number of our customers with a visual impairment or other vulnerabilities.



■ Signing up to the credit union

Number of customers with arrears over £1,000 **122**

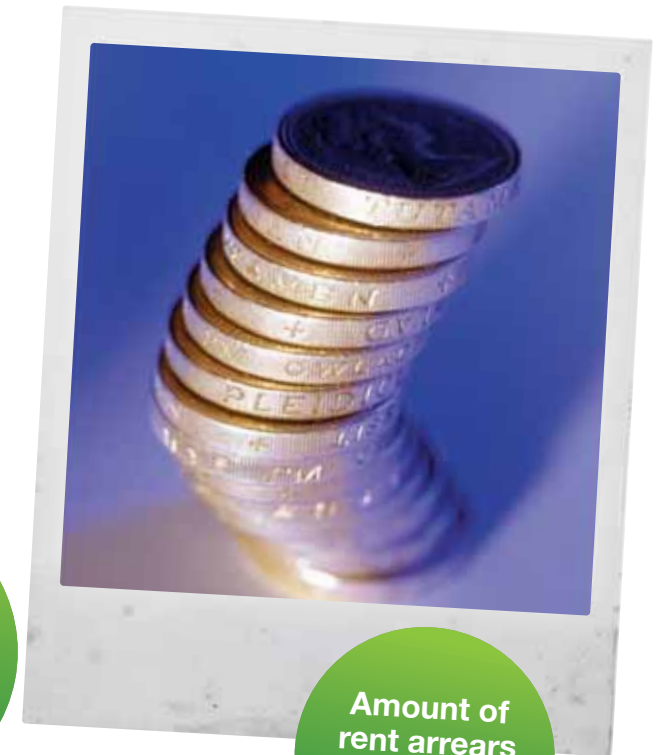
What next?

- In June 2011, we worked with Durham County Council to establish a secondment of a housing benefit officer one day per week to work with our staff to improve the service to our customers. This was especially important in view of the backlog of benefit applications with Durham County Council.
- We are working with Durham County Credit Union and the Area Action Partnership to establish the role of a development worker for the credit union to be based within the East Durham area.

Number of tenants evicted for rent arrears **15**

Amount of former tenant debt collected **£82,567**

Amount of rent arrears **£580,606**



3. Tenancy standard



Tenure - tenancy support

What we offer

We have a tenancy support service which helps you to manage your tenancy and stay in your home. 88% of all new tenancies last for more than a year.

Some of the services we offer are:

- We have a vulnerable applicant officer to support people with additional needs to apply for a home. Last year they helped 166 people to successfully get a new home.
- Our tenancy sustainment service offers additional help to younger tenants in the first year of their tenancy. 180 customers used the service during 2010/2011.
- Starter flats are available to help young people move into independent living for the first time. We offer this service in partnership with Stonham and County Durham Supporting People.
- We link with the Lifewise project that run workshops delivered by Centrepont, which help younger people develop life skills.
- We can supply furniture to rent, which can help people set up their home. Last year we provided 197 furnished tenancies.
- We can refer customers to Families First, who support a family wanting to start work or training. During 2010/2011 we referred 19 families to this service.
- We work closely with East Durham Partnership and our partner Morrison Facilities Service to recycle and reuse furniture left behind when tenants move out.
- We also have a guide to our services DVD, which is given to all new customers and contains useful information on the services we offer.

We carry out a tenancy audit every 3 years on secure tenants and their property. This helps us check that you are still living at the property and keeping to the tenancy agreement. We visit new customers (introductory tenants) after 3 weeks, again after 9 months and again after a year. You then become a secure tenant, if you have met the conditions of the tenancy agreement.

We have developed a new tenancy management policy in consultation with our customers, which was approved by our customer service board panel in August 2010. The policy outlines our approach to tenancy management, and aims to ensure you can keep your tenancy and live and work in a safe, secure and well-maintained environment.

Amount of charitable grants received to help our most vulnerable customers
£4,000



■ Starter flat

Our achievements this year

- **Partnership shortlisted for award** – the starter flat initiative was shortlisted in the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) awards in the 'Best Practice for Support People' category. Customers helped in the development of the service and we continue to work in partnership with Durham County Council and Stonham Housing Association on this initiative which provides flats with shared accommodation for young people. Additional support is provided as a member of staff is available on-site from 3pm every day.
- **Future Jobs Fund** - a Future Jobs Fund worker was seconded (temporary transfer) to East Durham Homes from East Durham Partnership in order to gain experience in the tenancy support services.
- **Secondment to help partnership working** an East Durham Homes Tenancy Sustainment Officer was seconded to the Family First initiative to help address inter-generational unemployment.
- **Pre-tenancy workshop** – we held a pre-tenancy workshop in June 2010 to help prepare young people for independent living.



What next?

- **Review of furniture packs** - the provision of furniture packs for the furnished tenancy service will be tendered to ensure the best value for money for our customers.
- **Benchmarking** - we will benchmark the tenancy support service to look at ways of identifying the support needs of our customers prior to accepting a tenancy.



Number of young people supported this year
180



Number of staff in the tenancy sustainment team **3**

Don't forget! we can offer you low-cost home contents insurance

4. Neighbourhood and community standard



Number of people who used the handy-person service 107

Estate management

What we offer

Keeping estates tidy is one of the top 10 priorities for our customers. We have a regular programme of estate inspections and walkabouts that help us ensure our estates are clean and well maintained.

Walkabouts with customer representatives take place every 3 months and the dates and times are advertised in Insight and on our website. Last year we carried out 160 estate walkabouts, 60% of these with customer representatives. The estate management team also check that gardens are well kept and customers keep to the rules in the tenancy agreement.

Giving you a helping hand in your home - our handy-person service is available to all tenants who are over 60, registered disabled (or both). A member of our estate management team can spend up to 2 hours in one visit to do small jobs that you may not be able to do yourself. They can visit you a maximum of 2 visits every year. Last year we helped 107 customers.



■ The estate management team

Our estate management team provide a caretaking service to look after the shared areas in blocks of flats and maisonettes. They will:

- ensure shared areas are kept clean, tidy and secure
- ensure landscaped areas, including lawns, are maintained to an agreed standard
- do some minor repairs
- ensure tenants keep to the terms of their tenancy agreement.

We have a leaseholder service which currently looks after 104 leasehold properties. Leaseholders are customers who have previously bought their flat or maisonette through the Government's Right to Buy scheme, or from former tenants who owned their property.

We are responsible for the upkeep of the structure, exterior and shared parts of the block. Leaseholders have to pay a share of these costs which we incur for this work. These costs are called service charges.

There is a section in the Insight newsletter specifically for leaseholders, which gives information relevant to them.



Number of estate walkabouts carried out 160

Our achievements this year

- **Improvements from estate walkabouts** – we have made 19 environmental improvements as a result of our estate walkabouts. Where possible we have used recycled materials, such as fencing, to save money.
- **Making an IMPACT** – We have been working in partnership with IMPACT, Durham County Councils alternative education programme. Nine young people aged 12-16 worked with our estate officers on an 8-week programme to help repair and stain several fences at communal areas of flat blocks in Peterlee.
- **Going green** – We now use QC space in Peterlee for tipping green waste and recycling. Because they are closer to our offices, this will save us money and be more cost effective.
- **Community clean up weeks** – we have held 2 community clean up weeks providing skips for people to dispose of rubbish and to carry out litter picks.
- **Fly-tipping** – Security cameras have been installed at the rear of Thorntree Gill flats in Peterlee, to help prevent fly-tipping.
- **Community payback scheme** – Joint partnership working at Gorehill estate, Thornley installing recycled fencing to help prevent anti-social behaviour



Amount of rubbish collected by the estate management team **104.4 tons**



■ The IMPACT programme

Amount of green waste **83 pickup loads**

What next?

- We will carry out a tender to improve the communal flat block cleaning service.
- We are looking at introducing 'Junior Wardens' to encourage the participation of younger people, and build on the current links to schools in the area.
- Develop service standards for our handy-person service with customers.

Number of actions taken as a result of an estate inspection **4,615**



■ Before



■ After



■ Before



■ After



■ The IMPACT programme

Number of environmental improvements made on our estates **19**

4. Neighbourhood and community standard



Number

Partnership working and anti-social behaviour

What we offer

Dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) is the second highest priority for our customers. In 2010/2011 our Neighbourhood Enforcement Team dealt with 374 reports of anti-social behaviour.

Legal action is a last resort, and we will always try to work with you to resolve the anti-social behaviour. Partnership initiatives to help prevent and resolve anti-social behaviour include:

- **Lifewise Project** – run by Centrepont, this project provides training workshops for young people aged between 16 and 25 years, who may be living independently for the first time.
- **Fire Service** – we work with the Fire Service to help prevent anti-social behaviour, such as carrying out arson/awareness events in local comprehensive schools
- **STEP (Support Tenants, Eviction Prevented)** – support for people who are causing anti-social behaviour to work with them to stop the behaviour before it gets worse and perhaps risks their tenancy.



School workshop

- **Mediation** – we work with UNITE mediation services, which help resolve neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour-related problems.
- **Supporting victims** - as part of the anti-social behaviour action plan, we will work various agencies to help support people. One of these agencies is Victim Support, an independent national charity that helps people cope emotionally with crime.
- **School workshops** – we visit schools in the area to raise anti-social behaviour awareness. In 2009/2010 we issued 1,080 certificates to year 8 pupils.
- **EDDVF (East Durham Domestic Violence Forum)** – we have links with EDDVF and can refer customers suffering from domestic abuse to EDDVF for support.

We also work with other local organisations to promote social and economic inclusion, including:

- **Families first** – can support a family as a whole when its members are starting work or training.
- **Safe Durham Partnership** – offer a Total Home Safety project to reduce burglaries and fires in the homes of vulnerable people. They will assess your home and fit one or more security measures such as window and door locks, outside lighting or smoke detectors.



Our achievements this year

- **Partnership shortlisted as finalist in national awards** - we were finalists in the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group (SLCNG) awards for our partnership working with County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- **POP awards** – we reached the final of the POP (Problem Orientated Policing) awards for our partnership working to tackle anti-social behaviour on the Deneside estate. Partners involved were Durham Constabulary, the Safe Durham Partnership, Families First, the Family Intervention Project, DISC, Durham County Council and Groundwork East Durham.



- **ASB promotional flyers** - we have a flyer which we distribute in hotspot areas or where we have had reports of anti-social behaviour. We have used this in 12 cases.
- **Bluetooth** - we can use Bluetooth technology from our customer outlet in Peterlee to promote campaigns such as tackling anti-social behaviour and to promote events such as multi-agency family fun days. We have used this on several occasions.
- **Schools events** - we have been working with Durham Constabulary's Hate Crime Officer, delivering Hate Crime presentations in local comprehensive schools.

What next?

- **Neighbourhood agreements** - we will be working with our partners and residents in High Impact Locality (HIL) areas to address issues such as anti-social behaviour and environmental issues.



- **Support for victims** - we are looking at training opportunities for our customers/volunteers to be trained in victim support as we offer a victim centred approach to all victims and witnesses.
- **Perpetrator survey** - carry out review of perpetrator survey following recent pilot.

Actions taken against anti-social behaviour

Warning letters issued	404
Acceptable behaviour agreements signed	6
Notices of seeking possession issued	22
Introductory tenancies extended	10
Demotion notices served	5
Notices to terminate served (introductory tenants)	6
Successful suspended possession actions	4
Referrals to support agencies	37
Voluntary agreements to stop causing ASB	17
Referrals to community mediation	37

Number of evictions made for ASB 3

5. Value for money standard



What we offer

We are always looking for ways to save money and be more efficient by doing things differently. Value for money is central to everything we do and we actively seek suggestions on how to save money from staff and customers.

Any efficiency savings made are used to make further improvements to our services, or to provide more investment in your homes.

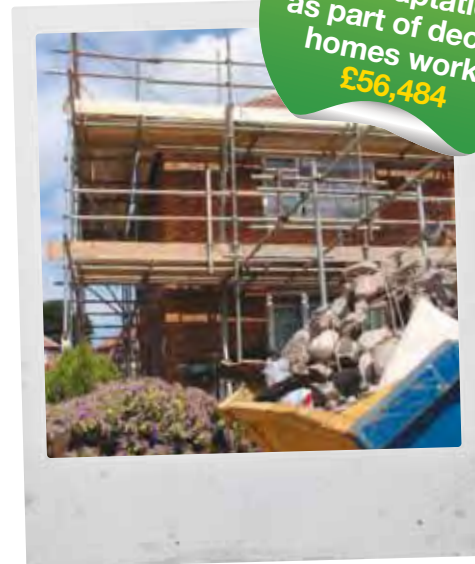
We have a value for money service review panel made up of customers and staff, which is chaired by a tenant. They meet every 2 months to discuss a varying agenda based on value for money and efficiencies. The panel reviews procedures and ensures we promote and deliver value for money. Customers can also suggest where the efficiency savings should be re-invested back into the community. The panel is promoted through our Insight newsletter, staff and posters.



Value for money service review panel



Savings made by providing aids and adaptations as part of decent homes works
£56,484



Savings made by carrying out tree pruning /cutting in-house
£21,043



Savings made by using a new supplier for the out of hours call handling service
£6,000



Our achievements this year

- **Efficiencies made in 2010/2011** - the VFM (value for money) target for 2010/2011 was £595,954. The actual savings came to £977,759. Efficiency savings allow us to reinvest in a number of new initiatives and to plan for the future. Reinvestments we made in 2010/2011 helped us improve services to customers and included:
 - £283,736 in growth areas in 2010/2011.
 - £200,000 additional funding into the property improvement programme.
- **Value for money service review panel efficiency savings** - our service review panel have made savings in a number of areas, including:
 - reviewing our taxi supplier
 - hospitality
 - Housemark training
 - panel meeting use powerpoint not printed handouts.
- **Resident scrutiny panel** – our CIIP (Customer Improvement and Inspection Panel) look at value for money as part of their service reviews and they make suggestions for efficiency savings.

Savings made
by using a new
provider to carry
out surveys of
properties
£62,894

- **Environmental policy makes savings** – our environmental policy has brought about a number of changes which has given us efficiency savings, such as printing double sided and not in colour, switching monitors off at night, light sensors installed in toilets and kitchen areas. We have also received our carbon footprint report, which could identify further savings.



Total
efficiency
savings made
£977,759

What next?

- In 2011/2012 the VFM service review panel will be looking at making efficiency savings in:
 - printing and graphics
 - areas highlighted from the 2010/2011 Housemark best practice
- All service areas have efficiency targets to meet for 2011/2012, including:
 - We will use the Post Office for the encashment of cheques and banking cash instead of the Durham County Council cash office, which will create a saving of £19,079.
 - Various IT projects which will improve our systems and will create savings of £130,000.
 - By renegotiating our insurance premiums we will save £17,000.
- Growth areas in 2011/2012 include:
 - £1,000 for the production of information to tenants offering advice on rent payments in the event of redundancy.
 - £15,000 for the customer services training.
 - £26,400 invested into customer services, including £15,200 to develop resident scrutiny.
 - £48,900 invested into IT systems.



Savings made
by changing
the preferred
supplier for
taxis £542

6. Governance and financial viability standard



What we offer

East Durham Homes is a private, not-for-profit company controlled by a board of 15 directors.

The board of directors is made up of 5 tenants/leaseholders board directors, 5 council representatives and 5 independent members.

Board meetings take place every other month in community venues across the East Durham area, and are open to the public.

We have 4 sub-groups of the board, called panels, that focus on improving key areas. Panel meetings are also open to the public.

The panels are the:

- **customer service**
- **equality and diversity**
- **finance and human resources**
- **audit and risk**

The dates and times of the board and board panel meetings can be found on our website and in Insight, our customer newsletter. Agendas and reports for all meetings can also be found on our website.

East Durham Homes is owned by and reports to Durham County Council through the Head of Housing, Glyn Hall.

Board Directors 2010/2011 (as of 31 March 2011)

Tenant/leaseholder representatives



Marion Brunskill



Michael Fortune



Jennifer Shutt



Thomas Wareing



Margaret Oswald

Independent representatives



Michael Bell



Keith Gallagher, **Chair**



Paul Morgan



Ian Youll, **Vice Chair**



Rachael Howard

Council representatives



Geraldine Bleasdale



Edna Connor



David Taylor-Gooby



Robin Todd



Ray Davison

Executive Management Team

The day-to-day running of East Durham Homes is managed by the Chief Executive, Paul Tanney with a team of 3 directors.



Paul Tanney
Chief Executive



Paul Mains
Assistant Chief Executive



Michael Doyle
Director of
Neighbourhood Services



Rachel Taylor
Director of Finance and
Support Services

Financial summary 2010/2011



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 commenced trading on 1 April 2004.

East Durham Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) of the County Council, the principal activities of the company are the day to day management and maintenance of the housing stock the council owns in East Durham.

Results for the financial year

Income

The company had a turnover of £15.58m (2010 : £14.87m), the bar chart shows the activities where East Durham Homes generated income.

Year to	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
31.3.10 £'000	13,653	1,175	42
31.3.11 £'000	14,026	1,515	42

- 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

The above analysis illustrates 99.7% of the company's income is received from the council.

Financial summary 2010/2011



Operating costs

The operating costs for the period totalled £11.92m (2010: £14.03m). The breakdown of East Durham Homes costs are shown in the following table:

	£'000
Repairs and maintenance (including managing repairs and improvements works)	8,635
Housing management	3,714
Central services (including office accommodation, finance and communications)	3,225
Pension adjustments	(3,650)
Total	11,924

East Durham Homes costs

As stated above, the majority of the company's income is received from the council. The council funds the management fee and a proportion of the income for improvement work to the council's housing stock from the Housing Revenue Account. The income to the Housing Revenue Account is predominantly from rents and housing subsidies from the government, both of which are dependent upon the number of properties within the council's housing stock. The number of properties within the council housing stock is decreasing on an annual basis as a result of the Right to Buy initiative and the demolition of properties which are unsustainable due to low demand.

The company is committed to providing value for money services and will continue to review its cost base to ensure the organisation is sustainable. A number of initiatives were implemented during the financial year ended 31 March 2011 to reduce the on-going organisational costs to ensure the company is financially sustainable in the long term. The pension adjustment included in the operating costs includes an exceptional credit of £3.448m which is due to changes in the public sector pension scheme announced in the June 2010 emergency budget.

Position for the financial year

The company made a surplus for the financial year of £2,879,928 (2010: £209,894 deficit) after exceptional items, interest and taxation. This includes the disclosure of the Company's pension liability as required by Financial Reporting Standard 17 (FRS17).

The company's result for the financial period is a surplus of £29,928 (2010: £1,320,106), if the pension liability is not included. The surplus in 2010 was due to an underspend on the repairs and maintenance contract, this was caught up in 2011. The level of company's reserves have been retained, they stood at £1,991,340 as at 31 March 2011 (£1,961,412 as at 31 March 2010), this information is included within the balance sheet. The reserve is to use for emergencies, contingencies and business planning purposes. East Durham Homes intend to utilise some of the reserves held to support the delivery of the Decent Homes programme.

The Board of Directors have satisfied themselves that the company is a going concern.

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

Income and expenditure account

	Period 1.4.09 to 31.3.10 £	Period 1.4.10 to 31.3.11 £
Turnover	14,870,470	15,582,663
Operating costs	14,031,371	11,923,517
OPERATING SURPLUS	839,099	3,659,146
Attributable to:		
Operating surplus before exceptional items	839,099	211,146
Exceptional items	-	3,448,000
	<u>839,099</u>	<u>3,659,146</u>
Interest receivable	14,730	26,306
	853,829	3,685,452
Interest payable and similar charges	(1,060,000)	(800,000)
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	(206,171)	2,885,452
Taxation	3,723	5,524
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<u>(209,894)</u>	<u>2,879,928</u>

Balance sheet

	At 31.3.11 £	At 31.3.10 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	154,574	117,964
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	754,731	485,597
Cash at bank and in hand	3,941,064	3,902,197
	4,695,795	4,387,794
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	2,859,029	2,529,493
NET CURRENT ASSETS	1,836,766	1,858,301
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,991,340	1,976,265
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	14,853
	1,991,340	1,961,412
PROVISIONS FOR LIABILITIES		
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	13,470,000	19,510,000
RESERVES		
Other reserves	(13,470,000)	(19,510,000)
Income and expenditure account	1,991,340	1,961,412
	<u>1,991,340</u>	<u>1,961,412</u>

