

Annual Report to Tenants

Each year the housing regulator, currently the Homes and Communities Agency, requires housing associations to make an annual report to tenants on how they meet the National Standards for social housing and on their 'local offer'.

NHH's local offer is our service standards, which are available on our website (www.nhh.org.uk) and in our annual Service Development Plan.



Welcome to the 2014/15 Annual Report to Tenants.

As a provider of social housing, North Hertfordshire Homes (NHH) is required by the Homes and Communities Agency, the housing regulator, to tell us, its tenants, how it is performing against national standards.

This eight page report clearly evidences the standards being achieved. I think it makes for interesting reading, and I hope you do too.

As you have read, the current financial year started with a change at Chief Executive level for the first time in NHH's history. This report provides evidence of the hard work and dedication provided by Kevin Thompson to make NHH a high performing housing association. In his short time in charge it is abundantly clear that Gavin Cansfield has every intention of ensuring this success continues. I am looking forward to continuing my role as Chair of the Tenant Forum in the new regime and am confident of high performance standards being reported this time next year.

Sandra Gavin,
Chair of the Tenants Forum

"We are grateful to the tenants who make time to ensure we are delivering a consistently good service as a social landlord.

In particular, our Tenant Audit team scrutinise and challenge our policies and processes and our Tenant Estate Inspectors survey areas where there is a high concentration of our homes.

We think the two teams are so outstanding that we entered them into the national Customer Scrutiny Inspection Awards. They made it through to the finals and although they did not come away with a prize, they took the opportunity to talk with the winners to understand improvements we can make together."

Leadership Team,
North Hertfordshire Homes

This year we will...

Increase the uptake of our online myNHH service from 15% of tenants to 21%.

Install 300 more energy efficient boilers.

Complete at least 80 social homes by 31 March 2016.

Reduce our total carbon footprint across our business premises by 6% by 31 March 2016.

Increase the thermal efficiency of 100 additional homes by installing extra loft insulation.

Understanding our tenants and responding to their needs

We aim to provide high-quality services and work hard to see matters through our residents' eyes

Service standard	% Achieved
Percentage of tenants satisfied with overall service.	85
Percentage of investigated and reviewed complaints resolved within 14 days.	85.3
Percentage of emails receiving response by the end of the next working day.	96.5
Percentage of telephone calls to headquarters reception and neighbourhood offices answered within 15 seconds.	91.5
Percentage of telephone calls to repairs call centres answered within 30 seconds.	85.6

"We found plenty of impressive work being done by very committed staff and it was difficult to see how things could be improved. But we did come up with some ideas and all our suggestions were accepted."

Eileen Mullender,
Chair of the Audit Team on the Team's review of the way we support and develop tenants and communities.


Saving tenants an average of £87 a year on water bills


Our scheme is supported by Sir Oliver Heald, MP, who said:


I congratulate our water company and our biggest housing association on this imaginative innovation, which will help many of my constituents."

There's more on this story on page 6 of Housing Matters 47.


Last year we agreed with the Tenant Forum that we would...


Investigate how we might make more of our services accessible on the internet. 

Help tenants to develop the skills to use the internet and online services. 

Investigate how we might enable tenants without smart phones or the internet to access online services. 

Review the possibility of launching an electronic version of Housing Matters. 

Standardise and simplify our policies and reports on Equality and Diversity. 

Extend the care service into St Albans at our new flexicare housing scheme. ¹ 

¹ We expect to open Parkside View at the end of August.

Helping residents access online services

To help make the internet available to more people we've recently funded computer equipment for community centres across our area.

We've also installed computers in communal areas at our temporary accommodation in Royston, Hitchin, Letchworth and St Albans. We know that helping people who're going through challenging times to get online makes a real difference to how quickly they can get their lives turned around.

Read more about the practical and affordable support available to help you access services, information, education and entertainment online on pages 11-13 of Housing Matters 47.

"Thank you all at North Hertfordshire Homes. The three tablets and new laptop will make such a difference."

Howard Garden Social & Day Care Centre

"It's great that we've got this new equipment. It will be particularly useful for our coffee mornings for parents and children. Although a tablet may seem small, they'll make a huge difference."

Emma Connor,
Centre Manager, Westmill Community Centre, Hitchin

Business efficiency and improvement

Last year we received around £48 million in rent and service charges.

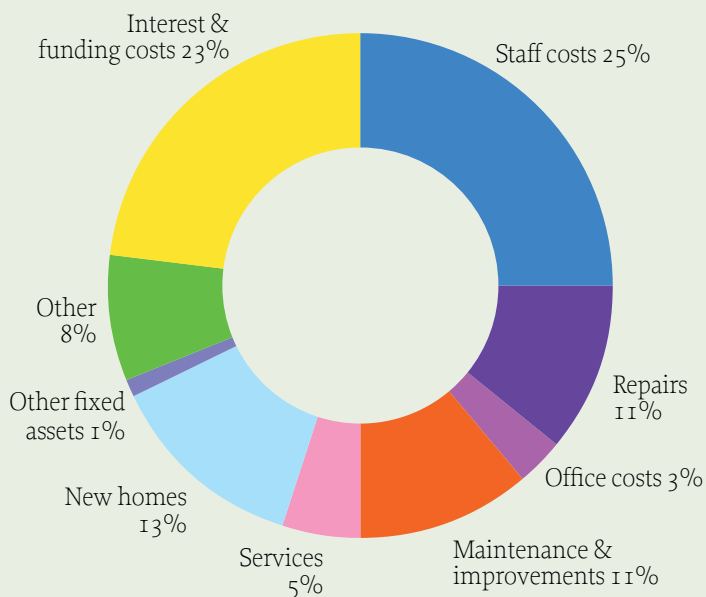
A significant part of this was spent on interest and funding costs. This is because NHH borrowed money to buy the homes from North Hertfordshire District Council and to bring them up to the government decent homes standard. Borrowing also funds the building of some of our new homes as well as long-term improvements and maintenance.

In order to continue to provide and improve services it is obviously important that we collect as much of the rent owed as possible. We also work hard to turn round vacant properties and re-let them as quickly as possible.

Nimble neighbourhoods

Our Neighbourhood Team is now working with iPads and smartphones. Now they can access current information on tenant accounts, and update records wherever they are is a huge change for the better. Our Neighbourhood Officers say they can be much more flexible and use their time more efficiently. Although office-based work is still needed, 'going mobile' and being online means the team can spend more time on our housing estates and with residents.

Governance and Financial Viability



Being a Neighbourhood Officer is all about making this a nice place for everyone to live.

Caroline Bright, Neighbourhood Officer, Hitchin

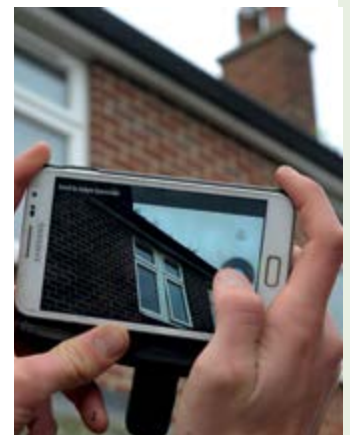
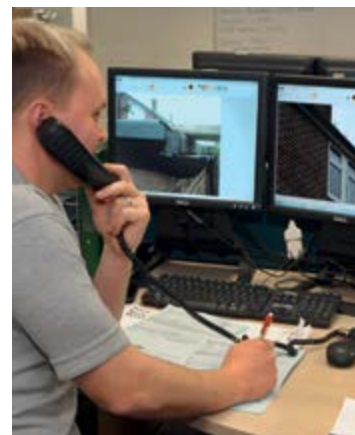


WhatsApp at the Depot

Michael Clark is our Head of Building Services. He's using the popular app WhatsApp to cut costs, reduce the need to travel and speed up maintenance work.



WhatsApp saves us an enormous amount of time. It could be our operative is in Royston up on scaffolding, repointing a chimney. He sees that there are also some loose bricks. Using WhatsApp he snaps a photo, or even a short video that goes instantly to his supervisor who's miles away in Letchworth. The supervisor takes a look and texts back his instructions – all in just a couple of minutes.



Providing quality homes

We aim to provide affordable, quality housing

Service standard Achieved

Percentage of homes meeting the government's decent homes standard.

100

Number of new homes created.

64

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall quality of their home.

82

Number of response repairs completed.

27,433

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the way that NHH deals with repairs and maintenance.

80

Percentage of emergency repairs completed within 24 hours.

99.7

Percentage of repairs completed within target.

98.8

Percentage of repairs appointments made and kept.

98

Last year we agreed with the Tenant Forum that we would...

Launch the new redecorations scheme for retirement living and flexicare residents



Complete the Retirement Living Scheme improvement programme ²



Complete the rebuild of Caroline Sharpe House and reopen as Parkside View in St Albans ³



² Finished six weeks late as additional work was needed.

³ Issues with the roof have delayed completion

Austin Corner is a "very welcome new landmark" in Royston

During the build, we were delighted to find that Royston residents were stopping our construction team in the street to say how much they liked the design of the Arts & Crafts style homes.

This development had been a long time in the making, mainly due to government funding cuts which meant the proposed housing for older people could not proceed. However, the revised plan for a self-funded housing development has proved successful. All ten market sale and four shared-ownership homes were reserved in record time. We used the proceeds to cross-subsidise a further ten social-rent flats.



These are very energy-efficient properties. The walls are thick and well insulated. We've installed heat recovery systems and taps and toilets that save huge amounts of water.

Finley Wood, Development Manager, NHH

We've built 64 new homes this year and are planning to build another 122 by the end of 2016



I've lived in and around Baldock for many years and the development of the old police station is really lovely.

Resident to our on site contractors

Providing quality homes

Award-winning team offer great care

The Flexicare team at Peter Sell House in Hitchin were awarded Most Innovative Care Team at this year's Hertfordshire Care Awards. They work with tenants to introduce fresh ideas and act on suggestions such as fish and chip suppers from a favourite eatery recommended by residents.

Organised by the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association, the tough judging process included unannounced visits and a filmed interview with resident Maureen Aird who said the scheme had a lovely atmosphere that felt like home and not an institution.

Tenants in Royston, Letchworth and Ashwell were some of those who complimented us on jobs well done.



Works completed to my property a few weeks ago were done by a polite hardworking gentleman.

Compliments to the team. They carried out a good job, cleared up after themselves and were very nice men.

Thankyou so much for getting our plastering sorted for us. It looks fab!

Tenants from Knebworth, Ickleford and Letchworth are pleased by the high standards of our staff and contractors.



Thanks to Daf and the team for the efficient way in which they dealt with our request for new boiler. Very happy.

Outstanding customer service.

Excellent service and great job by this young man. Most impressed.



Better neighbourhoods and communities

Everyone wants to live in a neighbourhood that's pleasant, clean and safe.

Our Estates Management Team ensure our estates and the public areas of flat blocks are kept neat and tidy as well as inspecting the work of the grounds maintenance and block cleaning contractors.



Tenants keep it clean

Around 25 of our tenants regularly volunteer to help inspect our housing areas. Now we've updated the way they work, by replacing paper checklists with a tablet and custom-built app. *There's more detail on page 4 of **On Track** issue 6.*

Paying it back

The Probation Service's Community Payback team undertake projects nominated by the community they have offended. We ask them to help us maintain our estates by removing litter, clearing leaves and jet washing walls.



I enjoyed clearing an overgrown garden for a person who couldn't manage it for themselves. The neighbours were grateful for the team's help in making the area look tidier so everyone benefited.

Anonymous Community Payback worker



We are all working together to help children understand just how anti-social littering is so that as they grow up they can help change attitudes.

Gary Mallett, ASB Officer, Letchworth



We partnered with local organisations for Paws in the Park events to encourage responsible dog ownership.

The Tenant Forum has an annual budget of £300,000 to allocate for Neighbourhood Improvement Schemes in response to ideas from residents and staff.



The tenants are over the moon.

Nicola Price, Neighbourhood Development Officer

Feeling safe in your neighbourhood and having considerate neighbours is also important

We encourage tenants to report cases of anti social behaviour. However, resolving them successfully sometimes depends upon the cooperation of others.

Schooling out anti-social behaviour

Our anti-social behaviour work has included a major drive in local primary schools to raise awareness of noise nuisance, littering and dog fouling so as young children grow up, they can help change attitudes. Pupils responded incredibly well to the practical workshops and outdoor activities and we have forged good relations with students and teachers.

Better neighbourhoods and communities

Service standard

Achieved

Percentage of flats receiving a minimum of 6 visits by estates services a year.

99.5

Percentage of large estates receiving a minimum of 6 visits by estates services a year.

100

Service standard

Achieved

Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases receiving initial response within target.

Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases involving racial harassment, harassment or threats of violence investigated within 14 days.

Percentage of closed anti-social behaviour cases resolved successfully.

Last year we agreed with the Tenant Forum that we would...

Review the effectiveness of the new block cleaning contract.



Introduce use of mobile devices for tenant estate inspections.



Find ways for us to continue to provide support service in Retirement Living Schemes following the decision of Hertfordshire County Council to withdraw funding.



Regenerating our communities

Work commenced on the first phase of the £7 million regeneration project at John Barker Place on the Westmill estate in Hitchin. The three-year project will see a new community centre, outdoor games area and children's play area built along with a new take-away, convenience store and 39 affordable homes. Local residents and shopkeepers have been very supportive during the planning process, and we aim to strengthen community wellbeing through the construction programme and neighbourhood development activities.

More on **page 14** of *Housing Matters* issue 47.



Service standard

Achieved

General needs housing average re-let time in days.

13.6

Percentage of general needs and housing for older tenants in rent arrears.

1.59