



# Your Local Standard

DESIGNED BY CUSTOMERS FOR CUSTOMERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

## FIFTH ISSUE

Investors in People  
Gold again for NDH  
*See page 2*

Value for your  
Money  
*See page 4*

New and  
Improved Customer  
Involvement Strategy  
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# ROYAL VISIT TOPS OFF A GREAT YEAR!



It has certainly been another busy year for North Devon Homes with many highlights such as the completion of phase one on Pill Gardens, Braunton and rent arrears falling to just below 0.20% amongst the lowest in the country. One of the more memorable occasions has to be when The Princess Royal visited the Forches estate in Barnstaple on 6th May. The visit was in recognition of the fantastic work of our Youth Team, the young people and the regeneration of the estate.

The visit started with The

Princess Royal visiting the Whiddon Valley Community Centre where some of the 300 young people who are part of the NDH Starfish project (funded by the Big Lottery) had the opportunity to meet her and explain the difference the project had made to their lives.

The visit then moved on to the Forches estate where the Princess Royal was shown the transformation of the estate due to the £20 million regeneration programme to transform the PRC properties into modern, warm, energy efficient homes.

The visit concluded with the Princess officially opening the new

community play park in Forches. The play area was named 'Eden Park' by Ava Oakley a pupil at Forches Cross School who was chosen as the 'Name the Park' competition winner.

Martyn Gimber, Chief Executive of NDH said 'Meeting HRH The Princess Royal was an amazing experience and privilege. I felt very proud showing what had been achieved through the hard work of NDH staff, partners and customers. What we have created in Forches is a new community where people want to live, not have to live – it's a whole new beginning.'



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# Service Standards in Brief

In 2010 we introduced a range of service standards to set out what you can expect from the services provided by North Devon Homes. Performance against the standards is reported by service managers to our customer Scrutiny Panel to ensure we deliver our promises and provide a good service to our customers. Your Local Standard provides you with an update on each service area and sets out compliance with the standards.

Throughout this report you will see **Service Standards Compliance panels for each area. Customers chose to acknowledge the Service Standards using poppies this year as a mark of respect.**



**1 Poppy = met national Standards**



**2 Poppies = almost compliant with local & national Standards**



**3 Poppies = fully compliant with local & national Standards**

A full set of our Service Standards is available from our Customer Care Team on 01271 312500. Over the coming year we will be reviewing our Standards and have set out what we will be doing next for each service area.

# A Farewell from Nick Lewis



The normal form is to say what an honour it has been to lead any organisation but with North Devon Homes there is no question of just one person leading. I have been happy to continue the work of the former Chair Pete Ratcliff in strengthening the role of Customers in setting the agenda and ensuring performance. The Board works with the Customer Forum and the staff (team ndh) to set this agenda, informed by the work of customers on the Scrutiny Panel. Many Housing Associations say customers are at the heart of what they do but none that I am aware of delivers in the way that North Devon Homes does.

Customers bring real knowledge and experience of living in social housing so that discussion and policy-making both benefit. I have been impressed by the way customers involved in the Board and Customer Forum always see the bigger picture and take the wider view.

I am not the only one to have been impressed as NDH has achieved Gold level Investors in People, Times Top 100 social enterprise status and the highest level Governance and Viability ratings from our regulator the Homes and Communities Agency.

Over the last three years NDH has delivered over 90 new homes which, given its size, is one of the largest development programmes in the country. However, the external financial challenges are increasing and if the community in North Devon is to take advantage of NDH's potential we need North Devon Council to be even more supportive and deliver on its stated commitment to social housing.

## Customer Forum and Board plan for the future

On 7th February 2014 the Customer Forum met the Board to discuss the future strategy for the company.

Members of the Customer Forum attended a Strategic Planning day with the Board and the Executive Team to review progress in delivering the Corporate Plan and to discuss and establish the company's priorities for the year ahead.

The joint event built on the success of a similar session held last year. It was a busy day and a real success. The day included discussions on Value for Money at North Devon Homes, the future direction of the Supported Peoples' Service and Customer Scrutiny. All those who attended agreed that the day was really valuable and that Customer Forum views brought a different and valuable perspective to complement others and help keep things on track!



## IIP Gold Again for NDH!

North Devon Homes was one of the first companies in the south west to achieve a Gold accreditation for our first ever Investors in People assessment back in 2012. Now, following a reassessment, we have been presented with the prestigious national award once again, this time attaining a fantastic 194 of the 196 criteria. The Investors in People Gold Award has been awarded to fewer than 700 organisations in the country, and is awarded to those companies that go above and beyond in the ways they develop, support and motivate their teams. We certainly feel this is a great achievement. Great people make great business, which means great service to our customers. Fantastic news for 'team ndh'!

## COMPANY MEMBERSHIP

**Have you thought about becoming a member of the Company? It doesn't cost anything and it gives you the right to attend the Company's Annual General Meeting and vote on the resolutions. It also entitles you to receive a copy of the Company's Annual Accounts if you would like to see them.**

Being a Company Member gives you an official voice in the life of North Devon Homes and is a good way of keeping you at the heart of the business. If you would like an application form, or would like to know more, please contact Lucy Duchesne on 01271 312500.

## We are one big team - we are team

At NDH we really care about our staff and believe it is important that our staff are fully engaged and feel good about working for us. The thinking is that happier staff are more loyal, give great customer service and perform much better. The better we perform as a business, the better we can keep rents low and deliver great results.



Me. My team. My ndh.



Across the Company, no matter whether someone works on the front line, reception or back office, we are all one team – team ndh. We work to a set of common values and the Company has invested in specialised customer service training and work place coaching to ensure that everyone works together and a positive working culture is created. We know this is working because we have just posted some of our highest customer satisfaction scores and been awarded The Sunday Times Top 100 Employer Award 2013. We came Number 42 in the UK, based on what our staff say it is like to work here.

We are very proud of our culture and our staff team at 'team ndh'!

# Rents Team

## Your Friendly Income Team

- We're here to help you!

We continue to work with our customers to help them through challenging times. During 2013/14 we provided assistance to a total of 1811 customers, increasing incomes by a total of £85,286. We have given advice on a wide range of topics, including housing benefit, pensions, benefits, tenancy support and the spare room subsidy.

The Spare Room Subsidy (or Bedroom Tax) was introduced in April 2013. NDH had 335 customers affected at this time, this has now been reduced to approximately 265 as the team has assisted many customers to downsize to smaller properties and are continuing to do so.

If you need any support, please contact the Income Team on 01271 312500.



# See My Data

See My Data is a free service from North Devon Homes providing access to many of our services, 24 hours a day from the comfort of your home. In 2013 we sent all customers a copy of our new exciting leaflet promoting what this service can offer you. Did you know you can report non urgent repairs, complete repairs surveys, view your rent account, make a payment, report neighbourhood issues and provide feedback on what we do? For more information, and to register, please visit our website [www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com) and click on "See My Data" or contact our Customer Care Team on 01271 312500 who will be happy to help you.

# Bank Accounts

When Universal Credit commences it will be necessary for all working age claimants to have a bank account, as Universal Credit payments will only be paid into a bank account (the post office card / cash account will not accept Universal Credit Payments). We reported our intention to assist our customers with setting up the necessary accounts and made arrangements with several mainstream banks. However, when talking to our customers about this we discovered that the majority of our customers already had a bank account. If you would like our assistance setting up a bank account, please contact our Welfare Support Officer Abbi Worth on 01271 312500.

## What's next for the Income Team?

- Identify customers who may be affected by the change to Universal Credit.
- Commence a rolling programme of customer information and liaison around the introduction of Universal Credit
- Ensure our front line services are ready for Universal Credit so we can assist customers through the changes.

# HOME SPOT!

- Rent Collected: £13,184,711
- Rent Arrears: £26,483
- Evictions: 2

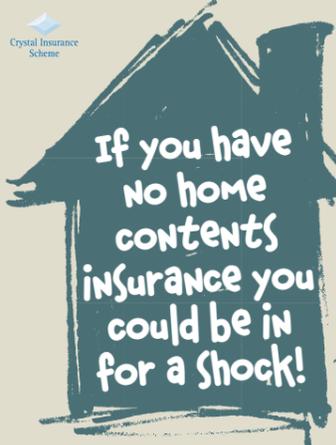


# Influencing Change

Scrutiny is an independent panel that reports directly to our Board with recommendations on what we should "stop doing", what we do well and should "continue doing" and what as customers they feel we should "start doing". Over the last year our Scrutiny Panel has reviewed Estate Management & Tidiness, Customer Care Service and Customer Involvement. The panel has made a number of recommendations which have influenced our service delivery, some examples of which are:

- Further resourcing the Neighbourhoods Team to enable officers to have regular "out days" reaching all our homes. These will be advertised on our facebook and through twitter
- Looking at and improving our Customer Care Services across the business so that for a customer contacting us it is a "first right time" experience

The Scrutiny Panel has also completed a review on what living in a North Devon Homes property feels like for a customer over 60 years of age, what services they value and what they might like to see introduced. Further service reviews planned for 2014/15 include elements of our repair service, anti-social behaviour and voids. We are looking for new members to help us with these reviews so if you would like to be part of the Scrutiny Panel and can give one evening a month please do contact Frances Walsh on 01271 312527.

**North Devon Homes does not insure your furniture and personal possessions. However we have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks to offer you an affordable home contents insurance policy.**

Protect your belongings against a whole range of risks and find peace of mind.

For more information you can call Crystal Insurance on **lo-call 0845 601 7007** (it may be cheaper to call 01628 586187 from a mobile) Or visit [www.crystal-insurance.co.uk](http://www.crystal-insurance.co.uk)

You can even request a member of the Crystal Insurance Team to call you back.

Terms & conditions, exclusions & limits apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

The Crystal Insurance Scheme is a product name arranged and administered by Thistle Tenant Risks. A trading style of Thistle Insurance Services Ltd. Lloyd's Broker. Authorised and Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. A S.T. Group Company. Registered Office: The St Botolph Building, 138 Houndsditch, London, EC3A 7AW. Registered in England No 00338645. VAT No. 244 2321 96.

## Coming Soon... Universal Credit

Universal Credit (for working age claimants) is a new benefit that will replace a number of existing benefits received by many of our customers. In North Devon the Government expects to commence the local roll out from April 2015. We are here to help you, our customers, through the welfare reform changes. We will be updating our website ([www.yourlocallandlord.com](http://www.yourlocallandlord.com)) welfare reform pages and providing information for our customers over the coming months as the launch date nears.

In summary, if you are of working age and receive ANY of the following benefits then you will be affected as Universal Credit rolls out: Housing Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based), Employment & Support Allowance (Income Related), Income Support, Working Tax Credit & Child Tax Credit.

If you have any questions regarding Universal Credit and how you may be affected, please contact our Income Team on 01271 312500. We are here to help!

# Value for your money - activities during the year

As a community landlord Value for Money (VfM) is very important to us and is part of everything we do, from setting strategies at Board level to delivering good value services across the community. VfM is about ensuring we get the best value for every pound we spend to deliver excellent services in all areas of the business, which does not necessarily mean being the cheapest.

VfM has been at the core of our business and is a key objective in our plans and we work with all staff across the business to embed this. We are always encouraging ideas on how to do things better and more efficiently; this is led from the very top of the company. Our plans for this year cover the following areas:

## Embedding VfM

Making sure that all staff, in particular managers, understand the costs within their areas and can show how they are achieving VfM.

## Benchmarking

Ensuring that we continue to use the information available to us to compare our costs with other housing providers.

## Procurement

Ensuring that we get the best value from the goods and services that we buy and that we join up with others whenever possible in order to achieve this.

## Social Value

VfM is also about ensuring that we invest in our communities and create opportunities for the people who live there, for example this might be through provision of work or training.

## Customer Involvement and Scrutiny Panel

Input from our customers and the Scrutiny Panel continues to be a valuable way of assessing how we can achieve VfM.

## Strategic VfM objective

This year we will be working on our 2015-2018 Corporate Plan; VfM will be a key objective in this plan.

## Performance Management

In addition to monitoring our costs we also consider other performance information, such as how long a property is empty before being re-let, how long it takes us to carry out emergency repairs and what our staff turnover levels are. By monitoring information across all areas we are able to make changes that ensure we continually improve and offer good VfM.

We are always looking for fresh VfM ideas!  
Please contact our Customer Care Team on **01271 312500**



## NDH OFFERS VALUE FOR YOUR MONEY

Every year we benchmark our costs and performance against 33 other social housing providers working in the south west. The latest available information was for the year ended 31st March 2013. The comparison looked at cost per property and the results are:



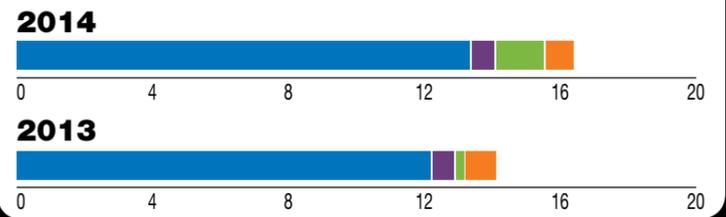
The houses in the chart above show the highest, average and lowest operating costs per property for housing associations in the south west. In order to compare, the total costs are divided by the total number of properties managed. Each housing provider will have overheads for essential resources such as office costs and computer systems regardless of the number of properties.

We compared our costs per property against the 33 similar housing associations operating in the area. NDH was the second smallest in the comparison group with 3,088 properties. We are very pleased to say that our cost per property was £3,417, which clearly demonstrates that our performance is excellent when compared to other social landlords.

# YOUR MONEY

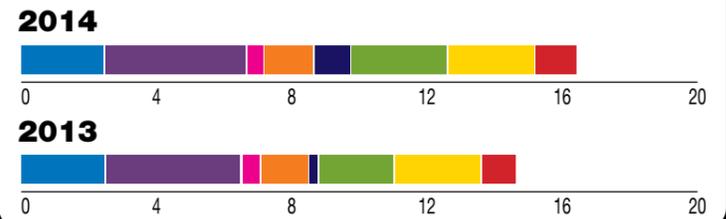
## Where the money comes from

- Rent and Service Charges **£13m** (2013: £12.5m)
- Support Charges **£0.6m** (2013: £0.6m)
- Shared Ownership Property Sales **£1.5m** (2013: £0.1m)
- Other income (Garages, Devon Homelink and Commercial lettings) **£1.0m** (2013: £0.8m)



## How the money is spent

- Responsive Repairs **£2.7m** (2013: £2.6m)
- Planned Maintenance (including kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems) **£4.4m** (2013: £3.9m)
- Service charge costs **£0.5m** (2013: £0.5m)
- Cost of providing Services **£1.5m** (2013: £1.4m)
- Shared Ownership **£1.3m** (2013: £0.1m)
- Depreciation **£2.4m** (2013: £2.2m)
- Interest charges **£2.5m** (2013: £2.5m)
- Other costs (Garages, Devon Homelink and Commercial lettings) **£1.3m** (2013: £1m)



## Value for Money

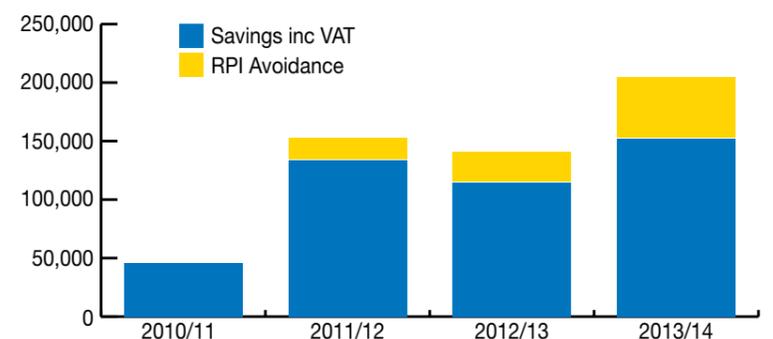
Value for Money has been embedded across the whole company. It means you get the best value from your rent money that NDH can provide. This does not always mean the cheapest, as quality of the goods and services is always taken into account when purchasing. By buying through Advantage South West, a company partially owned by NDH, the company has made savings of £152,000. This year the Customer Forum and Scrutiny Panel both ensured, on customers behalf, that the VfM standard was maintained at the highest level.

## Advantage South West = Savings + VfM

Advantage South West (ASW) is a procurement group with 12 members allowing each member to take advantage of collective purchasing, ensuring the lowest possible prices. It is estimated that ASW material prices are

between 20% and 40% lower than if purchased elsewhere.

The graph below shows the significant savings that have been achieved over the last four years through our membership of ASW.



# Supporting our Older People



Support Advisors continue to support older customers to be independent through the support planning process ensuring that people have an individual support plan that understands their needs. If you would like further information about the services offered from our Support Advisors for you or a member of your family, please call us on 01271 312500.

## 55+ Forum

The 55+ Forum has been suspended until later in the year whilst the support service undergoes consultation on the future service delivery post April 2015, when we will reconvene to focus on an 'Older Persons' support group that will deal solely with issues affecting older people in receipt of the support service and helping to shape the NDH offer for older people.

### What's next for Older Persons Services?

- To continue to consult our customers about the changes to the funding and to help shape our older person's service from April 2015.
- Continuing to promote our support service and alarms to all older people in the area
- Develop our NDH offer on our sheltered schemes across North Devon

## New Telecare Service

We now offer a wide variety of specialist telecare equipment, designed to make your life easier and to give you and your family peace of mind. This could be a falls detector, smoke alarm for hard of hearing or partially sighted people, movement detectors plus much, much more. To find out further information on the full range of products on offer please call us on 01271 312500.





### Devon Homelink

Devon Homelink is an alarm service for anyone living in the North Devon area.

A small alarm unit fits to your telephone, and a pendant or wrist stap allows the wearer to summon help in an emergency (24 hours a day)

For more information or to arrange a **FREE** demonstration call **FREE** on:

**0800 083 7553**

### A busy 12 months

It has been a busy 12 months for the Supported Housing Team, here are just a few of the things that they have been focusing on:

- We have been out and about talking to customers on changes to funding to understand better what this means for them.
- The Board and Executive Team attended a session at Medard House to meet customers and understand better what they value about the service.
- We have been supporting the customer Scrutiny Panel who have been liaising with customers to understand what we are doing and what they think about the service.

## HOME SPOT!

- Number of support service customers: 540
- Number of new Homelink customers: 241
- % of customer satisfied with sheltered service: 99%

## Equality & Diversity

At North Devon Homes we pride ourselves on making sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to request a service and that we deliver services in the most appropriate way. Our Equality and Diversity Team has worked hard over the past year to monitor and improve what we do. As an example of this we have:

- Reviewed each and every complaint to ensure that they did not raise or identify any underlying E&D issues.
- Maintained the changes to how we undertake planned maintenance to better meet the needs of the customer e.g. older customers and parents
- Retained better flexibility about the final specification of planned maintenance improvements to better meet customer needs.

In addition we have also made sure that contractors share our commitment to equality and diversity.

## New Homelink Website

We have been working to develop a new website [www.devonhomelink.com](http://www.devonhomelink.com) that gives full details on our home support service and alarms.



## Tenant 2 Tenant

Five members of the Customer Forum have formed a new support service to help other North Devon Homes' tenants.

During our work on the Forum, we have come across tenants who have teething issues with their new home, outstanding repairs or feel they are not getting a good service but don't know where

to turn. We also come across those who need a helping hand with more complex issues such as anti social behaviour and kitchen or bathroom installations. We would like to help these tenants and have created the Tenant2Tenant service to help answer these queries and provide impartial support to

all tenants with any issues. If you feel it could be helpful to have an informal chat to another tenant with no obligation, no matter how small or large or how silly you might think your query is, please call us on 07740 410970. We are available on this number 7 days a week, 9am to 9pm.

# Neighbourhoods



## Allocations

Last year we signed up 312 customers. This has increased from 244 during 2012/13 due to our regeneration programme and the impact of the spare room subsidy. The introduction of a wider range of tenancy types has increased the sophistication of tenancy management impacting on both the initial lettings stage and subsequent exchange requests.

Each customer was offered an appointment for viewing and signing their tenancy. As part of this process, we explain the contents of the tenant handbook to highlight the importance of tenancy conditions. Customers are also provided with the lettable service standard for their home. All new customers were granted a starter tenancy. All tenancies were reviewed after 9 months to determine conversions and written confirmation was provided within 10 months.



## Anti-social Behaviour



During 2013/14 we had 154 anti-social behaviour incidents reported. Each incident is assessed against strict criteria to determine the severity of the case. All ASB cases are dealt with by Neighbourhood Officers, although members of the CCT team are currently undergoing training to allow them to deal with low level ASB cases in the future.

Each major ASB case has an action plan to set out what customers can expect from us in response to their complaint. 150 cases were closed and we confirmed this in writing.

We had 12 instances of risk to person or property, all of these were responded to within our target timescale of 24 hours. Noise and fly tipping remain the highest of all ASB issues reported to NDH. As a result we have liaised with customers and have now purchased an additional noise monitor at a cost of £5000 to record and evidence such noise to help resolve these cases. Fly tipping did reduce last this year but is still very costly as we have to identify the sites, remove the items and take them to authorised skips for disposal all within our timescale of 3 working days from notification.

## HOME SPOT!

- Number of new ASB cases: 154
- Number of resolved cases: 148
- Number of closed cases: 150
- Number of cases without an action plan: 0
- Number of cases open at year end: 33

## HOME SPOT!

- Tenancy changes (acquisitions + successions) 49
- Number of Neighbourhood events: 13
- Number of Neighbourhood Vision Plans: 7

## Mutual Exchanges

From April 2013 we have employed a Neighbourhood Property Advisor, this is the first time we have a dedicated officer looking at mutual exchanges.

The Property Advisor ensures that customers are notified of our approval within the required timescales and will be provided with good information as to their rights and responsibilities.

Throughout the year we have added additional inspections, forms and letters which provide more information, such as life remaining in kitchens bathrooms heating and electrics.

We will be introducing a timetable to be provided to customers when they apply for a mutual exchange. This timetable will give customers a six week countdown on the progress of their mutual exchange.

We are delighted that we have received 100% customer satisfaction from the surveys completed by customers following a mutual exchange.



### What's next for Neighbourhood Services?

- Improved procedures for dealing with neighbourhood and ASB complaints
- Neighbourhood Officer spending more time on estates
- Working with team ndh to ensure each property is visited in each year

## HOME SPOT!

- Total lettings (relets + first lets): 312
- New lettings (new customers only): 77
- Mutual exchanges: 78
- Transfers: 109
- Total Relets: 235
- Customer satisfaction with Allocation Service: 90%

## Empty Homes

We aim to ensure that properties remain empty for as short a time as possible, through effective monitoring and management. We are active members of Devon Home Choice and have been monitoring customer satisfaction. Customers are provided with support and assistance throughout the short listing / viewing and sign up stages of a property letting.

For the first time this year we have bought the void inspection into Neighbourhood Services we have a dedicated inspector who will carry out pre tenancy inspections and re inspect if required to ensure we get the properties back in good order.

We have carried out a review of the whole process and have introduced new letting standards which have been approved by customers.

The close relationship this has allowed with the lettings officer has been a great improvement to the process, ensuring we let the properties as soon as possible and with appropriate works.

## Action Days

As with every year we carried out a number of action days which saw members of staff from across the company litter picking, gardening, cleaning graffiti, painting and collecting unwanted items.



## Estate Inspections

We carried out six estate inspections in 2013-14 three in the summer and 3 in the winter.

We invited customers who live on the estate and agencies that work on the estate such as police, grounds maintenance contractor, council reps etc.

During these inspections we walk around the estate, looking particularly at:

- Condition of gardens
- Litter and weeds

- Graffiti
- Abandoned / untaxed vehicles
- External condition of properties
- Maintenance of communal areas

The estate inspections also give customers a chance to meet the Neighbourhood Officer and have their say on the estate.

If you would like to be involved in future estate inspections please call us on 01271 312500.

**Are you or someone you know having problems with Anti Social Behaviour?**

**DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE, WE CAN HELP!**

Call us now on **01271 312500** and speak to your Neighbourhood Officer.

## Fly-tipping! Don't do it!

It's ugly and takes your rent money to clean up

You can report fly-tipping confidentially on **01271 312529** or text **07811273673**



# Customer Involvement

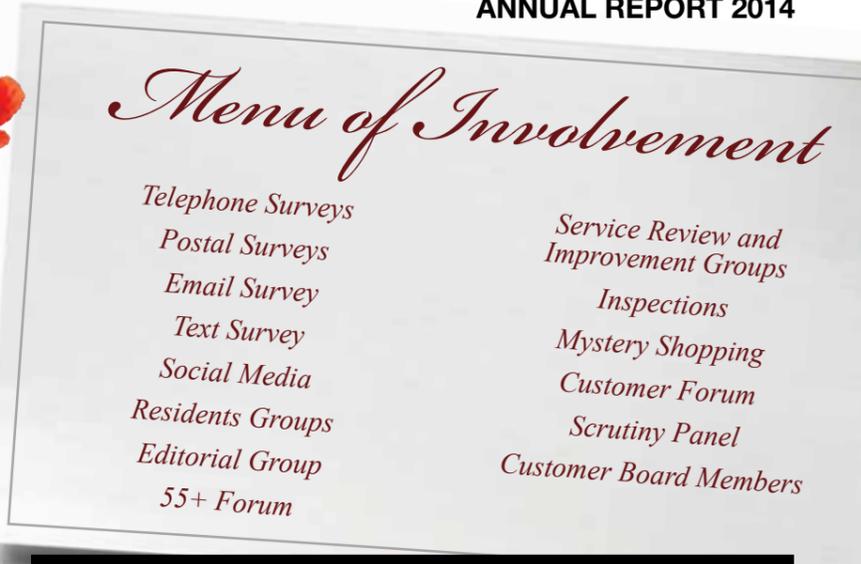
## Your Home - Your Voice - Your Choice



Customer Involvement means working with you to find out what you really think of our services to help us understand what you want and expect. In order to deliver the services that meet your needs and suit your preferences we need

you to tell us your views. You can do this in a way that suits you from our range of 14 activities shown in our menu of involvement. We listen to your views and make changes to our policies and working practices to improve the services you receive. Any time

you can spare is invaluable and important for the continuous improvement of your home and community. Our dedicated Involvement Officer can provide you with the training and support you may need to become more effectively involved.



## Customer Involvement Strategy

This year we have worked closely with Customers to develop our new Customer Involvement Strategy for 2014 - 16. The strategy sets out how we will proactively engage with you in the management and delivery of the housing services you receive from North Devon Homes. It details the range of activities we will use to inform, consult and involve you at a level you choose. We consulted customers last year through our different groups and at the Summer Fayre to develop five new key objectives to achieve our aims, meet regulatory requirements and best practice guidance whilst continuing to develop

the activities we offer. These customers felt the new strategy was clear and easy to read and provided them with a better understanding of customer involvement and how they can get involved. We listened to feedback from our customers and as a result we decided not to publish and distribute this to all customers, resulting in savings. We published our objectives in the Spring Newsletter and will continue to provide regular updates on our progress in future editions of the newsletter. Customers can request a copy of the Strategy by contacting the Customer Involvement Officer on 01271 313384 or download it from our website.

### HOME SPOT!

- Number of ways to get involved: 14
- Number of Involved Customers: 1,540
- Number of Customer Forum Members: 8
- Number of Customer Forum Meetings: 11
- Number of Customer Training Events: 16
- Number of Policies reviewed and developed by customers: 7

### Delivering high quality service to all

We have trained a number of customers to enable them to independently inspect and mystery shop a range of our services on a regular basis, checking that service standards are met and services are of a high quality. This year our inspectors have looked at communal cleaning, grounds maintenance, planned maintenance, out of hours services, voids and new lettings. We are always looking for new inspectors, so if you are interested, please contact Rowan Summers the Customer Involvement Officer on 01271 313384 for more information.

### Wanted: Volunteers to improve the services provided by NDH

We want your help to make sure that our services meet customer needs. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service delivery? Why not come along to one of our meetings to find out more and have your say? We run a range of groups including the Customer Forum, Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Group, 55+ Forum, Neighbourhood Services Improvement Group. If you would like to join any of these groups, please call the Customer Involvement Officer, Rowan Summers, on 01271 313384.

## Changing Faces

### Customer Forum Update 2013/14

The Customer Forum is a small friendly group of volunteer customer members who meet monthly to ensure that NDH puts you, the customer, first in all that they do. Over the last year there have been some changes in membership but we have continued to go from strength to strength. The Forum is involved in a wide range of activities and works closely with customers, staff, management and the Board to ensure that your views are represented and improvements are made to the services you receive as a result of your feedback. Working with NDH is far from boring, there is always something to get stuck into. Why not come along to one of our meetings? To find out more, please contact our Customer Involvement Officer on 01271 313384.



Pictured from left to right: Vickie Jenkins, Jenny Ross, Tracey Richmond, Jane Tomlin, Terry Hayes, Fil Ross, Richard Setter, Eric Cann, Patsy Chapple, Lorna Childs and Dawn Ash.

### What next for Customer Involvement?

- Implement our new Customer Involvement Strategy
- Improve digital communication with customers
- Develop involvement through social media

### Neighbourhood Service Improvement Group

This group, of staff and customers, looks at specific aspects of Neighbourhood Services. During 2013/14 the group looked at Anti Social Behaviour policies and how NDH adopt these when dealing with ASB issues. They also looked at Devon Home Choice to understand how homes are allocated and the system is operated. Communal cleaning has also been a focus and as a result many improvements have been implemented to offer value for money and the best results for customers. Future meetings will look at voids and estate inspections and maintenance. For more details, contact Rowan Summers on 01271 313384.

## Service Standards

The Customer Forum has reviewed the service standards that were introduced back in 2010 to provide a minimum service level that customers will receive from North Devon Homes. The Forum found that some standards were dated and lacked accountability. A number of changes have been made to the service standards to ensure that NDH can effectively evidence and monitor performance against the standards to ensure that the promises made to you are kept. If you would like to receive a full copy of the new standards, please contact our Customer Involvement Officer on 01271 313384. The Scrutiny Panel and Customer Forum will continue to monitor the company's performance against the standards and identify areas for improvement.

## Do you like us?

### An update on involvement through social media

In the last edition of Your Local Standard we talked about increasing customer involvement through social media. We have a facebook page which is regularly updated with information about what we have been up to and forthcoming events. We would like to encourage as many customers as possible to like our facebook page so that we can let you know the latest news, what's going on in your area and find out your opinions.

## Improving the quality of our customer care



Last year our Scrutiny Panel identified that we needed to improve the quality of our customer care during our phone conversations with you. We realised that our call openings were lengthy and some of our techniques sounded impersonal. The panel also highlighted our focus on the delivery of service standard and key performance targets to answer calls within set timeframes. This meant that we were putting pressure on staff to 'move on' to the next call rather than focusing on dealing with the customer already on the phone. As a result, we have switched the emphasis away from targeted call pick up times to the quality of the call to ensure that your queries are dealt with effectively and efficiently. To help us monitor and improve this, we are currently developing a quality assurance score card in partnership with our customers.

## HOME SPOT!

- Letters responded to within 10 working days: 91%
- Number of calls received: 51,631
- Average time taken to answer calls: 27 seconds
- % of customers satisfied with the handling of their call: 98%
- Number of repair telephone satisfaction surveys completed: 942

## Garage Maintenance Programme

Last year, team ndh reviewed its historically reactive approach to garage maintenance to devise a clear strategic plan and investment programme for the future to address those where there is little demand, in need of repair and ones beyond viable repair. The Garage Maintenance Programme is continuing well with many garages back in a lettable condition. During 2013/14 we targeted four key areas - Park Villas, Oakford Villas, Hawkridge Road and Torridge Road. Our programme for this year is currently being finalised and more information will be available soon.



### What's next for the Customer Care Team?

- Introduce call quality monitoring including deployment of a more robust call recording system.
- Continue working to achieve 'Right First Time' for our customers, especially around repairs.
- Introduce team liaison roles within CCT for each NDH department.

## HELP US, HELP YOU!

Please do tell us if you change your mobile number or if you have an email address that we can contact you on. Keeping our records up to date enables us to communicate with you via, phone, text and email to keep you informed and help you effectively. To ensure we have your correct details please call us on 01271 312500.



## FIRST LINE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CALLS

In the last edition of Home News we reported the changes made to our Anti-social Behaviour Strategy as a result of your feedback. Our Customer Care Team has been trained to make clear assessments of reported incidents to distinguish between minor and major cases of anti-social behaviour. All minor cases are now dealt with by the Customer Care Team to enable our Neighbourhood Officers to spend more time on complex issues. Since introduction in September 2013 and March 2014, the Customer Care Team dealt with 23 first line cases. These were all low level neighbour disputes and we are pleased to say the team was able to deal with these calls successfully so that there was no further escalation.

## DIAGNOSING YOUR REPAIRS

We know that being able to diagnose a repair quickly and correctly benefits both you and NDH. It saves time and money and means the repair is more likely to be done 'Right First Time'. To improve these skills training days have been held in empty properties to give staff a better understanding of the types of repairs that occur, how to diagnose from the information given over the phone and to understand building terminology. New staff are also given further training that includes them observing other teams that are already using the training skills in processing repairs. This means the Customer Care Team can make much swifter, accurate diagnostics and results in much more efficient processing of repairs jobs.

## Garages available at:

Forches,  
Gorwell and  
South View,  
Prixford

## NDH Opening Hours

Head Office,  
Westacott Road:  
Monday to Friday -  
08:30 to 17:00

Town Centre Office,  
Boutport Street:  
Monday to Friday -  
08:30 to 16:00

Call the  
Customer  
Care Team  
on  
**01271 312500**



## Text Alert

Customers told us it could be expensive to retrieve messages we'd left on their mobile. So now we can text you at no cost to you. Make sure you let us know if you change your phone number. 01271 312500.

## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A HOME SWAP?

If you want to move why not try HomeSwapper? All you need to do is register your home and they will automatically match you to as many swaps as possible. Go to [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) and register today - it's free.

## More affordable Homes for North Devon

The Development & Regeneration Team has had a hugely successful and exciting year with a large number of homes now complete and occupied.

### Forches Phase 2

The second phase of the planned regeneration on Forches is well underway, with the majority of demolitions now concluded and the few first properties complete and undergoing internal finishes. Phase 2 will provide 80 new homes which will be a mix of affordable rented and shared ownership properties.



### Pill Gardens Phase 1

Pill Gardens is proving to be a huge success providing 26 new affordable homes in the first stage to the Braunton area. All 26 properties were completed by August 2013 with the majority of homes occupied by the end of September 2013.



### Pill Gardens Phase 2

Demolitions are continuing across the site on Phase 2 Pill Gardens with the 6 affordable rented properties on target for completion in July 2014.



### Woodville

We are pleased to announce that the first 7 properties at Woodville were completed and occupied in March 2014 and we hope all our customers are settling well into their new homes.



### South View, Bratton Fleming

Four new local occupancy properties in Bratton Fleming were handed over to North Devon Homes at the end of March 2014.



### The Orchards, Lovacott

With drainage works and demolitions across the site now complete, the erection of timber frames is now well underway. The Orchards at Lovacott will provide 9 new affordable rented properties which will have a local occupancy tie and these are programmed for completion by November 2014.



## Future Plans Update

### Development in Gorwell

We are currently working on proposals with our partners to make a positive impact in the Gorwell area to include new affordable housing and new community facilities. To kick start the consultation process we held a consultation event on the green in July 2013 which reflected a high level of community interest and comment. Following feedback received from this initial consultation, a door to door survey of the estate was undertaken to help shape our development proposals, ascertain more detailed information from residents and to showcase possible areas for development.

Having taken into consideration all the feedback we have amended our plans and are now looking at developing initially in three key areas. A consultation event was held in April 2014 where we showcased proposals for the scheme layout. North Devon Homes is committed to working closely with the community, keeping residents informed and welcome all feedback. Should you require any further information on the these proposals please contact the Development & Regeneration Team on 01271 312 528.



## Forches - PRC - New Technologies

At North Devon Homes we are not only committed to providing new affordable homes in the area but to developing energy efficient, sustainable, lifetime homes, using a number of new technologies. The new homes on Forches have used a number of new technologies including photovoltaic panels (PV) which capture the sun's energy, providing real savings to customers by reducing their electricity

bills; and rainwater harvesting systems which recycles rain water to be used for flushing toilets and running washing machines. By upgrading insulation and construction, using in the main timber framed homes, creates well insulated and sound proofed properties.

As well as PV panels and rainwater harvesting systems, our properties are now built to Lifetime

Homes Standards which are assessed by looking at accessibility and adaptable homes. Our new properties are also built using the Secured by Design principles, focusing on crime prevention, as well as being built to a Level 3 standard under the Code for Sustainable Homes, which aims to reduce carbon emissions and promote higher standards of sustainable design.



## Aids and Adaptations

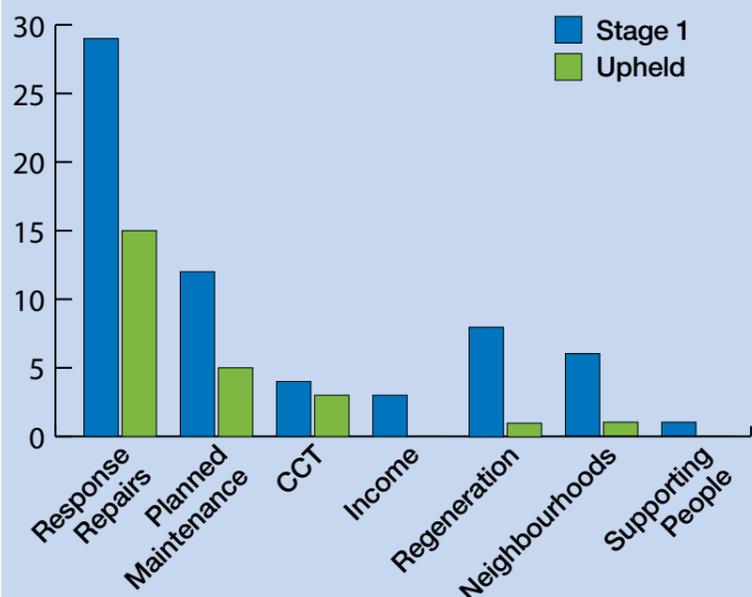
North Devon Homes is committed to enabling older, disabled and vulnerable people to maintain their independence and ensuring that their homes are safe and convenient to use. We work with social services to deliver quick and responsive minor adaptations service in support of adaptations

requested by social services. Last year we completed 234 minor aids and adaptations, such as hand rails, grab rails and ramps. If you require any adaptations to your property, you will first need to arrange for an Occupational Therapist to visit you in your home to make an

assessment of your needs. This can be arranged by contacting **Care Direct on 0845 155 1007** or you can visit their website [www.devon.gov.uk/caredirect](http://www.devon.gov.uk/caredirect). North Devon Homes is unable to accept a request for minor adaptations without a referral from an Occupational Therapist.

# Complaints & Feedback

## Complaints by Team



### What next for Complaints and Feedback?

- Continue to work with Managers to improve response times to complaints.
- Continue with the work the Complaints Review Group does to identify service improvements from complaints.
- Work with the Customer Complaints Panel to look at complaints, identify trends and further service improvements from the customers perspective.

## HOME SPOT!

- Number of compliments: 113
- Number of stage 0 complaints: 69
- Number of complaints: 63
- Number resolved at stage 1: 58
- Number resolved at stage 2: 4
- Number responded to within timescale: 57

## Accessing your home

We still struggle to get access to some of our homes where a repair has been reported or an inspection has been requested. This means that both our surveyors and operatives are wasting time that could be used repairing other customers' homes. We do not think that this is a good use of customers' money, so we are making efforts to improve the notification service for appointments through the use of texting. We would appeal to customers to continue to make every effort to attend an appointment or to phone our Customer Care Team on 01271 312500 to rearrange any appointment that is not convenient.

## Technology To Work Better For You

This year we will continue investing in IT equipment to allow our surveying team to do more when they are out of the office visiting you in your homes. Mobile working will allow us to collect more information quicker and use it in a smarter way to inform our asset databases etc. Ultimately this will provide more precise information for our customers, the company and allow us to develop our services further.

## New and improved policy

During 2013/14 we reviewed our Complaints Policy in partnership with customer's who have been through the complaints process, members of our Customer Complaints Panel and the Customer Forum. The revised policy takes into consideration the new Customer Complaints Panel we have developed as our Designated Tenants Panel in response to the changes introduced through the Localism Act 2011. The policy was approved by the Board in July 2014 and will be reviewed again in 2015/16. We are now working with customers to update our customer leaflet to bring it in line with the changes made to the policy.

We encourage feedback, both good and bad, from all customers so that we know what we are doing well and areas we need to improve. Last year we were delighted to receive 113 compliments.

In addition, 69 issues were resolved at first contact (stage zero) before becoming formal complaints. We received 63 complaints during the same period as shown in the bar chart with 25 being upheld. All complaints are reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that we learn from your feedback. There were 28 service improvements identified with the majority of these relating to repairs and maintenance as shown below:

*I had a leak which has been fixed but my ceiling is in a mess and hasn't been done.*

Procedures to be updated to ensure a surveyor attends after leaks are reported to assess any damage to property and arrange any necessary repairs.

*I reported a repair during the night and no-one came until the next day. I waited up all night as I was expecting an electrician to call.*

Out of Hours service to change their procedures to call customers back to advise when the contractor should visit/call. This will enable the customer to anticipate and plan for the contractor arriving.

We have 24 hours to respond to an emergency call so it could be a while until a contractor attends but if you have an idea of when that might be it would be useful.

*Lack of communication between contractors and customers and also between NDH and customers.*

Our Customer Care Team is working with Home 2 Home to improve communication with regard to their works and appointments. We will highlight the issue with other contractors and continue to monitor their progress.

We would like to thank all our customers who have taken the time to contact us with their compliments and complaints.

## A Fair Process?

Our approach to complaints is developed in accordance with legislative and regulatory guidance, best practice and in partnership with our customers. However, we receive very little feedback from customers who have been through the complaints process. We would like to know more about your experiences of the process so that we can continue to improve it. Of the 63 customers who reported complaints in 2013/14, only 4 completed and returned a satisfaction survey. Two of these customers were either fairly or very satisfied with the way their complaint was handled and fairly or very satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. It can be difficult for us to gather satisfaction levels for complaints because it usually depends on the outcome as to whether a customer is satisfied or not.

### Customer Complaints Panel

The Customer Complaints Panel has been established as our Designated Tenants Panel. This has been approved by the Board and we have notified the Ombudsman that we have a recognised panel as part of our complaints process in line with legislative requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Our Customer Complaints Panel is made of members of our Customer Forum and Scrutiny Panel who have been approved by our customer selection committee. They have undergone extensive training to take on this role. Any complaints that remain unresolved after stage 3 of the process can be referred by the complainant to the panel for independent and unbiased help to resolve the issue before taking it to the Ombudsman.

We always try to resolve any complaint before reaching this stage and have a very good record in dealing with complaints effectively and fairly. The complaints panel reviews all complaints on a quarterly basis to ensure that NDH complies with its complaints policy, identifies any trends and areas for improvement.



**Got something to say about NDH?**  
**We want to hear it!**

Call us on  
**01271 312500**  
or email us at  
[enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ndh-ltd.co.uk)

# Looking after your home

## Planned Maintenance works break down 2013/14

This year has been another busy and successful year for the Planned Maintenance team with over £2.2 Million spent on planned maintenance works.

Kitchens:	26	Bathrooms:	24	Doors:	257
Windows:	28	Electrics:	48	Boilers:	95
E7 Heating:	27	Full Gas Heating:	27	Solid Fuel:	3
External Decoration:	269	Air Source Heating:	1	Shed Demolition:	19
Chimney Removal:	57	Communal Areas Decoration:	5	British Gas Boilers:	29
<b>Total:</b>					<b>915</b>

## Tailor-made services

Before any works start in your home, our Customer Liaison Officer visits you to discuss any particular needs or areas of concern you may have. We encourage customers with health or disability issues to tell us about their specific needs so that our service can be tailored to meet these needs. We also work with our contactors who may identify additional small changes that often make a big difference. During 2013/14, we tailored our services to meet the needs of many of our customers. This

included working around school runs, hospital appointments and stays, and adjusting the heights of sockets to help customers with disabilities.

As a founder member of Advantage South West we have direct access to new and evolving products which we then use in our specifications of work. Members of customer groups also attend product viewings with ASW and are able to contribute their views to new product selections.

### HOME SPOT!

#### Total Number of Jobs:

- % completed on target: 95%
- % completed on first visit: 87%
- % of customers satisfied: 96%
- % gas safety checks completed on time: 99.95%

## Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Group

We are a small friendly group of customers who meet regularly with NDH and contractors to monitor the service and contribute to the choices and decisions made by North Devon Homes. This includes the colour choices, products, materials and contractors that are used. During 2013/14 the group:

- Reviewed repairs and maintenance policies and procedures
- Attended monthly contractor progress meetings
- Inspected completed works
- Attended ASW product viewing events
- Took part in the reappointment process of extended contracts
- Received updates on repairs and planned maintenance performance
- Reviewed customer complaint outcomes and actions.
- Developed the Tenant2Tenant service to provide support to customers

We need new members to help us continue to improve the repairs and maintenance services provided by NDH. Group chair, Tracey Richmond, says "it is really important for customers to be part of these groups as our contributions really do have an impact on NDH policy and direction". So what's stopping you? Please contact our Customer Involvement Officer on 01271 313384.

Repair Priority	Number Completed	Number on Time	% On Time
Emergency	1706	1637	98.4%
Urgent	4199	4046	97.6%
Routine	6374	6008	97.7%

#### What's next for Planned Maintenance?

- Promoting and establishing our area based model of working for the Surveying Team
- Development of a five year plan for Planned Maintenance
- Investigating green technology which could be used in our properties

#### What's next for Response Repairs?

- Negotiations with suppliers to reduce material costs
- Improved ON TIME performance management
- Review of the Right First Time process

### HOME SPOT!

- % of customers satisfied: 94%
- Number of units completed: 915

## RESPONSE REPAIRS

We have worked hard to improve our initial diagnosis of a repair. This has included additional training for our Customer Care Team, some of which was provided by our H2H operatives and we have set up a technical support desk to provide daily support for the more complicated repairs. The next phase will be working with our operatives to identify changes that we can make to ensure that a job can be completed in one visit. Part of this is looking at the stock of materials that we hold on our vans and at our Head Office to see if we can be better equipped to deal with the majority of repairs that come our way.

The work that we are doing to improve the Right First Time working will also make improvements to our appointment system. We are also exploring work planning tools to help us allocate jobs in the most effective way. We have tried to use the mobile working tools provided by our current software supplier however this did not work effectively due to connectivity issues around North Devon and so we are reviewing what alternatives are available to us.



## General Practice Surveyors

We have made changes to the way in which our surveyors work and they will follow the patch base model used by the Neighbourhoods Team. This means that every one of our general practice surveyors will have an area to cover in which they deal with all responsive and planned maintenance works. We hope that this will create a better link between our planned and responsive works and ultimately a better service for our customers who will be dealing with surveyors who know their properties better.

## IMPROVING WHAT WE DO

Last year we completed 12,279 repairs and whilst 11,691 were completed on time, a higher proportion than we would have liked were not.

The stormy and turbulent weather in the first few months of 2014 contributed to this. The high winds and heavy rain did large amounts of damage to fencing, garages and roofs and we were pleased to get through the period whilst maintaining our performance. We have put measures in place to alert us to unexpected or unplanned increases in the number of jobs being raised so that this can be dealt with more effectively in the future.



# Inspiring Young People

Our North Devon Homes Youth Service has gone from strength to strength with 361 young people from our Barnstaple and Ilfracombe communities engaging with our Big Lottery funded project.

- 17 school leavers have been supported into paid employment and/or college placements

- Throughout the last year 196 opportunities were created for young people to increase employability skills
- A further 150 opportunities were created for young people to undertake healthier lifestyles.

It's not all work and no play, though. In October young people from all three clubs had a one night only

performance at the Landmark Theatre in Ilfracombe to an audience of over 200 people and the summer holidays continue to be packed with events, activities and achievement award nights, with three adventure weekends in the summer funded by North Devon Homes and partner agencies.

# Funding for Community Projects

Partnership working is key to the continued sustainability of our community based work, this year we were delighted that Tony Hogg the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall gave us £3000 to build a facility in the Forches garden to develop training opportunities in Horticulture. This project spans not only Forches but also Heppenstall and has plans to expand in 2014/15. Working in partnership with Westward Housing we are creating new links into the community for training opportunities within our communities.

The South West Foundation awarded the Forches Community Association £6000 to develop training opportunities and establish a Community Sewing Group which will make craft articles for sale and provide an alterations and soft furnishings service for the community.

There are many opportunities available. Come and join the sewing group and learn new skills, spend time in our beautiful garden or have those alterations or soft furnishing ideas made by our new community service. Just call our Community Support Worker Carol Lewis or our Community Involvement Manager Frances Walsh on 01271 312527.

# CATS Awards

In June 2013 the Ilfracombe Slade Valley Youth Club hosted the local Community Awards Through Sport (CATS) event. Fantastic prizes, allowing young people to participate in local sports events, were awarded to recognise the efforts of young people volunteering in Ilfracombe. Nominations were received from the Ilfracombe Academy, Ilfracombe Rotary, North Devon Theatres and North Devon Homes. Ilfracombe CATS hopes to get nominations from lots of other local organisations for their 2014 Awards evening.



# SLADE VALLEY FUN DAY

On 22nd August 2013 the Slade Valley Vision Centre hosted its first ever Fun Day entirely organised by the Youth Management Team supported by the Youth Team.

On the day there was a variety of activities; raffles, games, face painting, bouncy castle obstacle course and treasure hunts to name but a few.

The support from the local community was outstanding with local high street stores

donating raffle prizes, ranging from a box of fudge to a family Jet Ski experience.

The day was arranged by young people to enable them to share time with parents and adults in a fun filled environment whilst showcasing their Youth Club to the wider community in Ilfracombe.

On the day 60 adults came along to join the 93 young people who attended.

The event made a small profit for the Youth Club from the sale of raffle tickets at 20p each, cheese burgers at 50p and entrance for adults of 50p making this an affordable day for all.

The Youth Team was so excited that its first community event was such a success, next year there are plans to make this annual event even bigger!

## Don't tell your neighbour, ... tell us!

Panel 1: Neighbor: "HI HOW ARE YOU?" Resident: "NOT TOO GOOD. I'M HAVING REAL PROBLEMS GETTING MY GLITTERING REPAIRED"

Panel 2: Neighbor: "WELL... HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO NDH AND TOLD THEM? THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE THERE FOR!"

Panel 3: Neighbor: "I DID REPORT IT. BUT I'M STILL NOT HAPPY. I GET TOO FLUSTERED WHEN I CALL THEM TO COMPLAIN"

Panel 4: Neighbor: "WELL... WHY DON'T YOU CALL THEIR COMMENT LINE AND LEAVE A MESSAGE? IT'S 01271 312529"

If you don't have the time, don't want to talk to someone or if our offices are closed please use our comments line. You can call and leave a message on **01271 312529** or text us on **07811 273673**.

*If you want us to, we will call you back the following working day, as long as you leave your name and contact number.*