



Your Local Standard

DESIGNED BY CUSTOMERS FOR CUSTOMERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

SIXTH ISSUE

Offering Value for Money
See page 4

Supported housing communal lounge refurbishment
See page 5

101 new homes built this year
See page 9

Working together to create communities for the future



North Devon Homes has had another busy and productive year which has seen lots of highlights. Many of these illustrate our commitment to creating positive communities, opportunities and quality, affordable housing in the local area. Key investments and developments now will build the communities where people will want to live both now and in future generations.

Contents

Governance
[Page 2](#)

Income
[Page 3](#)

Value For Money
[Page 4](#)

Supported Housing
[Page 5](#)

Neighbourhoods
[Page 6](#)

Customer Involvement
[Page 7](#)

Customer Care Team
[Page 8](#)

Regeneration
[Page 9](#)

Complaints and Feedback
[Page 10](#)

Repairs and Maintenance
[Page 11](#)

Community Involvement
[Page 12](#)

Charitable Conversion

North Devon Homes Limited converted to a charity on 1 April 2015 following a consultation with customers in 2014. This change will not have any effect on the way we deliver our business or on the services we provide to customers. The company converted to charitable status to ensure that all our assets and income are used solely for the benefit of our customers. In undertaking the conversion we are able to take advantage of tax and VAT efficiencies that will keep rents affordable and provide funding for new homes.

HOMES FOR BRITAIN

In February people of North Devon caught a bus as part of the nationwide campaign to end the housing crisis within a generation. The event started at Lands' End and finished in Westminster with the Homes for Britain rally on 17th March 2015. The rally was held to publicise a campaign for the government to tackle the housing crisis and come up with a long term plan.

North Devon Homes received the Baton from Westward Housing on 23rd February. The branded double decker bus took North Devon Homes customers, Board Members, staff and Councillors to the official opening of their newest housing scheme The Orchards, Lovacott.

North Devon Homes Chief Executive Martyn Gimber said: "We are proud to support this important campaign to raise awareness of the chronic housing shortage. At North Devon Homes we are committed to increasing the amount of affordable housing available for local people in North Devon."



Investing in future generations

LOTTERY FUNDING AWARDED

The Big Lottery, Reaching Communities fund has awarded NDH a further three years' continuation funding, £349,000 (2015 to 2018), to continue our work with young people in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.

The new project, 'Bridging the Gap', reflects the learning from the previous project 'Starfish NDH' which the Lottery consider to be an exemplary piece of work well worth a

further three years investment.

Young people in Slade Valley, Forches & Gorwell are central to the decision making and design of the project around their needs as well as providing a safe space to have fun, make friends and find, with support, the confidence to achieve in exams and go on to college or paid employment when they leave school.



Service Standards in Brief

In 2010 we worked with customers to introduce 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. This edition provides you with an update on each service area and sets out compliance with the standards.



Fayre's Fayre!

The Board, Customer Forum and Executive team met in March 2015 to review and make final amendments to the company's new Corporate Plan 2015-18. The meeting was the culmination of a series of consultation events with staff, stakeholders and customers that began at the Summer Fayre in 2014. Most customers seem very pleased with what we do but we always want to improve!

The new corporate plan sets out what we are focussing on for the next three years to achieve our vision "working together to create communities where people want to live". The Away Day helped to bring together all the feedback and discussions we have had over the past year.

The key priority areas were agreed:

- Working to improve a "right first time" approach to reduce call backs, waste and inefficiency
- Investing in new information technology to help provide more joined up services



to customers

- A focus on taking our services into communities more frequently
- Investing in a new web site to enable customers to self serve and make appointments or track repairs and make it easier to communicate with us
- Develop our commercial activity to provide funding for new homes and support for customers
- Develop our in house Home 2 Home repairs service that our customers value

We want to thank everyone for helping us plan for the exciting changes and improvements to Team NDH.

Simon Price - Chair of the Board

I am pleased that North Devon Homes became a charity on the 1st April 2015, this conversion has a number of benefits to customers. The main one being that we exist to benefit the communities we work in and any surpluses we generate are invested back into the business for example, to develop new social housing units and deliver better services to you and your neighbours.

As you know we had the General Election in May. Following on from the election we had the Queens Speech on the 27th May and the Summer Budget on Wednesday 8th July, all of these contained announcements that will have a profound and long-lasting impact on the social housing sector in England and Wales.

Along with Welfare cuts the announcements are proposing the introduction of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants, any tenants with a household income of over £30,000 may see their rents rise, and there will be a 1% reduction in your rent for four years.

The Board now have a duty to ensure we respond to these proposals and understand the impact on North Devon Homes, you our tenants and the wider communities North Devon Homes operates in.

One of the long term impacts of the proposed changes I predict will be a reduction in the supply of social housing and an increase in homelessness. I hope I am wrong but I can assure you the Board, staff and our involved tenants at North Devon Homes are working hard for you.



Governance



North Devon Homes is a multi million pound business and like any large business needs to have a strong Board of management to ensure that it is run correctly and delivers its strategic aims and objectives. The housing sector that we operate in is regulated by the Government through the Homes and Communities agency. North Devon Homes uses public grants where it can to help build new affordable homes and has to uphold strict governance and regulatory requirements to operate as a registered landlord and use public money.

North Devon Homes was once again pleased to be awarded the highest governance rating from the HCA in March 2015.

There is no time to rest on our laurels though! In April we converted into a Charity and the HCA significantly

updated its governance requirements and lifted the bar for all landlords to work towards as the sector becomes more risky.

The Board is working hard to ensure that we are able to meet the increased standards of the HCA and now the Charity Commissioners.



All Change

There have been a number of changes to our Board this year. North Devon Homes has a board of 12 with 4 customers, 5 independent professional members and 3 local authority councillors. All Board members are unpaid and undertake their significant duties and responsibilities on a voluntary basis to help further our vision as a business delivering quality affordable homes in North Devon. At each general election the local authority members retire and new representatives are nominated from the incoming local authority.

Please welcome Councillors Faye Webber, Jeremy Yabsley and Brian Moore to the Board of North Devon Homes. I know they are all keen to help us continue the good work we are doing helping us to tackle homelessness and provide more housing for people desperate for an affordable home.

During the year we said goodbye to two of our customer board members Jane Tomlin and Tracey Richmond who brought to us a lot of experience and input from a customer perspective for which we are extremely grateful.



INCOME TEAM



Affordable Loans from Credit Unions

Avoid using doorstep or payday lenders whose interest rates are much higher than those of other lenders. Borrowing from doorstep lenders can seem easy and convenient but the interest charged can make things much worse in the long run. For instance, if you wanted to borrow £500 and repay over the course of a year, the total cost of the loan would typically be £910 with a doorstep lender but would be £563 with a local Credit Union.



Thank you NDH customers you are the best payers in country

North Devon Homes customers are the best in the country when it comes to paying their rent and this goes to providing essential services to all tenants. During 2014/15 we worked closely with customers, helping to make sure they could pay their rent

and service charges. We helped 1935 customers make claims for housing or other benefits and worked with another 84 households on complex welfare and benefits cases. Many people experience financial difficulties from time to time, and our Income

Team are here to help if you find yourself in difficulty.

Don't miss out on financial help. Check your benefits entitlement at www.entitledto.co.uk or www.turn2us.org.uk

Universal Credit Update

Universal Credit will start to be rolled out across Devon from November 2015. At first this will be for single people of working age making a new claim. The Income Team will be available to help you through the change to this new benefit. You can help yourself to be prepared by:

- Make sure you have a bank account or a credit union account that allows you to make automated payments
- Put together a monthly budget for your household income and expenditure
- Check out where you can get free access to the internet in your area (your local library or job centre)
- Get your finances in order, make arrangements to pay off any debts and use comparison websites to make sure you are getting the best deal on utilities, insurance, mobile phones, shopping and financial services.



A big thank you to customers in Ilfracombe who are helping us understand how Universal Credit will affect them. We are using this information to design services and support that our customers are likely to need from us.

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.

HOME SPOT!

- Rent Paid: £13,514,899
- Arrears: £50,697
- Benefits Entitlement Assistance: 1,935
- Number of evictions: 3

Methods customers use to pay their rent

- Direct Debit - 16%
- Debit/Credit Card 3%
- Post Office - 48%
- Paypoint and Payzone - 9%
- Internet - 11%
- Standing Order - 13%

What next for the Income Team?

- The implementation of Universal Credit starting November 2015.
- Helping you understand how changes to tax credits and the benefits cap will affect you.
- Working more closely with other organisations, such as the Job Centre and Plough and Share Credit Union on services that our customers will need.

Value for your money



How are we offering Value for Money?

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 of your rent that we spend to deliver excellent services in all areas of the business. This does not necessarily mean being the cheapest. We have published a Value for Money Statement which is available on request.

VfM is a key objective in our Corporate Plans and we work with all staff across the business to embed this. We always encourage ideas on how we can do things better and more efficiently and this is led from the very top of the company.

Benchmarking

Each year we use benchmarking to compare our costs with other housing providers. The latest published results are for the year ended 31 March 2014 and the comparison below shows total cost per property for a NDH property compared to 43 other southern social housing providers.

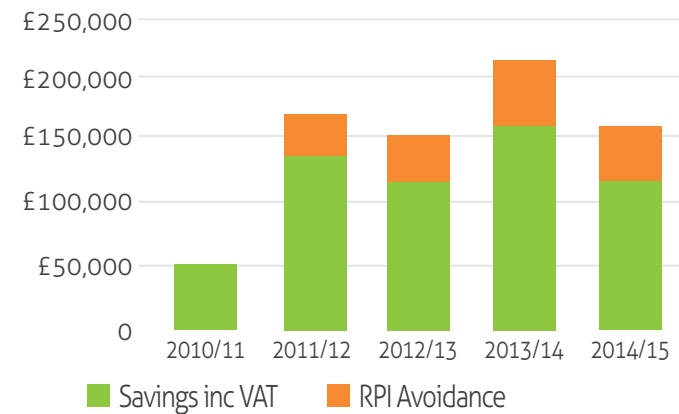
Cost Per Property	Peer Group			NDH 2013/14
	Upper	Median	Lower	
Total Operating Cost	£4,728	£5,850	£8,685	£4,241

We are very pleased to say that our cost per property was £4,241 which places us in the top performance quartile.

At our Board and Customer Away days during the year it was confirmed that VfM is a key driver for the business and that we will always aim for upper quartile performance in terms of customer satisfaction and costs but at times we may not always be able to have the lowest costs to deliver the first class services we want to. However we will always strive to achieve the best VfM we can.

Procurement

During the year we re-tendered a number of contracts to ensure we obtained the best value we could and we continued to purchase goods and services through Advantage South West (ASW), a company partially owned by NDH. ASW is a procurement group with 12 members allowing each member to take advantage of collective purchasing, ensuring the lowest possible prices. The graph below shows the significant savings that have been achieved over the last 5 years through our membership of ASW:



We must not underestimate the benefits that membership has brought in terms of access to the formal network of members that provides valuable advice and guidance, as well as the specific procurement expertise that ASW itself has.

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. Through our Big Lottery funding, we have established successful youth clubs across the region and help get young people into education, training or work.

Average rent levels

Every year we benchmark our rents and service charges against other social housing providers in the region and a key objective in our 2015-18 Corporate Plan is to keep our rents and service charges at a level that represents good VfM.

The latest available information on rents in the Devon area is for the year ended 31 March 2014 and is shown below.

	Devon Average 2013/14	NDH Average 2013/14	NDH 2014/15
Housing for Older People	£120	£83	£88
General Needs	£98	£89	£92
Affordable Rent	£139	£119	£122

The table shows that the average total rents and service charges for NDH are much lower for 2013/14 than the Devon average for 2013/14. The table also shows that NDH's average for 2014/15 is still lower than the Devon average for the previous year, clearly showing our commitment to keeping rents at an affordable level for our customers.

Raising Finance

In November 2014 we secured £8m of loan funding from Affordable Housing Finance at an all-in cost of 3.30% which was much better than the 5% rate we had allowed for in our Business Plan, saving about £1.8m in interest over the 28 year loan period. At the time this was a sector record for the cheapest ever debt. This money will fund 71 new build rent and shared ownership units for people in North Devon.

Regulatory Judgement

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) regulates all registered social housing providers in England. They issue ratings for governance and financial viability and keep a check on what we do by regularly assessing their ratings. The HCA reviewed our ratings in the year and confirmed that NDH has maintained the highest possible ratings.

Our plans for 2015/16

Our new Corporate Plan clearly sets out how we plan to deliver Value for Money:

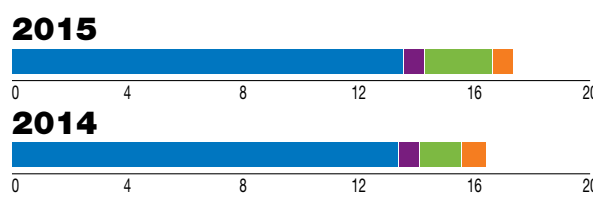
- Integrating our systems and processes to make them more efficient
- Use benchmarking information to challenge some areas where we think we are not performing as well as we could be
- Identify specific improvement projects
- Maximise our charitable status by looking at new funding opportunities
- Look at commercial opportunities through our new trading subsidiary company
- Continue to use procurement clubs to obtain the best value
- Creating social value from our community projects including Big Lottery funding.

Through feedback from benchmarking groups, our Customer Involvement and Scrutiny Panels and our performance management systems, we will continuously review how we are achieving VfM.

YOUR MONEY

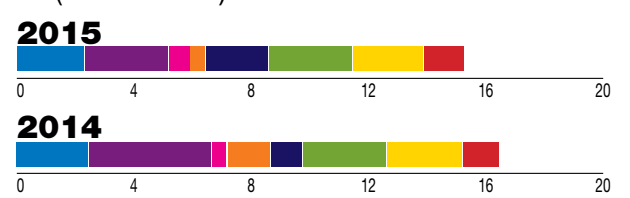
Where the money comes from

- Rent and Service Charges **£13.6m** (2014: £13m)
- Support Charges **£0.6m** (2014: £0.6m)
- Shared Ownership Property Sales **£2.2m** (2014: £1.5m)
- Other income (Garages, Devon Homelink and Commercial lettings) **£0.8m** (2014: £1m)



How the money is spent

- Responsive Repairs **£2.6m** (2014: £2.7m)
- Planned Maintenance (including kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems) **£3.6m** (2014: £4.4m)
- Service charge costs **£0.8m** (2014: £0.5m)
- Communal services **£0.5m** (2014: £1.5m)
- Property sales costs **£2.1m** (2014: £1.3m)
- Depreciation **£2.4m** (2014: £2.4m)
- Interest charges **£2.4m** (2014: £2.5m)
- Other costs (Commercial activity, pension and written off development costs) **£1.4m** (2014: £1.3m)



SUPPORTED HOUSING

Supported Housing Communal Lounge Refurbishment



Before



After

As part of our ongoing development of our service offer, the communal areas of the sheltered schemes were extensively updated during February and March of this year. Bright new colours for the furnishings have replaced the old look and given a much needed lift to the schemes. In addition we have installed new scooter stores at Medard and Normandy House with two more planned at Mariners and Magdalene Lawn.

Customers have continued to sign up to the 'support service' across the sheltered sites and continue to benefit from the excellent support

the staff provide.

This year we have been busy promoting our Homelink service to NDH customers, health and social care agencies and the general public of North Devon. We have held coffee mornings, delivered presentations, placed articles in the local press and attended the North Devon Show.

The 'Homelink' service is available to anyone who may feel that they would benefit from the reassurance of a 24hr community alarm or a welfare visit/call from one of the Support Advisors.

Homelink Website

Please visit our website www.devonhomelink.com to find lots of useful advice and information about our home support service and alarms.



HOME SPOT!

- Number of support service customers: 523
- Number of Devon Homelink customers: 1099
- % of customers satisfied with support service: 98%



www.devonhomelink.com

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 strap 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**

New Customer Satisfaction Form

We are committed to providing a high quality and valuable service to our support service customers. This year we have developed a new customer satisfaction form to enable us to gather and listen to feedback from our customers in relation to the service.

Specialist Telecare Equipment

Devon Homelink now offers 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.

Pictured is the new iVi pendant with falls detection.

It is a lightweight and discreet pendant with a range of wearing options and adjustable sensitivity. It provides constant care automatically by monitoring safety and offering reassurance and peace of mind.

To find out information on the full range of products on offer please call us on 01271 312500.



What next for Supported Housing?

- The support service is currently exploring providing other facilities on the schemes. The Rotary club in Braunton are hoping to start a 'memory cafe' at Mariners at the end of September.
- We will continue to promote the Homelink service to all customers, raising awareness of the benefits of the service.
- Develop the housing management service on the schemes, making it easier for customers to speak directly to one of the support staff regarding any issues they may have.

Consulting with our customers

The Scrutiny Panel conducted a review of older person's services in July 2014. They consulted with customers about the changes to funding and the things that they value about the service. The results were used to shape how the support and alarm service will be delivered from April 2015.

Equality and Diversity update

At North Devon Homes we deal with over 10,000 customers, contractors, staff and members of the public every year.

In delivering our services and dealing with such a large and diverse group of people as a business we work hard to ensure that our culture and the services we offer are accessible for everyone.

To do this we train our staff and develop a positive action culture through our values and embed equality as part of our

business.

This year we have

- Reviewed our new development standards and specifications to ensure they meet the changing needs of our customer base
- Carried out a range of adaptations to 218 properties
- Improved the way we design and deliver planned maintenance contracts to take account of specific customers needs

- The Board has considered each major decision it has taken in terms of its impact on equality for customers
- All policies and customer service standards approved in the year have been reviewed and amended to take into account best practice on equality.
- All contracts we have committed to with external agencies include specific requirements on treating customer fairly and with respect

NEIGHBOURHOODS



WOODVILLE LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN



We introduced a local lettings plan for the new homes at Woodville in Barnstaple:

- To achieve a balanced community in terms of economic activity
- To attain a mixture of child density and occupancy levels
- To free up social housing in North Devon through downsizing
- To ensure applicants with a local connection to North Devon are prioritised over applicants without such a local connection

This was achieved by applying the following criteria:

- A target for 30% of the properties to have at least one member of the household in

employment.

- Selectively under-occupying certain properties where there is no immediate access to communal space
- Priority given to downsizing applicants freeing up social housing in North Devon
- Priority given to applicants with a local connection to North Devon by either of the following criteria:
 - Residence.
 - Work in Devon.
 - Have family connections to North Devon.

There is more information about these criteria available from the Local Government Association 020 7664 3000 www.local.gov.uk

Voids process improvements

This year we have made some key changes to the voids process.

- The revision of lettings standards (which was approved by our customer groups)
- Introduction of multiple viewings
- Completion of post termination visits to 100% of all properties
- Inclusion of the Change of Tenancy budget within the Neighbourhood Services Team
- Improved management of contractors, including monthly review meetings
- Improvements in value for money. Negotiated with contractors to

agree improved contract clauses, for example, carrying out additional checks

- There has been increased accountability of the works undertaken by H2H
- The removal of the mutual exchange and voids from the surveyors role has freed up time to concentrate on planned works and enabled the "patch" based model to be introduced
- The Lettings Officer and Property Advisor work together to ensure clear and accurate information about the property is communicated between them and the customer

What next for Neighbourhood Services?

- Work with the Neighbourhood Services Improvement Group to develop a Neighbourhood dispute booklet
- Develop Multi Team Meetings - a focused weekly meeting to include Neighbourhood Officers, Surveyors, Customer Care Team, Income Officers and Support Advisors for each neighbourhood patch
- Neighbourhood Officers to champion in key areas of work e.g Mediation, Targeted Families and community involvement
- Review of the Devon Home Choice procedure and process

Anti Social Behaviour Update



This year we have improved procedures for dealing with neighbourhood and anti social behaviour complaints. All relevant teams have received training. Members of our Customer Care Team have been trained in completing assessments and the triage process to enable them to respond to all reports of low level anti social behaviour. In addition, our Support Advisors have been trained to take on housing management of our sheltered schemes, part of which will be to respond to all reports of low level anti social behaviour. Our Neighbourhood Officers are spending more time on estates, having a dedicated day per week to spend out on their patch. Noise nuisance and fly tipping remain the top two highest reported incidents of anti social behaviour to North Devon Homes. 19 fly tipping cases were reported in 2014/15. 94.7% of these were removed within the target timescale of 3 days. 39 noise nuisance cases were reported in 2014/15. In response to this we have purchased two more sets of noise monitoring equipment. This means that we now have one set of noise monitoring equipment per neighbourhood patch. New legislation has recently been introduced in relation to anti social behaviour. In the coming year we will be updating our ASB Strategy in line with these changes.

HOME SPOT!

- Total lettings (relets and first lets): 325
- Total relets: 223
- New lettings (first lets): 102
- Mutual exchanges: 47
- Transfers: 76
- Customer satisfaction with Allocation Service: 98%

HOME SPOT!

- Number of new ASB cases: 109
- Number of closed cases: 117
- Number of closed resolved cases: 117
- Number of cases open at year end: 31
- Number of cases without an action plan at year end: 0

HOME SPOT!

- Tenancy changes (acquisitions and successions): 47
- Number of out days dedicated to inspections: 48
- Number of Action Days: 4

Action Days



This year we have held Action Days at Gorwell, Frankmarsh and Forches in Barnstaple and Burnside and Slade Valley in Ilfracombe. These are attended by a wide range of people from the local community including residents, councillors, police and staff from North Devon Homes. Community Action

Days are a great opportunity for all parties to work together to improve the appearance of the local area and include litter picking, pathway weeding, collecting unwanted items and a general tidy up of the estate. We are looking forward to holding more Action Days in the year to come.

Customer Inspectors drive key service improvements

A group of eight customer inspectors have been visiting areas maintained by North Devon Homes to inspect the standard of grounds maintenance and communal cleaning services provided. Inspectors have visited sites all over North Devon assessing the quality of grass cutting, hedge trimming and cleaning standards. This information is recorded and key findings fed back to managers and service providers to help drive service delivery improvements.

In addition, customer inspectors have been visiting void properties to assess the efficiency of the voids process, the quality of works done and the standard of ready to let properties.

We are always looking for new inspectors; if you are interested please contact our Customer Involvement Officer Clare Paddon on 01271 313384 for more information.

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 Customer Involvement Officer can provide you with the training and support you may need to become more effectively involved.

Menu of Involvement

- Telephone Surveys
- Postal Surveys
- Email Survey
- Text Survey
- Social Media
- Residents Groups
- Editorial Panel
- Supported Housing Focus Group
- Service Review and Improvement Groups
- Inspections
- Mystery Shopping
- Customer Forum
- Scrutiny Panel
- Customer Board Members

Customer Involvement Strategy

During 2014 we began to implement the objectives set out in our new Customer Involvement Strategy. 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 offer to inform, consult and involve you if you choose to do so and contains key objectives and actions to achieve the strategy's aims, meet regulatory requirements and best practice guidance. This year customer led inspections have taken place to assess the quality of grounds maintenance and communal cleaning service

provision and the efficiency of the voids process. An effective new database has been established to record all involved customers and an impact assessment has been developed to record and monitor all outcomes of involvement activities. We have adopted a proactive approach to customer involvement by designing a new booklet to send out to all customers to promote involvement activities and encourage participation. Customers can request a copy of the Customer Involvement Strategy by contacting the Customer Involvement Officer, Clare Paddon on 01271 313384.

HOME SPOT!

- Number of Customer Forum meetings: 12
- Number of documents reviewed and developed by customers: 33
- Number of Customer Forum Members: 9
- Number of ways to get involved: 14
- Number of Scrutiny group service reviews: 3
- Number of involved customers: 1,172
- Number of customers receiving training for involvement duties: 31
- Number of service changes as a result of customers involvement: 8
- Number of improvements as a result of inspections and mystery shopping: 1

Changing Faces on the Forum

The Customer Forum is a group of volunteer members who meet monthly to ensure that North Devon Homes puts customers at the heart of everything they do. Over the last year there have been some changes in membership but the group have continued to go from strength to strength. The Forum work closely with customers, staff, management and the board of directors to ensure that customer views are represented and improvements are made to our service delivery as a result of customer involvement activities. Would you like to come along and find out more about the Forum? Why not come along to one of our meetings? Please call our Customer Involvement Officer, Clare Paddon on 01271 313384 if you would like more information.

What next for Customer Involvement?

- Review of Customer Service Standard to include Key Performance Indicators
- Increased collaborative working between the Scrutiny Group and the Customer Forum
- Working with the Customer Forum to create a 'task and finish' working group to assist customers with the forthcoming welfare changes and the implementation of Universal Credit

Supported Housing Focus Group

This year we have made plans to introduce a Supported Housing Focus Group. This will look at issues affecting older people and help shape the NDH service offer.



Digital Communication

This year we have made plans to introduce an on line forum for customers. This will create a digitally up to date and accessible way for customers to discuss key issues and help to shape the services provided by NDH. In addition, customers have been consulted with on the design and function of the new NDH website.



SCRUTINY UPDATE

The customer Scrutiny Panel has had a busy year looking at our Older Persons Service; Customer Satisfaction around Response Repairs and our internal process to raise Job Tickets.

The Board reports from the panel have action plans agreed with each service review that include suggested improvements the panel make. In 2015 the panel asked that they would like updates on how these actions were being implemented in order that as a customer group they can demonstrate having an influence and are able to challenge, from a customer's perspective, the way we deliver services.

The Panel asked that we looked at how we collect customer satisfaction surveys for response repairs, in

particular increasing the number of surveys returned and suggesting a way this might be achieved. We are currently looking at how this idea will be implemented and the changes we need to make and will be reporting back to the Scrutiny Panel in July 2015 on what we have done.

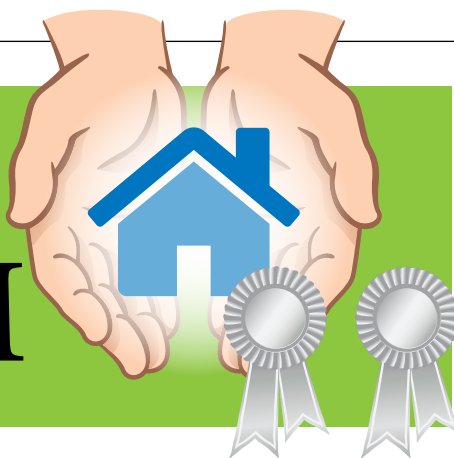
The panel also asked the Older Person's Service report back to them in August 2015 on how the new service charges were affecting customers. Their review of this service in September 2014 highlighted the impact that the changes in funding may have. The panel are keen, not only to support our Older Persons Service, but also to understand and inform our Board from a customer's point of view on this impact.

Eco Friendly Scrutiny Panel

Identifying, suggesting and practicing Value for Money is close to the hearts of our Scrutiny Panel. In December they became paper free, adopting new technology to reduce printing, paper and postage costs. This development allows the group to have a greater breadth of information at their finger tips when reviewing service delivery. Michelle Rigler, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, says: "Becoming paper free was a big decision for the panel but we made it because of the

value for money it offered, an integral part of what scrutiny stands for. Also the benefits of being able to access all the information we need for our reports is invaluable. Our members, which include a wide age range, have all received training and support. Although we are at an early stage I feel we are already benefiting from the change." If you would like to give Scrutiny a try please contact Frances Walsh on 01271 312527.

CUSTOMER CARE TEAM



Customer Care Team Review

In 2014 a review of the Customer Care Team was undertaken. This incorporated feedback, statistics, performance indicators and a multitude of changes to the team since it was introduced in 2009. We identified that it was time to refocus the team on the things that matter to

our customers. As a result, we recruited permanent staff and embedded a 'Right First Time' culture. The team undertook skills assessments and these results have helped us to devise a targeted training programme to improve and strengthen our adviser's knowledge.

Call Recording and Quality Assurance

As we reported last year, we have now introduced a more robust, user friendly call recording system. We have put this through its paces with rigorous testing and are now in a position to roll this out to all teams. This means that 100% of inbound and outbound calls will be recorded. You may notice some changes to our telephone messages when you call in, as we do want to make all customers aware that their calls are recorded. The next step is to introduce a Quality Assurance framework to monitor performance and inform future training for our teams.

First Line Anti-Social Behaviour Calls

We had hoped to introduce changes to the ASB reporting process last year and have made progress towards this. The Customer Care Team received further training in July to enable our advisers to deal with the first reports of anti social behaviour and assess whether these require escalation to the Neighbourhood Officer.

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

NDH Team Reps - making things more joined up!

We also introduced a new initiative to help improve internal communications at NDH. This was in an effort to better inform our Customer Care Team, and in turn our customers, about things that might affect them. Each team has regular meetings with their CCT rep so we can establish the current hot topics, any planned events and future

activity, such as planned works or mailouts. These meetings have enabled the Customer Service Advisers to deal with your calls effectively and efficiently, the first time you contact us. Work is planned to further improve the way our teams work together and we hope that you feel the benefit of this when you call us.



Garages

In the last edition of Home News, we reported on the investment programme for garage maintenance. This has progressed well during 2014-15, with major works carried out at numerous locations. The specific sites that were targeted this year were Hart Manor, Jewell Crescent, Staddon Close and Park Villas which had new roofs and

Meteor Walk, Sabre Walk, Kings Road and Churchill Crescent where we fitted new doors. We are now looking at the programme for the coming year, which will include major roofing works at Churchill Crescent in South Molton. We are also working closely with our Regeneration team to identify sites that may benefit from development.



HOME SPOT!

- Calls answered between 1 April and 31 March 2015 (including overflow from other teams): 49,658
- Percentage of customers happy with the handling of their call: 98.6%
- Number of repair satisfaction surveys administered: 2,994
- Percentage of these being telephone surveys: 28%

What next for the Customer Care Team?

- Our call quality assurance monitoring will be introduced during 2015/16.
- We will be working collaboratively to improve NDH's website.
- We intend to work more closely with our Out of Hours Service to improve the customer experience when calling emergency repairs through them.
- In November 2015 we will be sending all customers the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR survey). This will give customers the opportunity to give us feedback about our services and will help us to shape our business in response to customer comments.

Head Office Number:
01271 312500

Emergency out of hours number:
0800 917 0619



DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION

It has been a hugely successful year in the Development & Regeneration team, building 101 new homes throughout the financial year.

Woodville

We are delighted to confirm that we successfully delivered completion of all 27 units forming Woodville Phase 2, with the final units completing in March 2015. These properties included a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom houses and 2 bedroom bungalows. Works are now progressing across Phase 3 with the next 11 properties on target for handover in September 2015.



Lee Road, Lynton

With the site at Lee Road now cleared we are pleased to confirm that piling works are underway to prepare the site for the structural building works that will begin over the coming months. The scheme will provide 2 new commercial units and 4 new rented flats, which have a local occupancy tie to the Lynton area.



Forches Phase 2

Works are now drawing to a close on Forches Phase 2, with all rented properties completed and final works underway in connection to the highways on the estate and the remaining shared ownership properties. The final touches are also in hand with regard to landscaping across the site. All in all we have delivered 147 new homes at Forches over the past 4 years.



Pill Gardens, Braunton

The last 5 rented properties forming part of Pill Gardens Phase 2 were completed in August 2014. The scheme as a whole has provided 32 new affordable rented properties in Braunton for local people.



The Orchards, Lovacott

The scheme at Lovacott has been a great success and has provided well needed affordable accommodation to the Lovacott area. All 9 properties on the development are affordable rented properties which have a local connection tie.



10A & 10B Forches Avenue

Previously a community resource for the police, 10 Forches Avenue was converted into two rented flats in November 2014.



Section 106 Purchases

KENSINGTON CLOSE, BARNSTAPLE

In July 2014 we purchased 5 new 2 bedroom affordable rented properties from Chichester Homes.



Future Plans

Anchorwood Bank

North Devon Homes are pleased to confirm that we have now secured the iconic Anchorwood Bank site, in central Barnstaple. Over the next five years, NDH in partnership with Wessex Investors, intend to create an exciting new riverside quarter to include housing and commercial property.

Plans are currently being drawn up for 172 properties that will include 37 affordable rented homes and 135 market sales. These properties will include a mix of houses and flats. The site will also provide a new ASDA store, additional retail space and leisure uses including restaurants and cafes.

Phase 1 of the development which includes the new ASDA, a nature reserve, highways works and a riverside walkway linking the Tarka Trail with Long Bridge is already underway and will be completed in 2016.

Once complete this once derelict site is expected to be a major asset to Barnstaple and enhance the town's reputation as a destination for visitors from across North Devon and beyond.



Gorwell

We are pleased to confirm that we have now secured Planning Permissions, subject to Section 106 Agreements, for all three proposed sites on the Gorwell Estate, which are:

- Land at Goodleigh Road
- Crow View Garage Site
- Regeneration of Beaufort Walk flats (even numbers 2-32)

Works are anticipated to commence on the Crow View and Goodleigh Road sites later this year.

Empty Homes Initiative

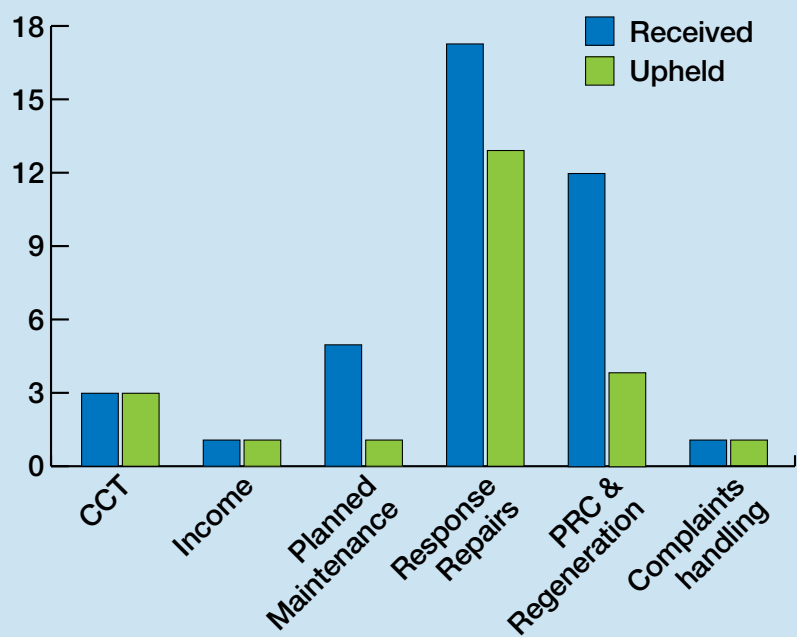
During the last financial year we have been working closely with a local landlord, together with support from Home & Communities Agency Funding and NDH own resources, to bring empty properties back into use as affordable housing.

Under this initiative as a whole we have delivered completion of 10 properties, including 6 flats at The Globe, Lynton, 2 flats at 19 High Street Ilfracombe and 2 flats at 10 Market Square Ilfracombe.



COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK

Complaints by Team



Your feedback helps improve services

We encourage feedback, both good and bad, from all customers so that we know what we are doing well and areas that we need to improve. All complaints are reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that we learn from your feedback. There were 14 service improvements identified some examples of which are shown below:

I haven't heard anything after reporting a nuisance from my neighbours.

This has been an issue in the past and to try and prevent this from re-occurring our Customer Care Team have had training with our Neighbourhood Officers on ways to deal with some issues at the first point of contact. Should the same issue arise now we will deal with it straight away and make sure it is followed through.

I reported a leak in my roof, 2 workmen visited and said scaffolding was needed and I have not heard anything since.

The report from our operatives was emailed to a surveyor who was away from the office for a period of time. In order to prevent this happening again we have introduced a shared mailbox which means that all emails are visible to all surveyors and where we know someone is away their work can be picked up by another member of the team.

When I moved in there was lots of rubble and rubbish left in the garden, we were told that the Rangers would remove it. No-one came so we got rid of it ourselves.

Traditionally our Rangers only had access to their diary for booking in work and spend the majority of the day out of the office. To ensure that all jobs are picked up we have enabled our Customer Care Team to put appointments in their diary to make sure the work gets done.

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

Reviewing Policies

The Reasonable Behaviour Policy is currently being reviewed by Staff along with the Customer Feedback Policy and Compensation Policy. We hope to have all 3 policies reviewed and approved by the Customer Forum and Board by the end of March 2016.

Complaints and feedback satisfaction surveys

We have only received 4 satisfaction surveys during the course of the year and of those received 3 were either very or fairly satisfied with how their complaint was handled and with the outcome of their complaints. One customer was very dissatisfied with the handling and outcome of their complaint.

Improving response times

All members of the Strategy and Performance Team are now trained to take complaints which has helped us to achieve 100% acknowledgement within 3 days. This has then impacted on the stage 1 response times as it enables the complaints to be passed more quickly to the line managers to investigate.

What next for Complaints and Feedback?

- We want to capture more Stage 0 complaints (dissatisfaction resolved at the first point of contact).
- Work with Managers to achieve 100% on time response to stage 1 complaints.
- Increase the membership of the Customer Complaints Panel.

Customer Complaints Panel

No complaints have escalated to the Customer Complaints Panel. The group has had a reduction in members during the year and we hope to have new members in place soon to enable training to continue using previous complaints and outcomes. If you would be interested in being part of the group please contact Cath Norris on 01271 313361 and she will be able to advise you on what you would need to do. All members of the customer Complaints panel are members of either the Customer Forum or the Scrutiny Panel who have been approved by our customer selection committee.

3 things for 2014-15

- Due to the reduction in meetings during the year and the recent fall in members of the Customer Complaints Panel we have not been able to look thoroughly into the complaints. It is still an ambition to have customers helping to identify improvements to our services from complaints and their experiences.
- 42 complaints (82%) were responded to within target however we have seen a drop in the number of complaints received this year. We have maintained a 100% record for acknowledging complaints and would like our response times to match, therefore this is again an area of priority to us.
- Continue to work with the Complaints Review Group to identify learning from complaints. We have identified 14 improvements which the group continues to work through to introduce.



New customer leaflet is now available from our offices and includes a form

Performance Indicators

- 51 complaints received.
- 27 upheld (53%).
- Of those upheld, 14 service improvements identified (52%).

Compliments

We received 91 compliments during 2014-15. It is helpful for us to know when we get things right as well as when we get things wrong. Sharing this information with colleagues helps us with the service we provide.

HOME SPOT!

- Number of stage 0 (informal) complaints: 18
- Number of formal complaints: 51
- Number resolved at stage 1: 43
- Number resolved at stage 2: 4
- Number resolved at stage 3: 4
- Number taken to the customer complaints panel: 0
- Number taken to the ombudsman: 0
- Number responded to within target (15 days): 82%
- Number acknowledged within target (3 days): 100%

Compensation Claims

We received 25 compensation claims throughout the year 16 (64%) were upheld with payments totalling £2807.

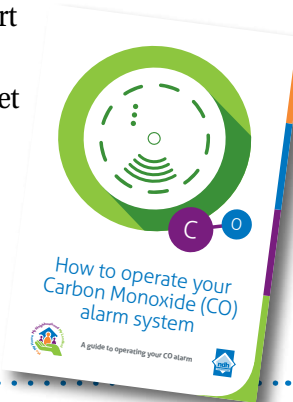
Looking after your home



Carbon Monoxide Alarms

North Devon Homes has taken the decision to install carbon monoxide alarms into all properties where there is fuel being burnt for example solid fuel such as log burners, open fires or a gas central heating system or gas cooker. This decision follows the announcement from the Government who are introducing new legislation from October 2015. The legislation is currently in a draft version and only makes the requirements for solid fuel; however North Devon Homes recognises the risks also posed by gas appliances and so has aspired to a higher standard to ensure the safety of its customers. During 2015/16 we will be installing CO alarms as part of our programme of servicing checks on smoke alarms and when properties

become void. We hope to be 50% of the way through our properties by the time the legislation is introduced and that all properties will be covered by March 2016. Please help us to achieve this by allowing our servicing contractor, James Electrics, access to your home. As part of the process we have also developed a guidance leaflet for customers to read so that you can understand a little more about CO, the actions to take and the importance of testing your alarm.



Biomass Boilers

We've had an opportunity for funding to replace some oil fired and solid fuel boilers with Biomass boilers. We jumped at the chance to try out this new technology which will bring energy savings to our customers and update some of our older heating systems. The term biomass means plant matter containing energy. The stored energy is released when it is burnt in an efficient boiler. Most biomass fuel comes from wood in the form of pellets which is a renewable and abundant source of fuel. Any property receiving the biomass boiler will also have insulation levels checked and upgraded if necessary to ensure that we get the best energy performance from the property.

We hope to be reporting on the savings that these boilers have generated for our customers in the near future.

HOME SPOT!

- Total number of jobs: 10,674
- Percentage completed on target: 95
- Percentage completed on first visit: 86
- Percentage of gas safety check completed on time: 100
- Percentage of inspections on completed repairs: 10%
- Percentage of repairs customers satisfied: 96
- Number of planned units completed: 645

Investing in Home 2 Home

We know that our customers really value our repairs service. This year we have continued to invest in our Home 2 Home team to develop and enhance our response repairs service. We have purchased two new trailers that will be used by our Home 2 Home vans to increase capacity for transporting materials and tools. In addition, we have purchased a cherry picker. This is an elevated work platform which uses a hydraulic lifting system. The cherry picker will be used in works that need to be carried out at a height or in more difficult to reach areas. A large number of power tools have also been purchased and this will increase the long term efficiency of our Home 2 Home service by saving on hire costs. We have also successfully negotiated with our building materials supplier to reduce our costs in this area.

On Time Performance

We have been working with our contractors in stressing the importance of meeting our on time performance and have had meetings with those that were not achieving the target set. We have also worked with the customer care team to get the jobs prioritised correctly and have reviewed our prioritisation categories. Our H2H team have improved the planning of jobs and also have recruited some of the multi-skilled operatives vacancies within the team.

HOME 2 HOME RECRUIT THREE NEW APPRENTICES

Last year three new apprentices were recruited to work alongside the multi skilled operatives as part of the Home 2 Home team. The apprentices have been learning lots of new skills and gaining valuable work experience in their new roles alongside attending college to complete relevant qualifications.



Planned Maintenance works breakdown 2014/15

Kitchens	48	Gas Boilers	68
Bathrooms	18	Gas Heating	40
Doors	171	Air Source Pumps	2
Electric Heating	49	External Decs	141
Electrics	108	Total no. of units	645

Planned Maintenance News

- As well as biomass boilers we have undertaken a Ground Source Heat pump installation to 8 properties in Lynton. We will be monitoring performance to see how costs have reduced for our customers
- We have developed a 5 year planned maintenance programme which will provide some stability and certainty around where our future delivery will take place. This plan has been developed through increasing levels of stock condition surveys to our customers homes which will provide greater accuracy for replacement components in future years
- We have introduced a patch based model of working for surveyors who undertake both Responsive and Planned Maintenance functions. Each surveyor has one quarter of the district. A key benefit for customers is the Surveyor for your area will know all of the maintenance type questions or queries and will be able to assist in both these areas of the business delivery.

What next for Planned Maintenance?

- Continue to strengthen the knowledge and accuracy of how key components in customers' homes are performing and when they are due for replacement by undertaking another 650 stock condition surveys this year
- Retender some key Planned Maintenance Contracts during the next 12 months
- Embed and develop further the patch based model of working across the housing stock.

Response repairs performance 2014/15

Repair Priority	No. Completed	No. On Time	% On Time
Emergency	1629	1575	96.7%
Urgent	3654	3517	96.3%
Routine	5391	5042	93.5%

Right First Time Process

We are in the process of setting up a stores to get materials on site so we are not having to take trips to materials merchants and are working with both the CCT and surveyors to try and get as much detail as possible on job tickets to allow operatives to plan the work in effectively.

A growing success



The community garden in Forches provides a quiet, peaceful place for local residents to sit and relax whilst also providing an area to grow fresh food.

The garden operates as a communal project with volunteers all joining together to grow and harvest crops. Some of the produce is sold

commercially to cover the cost of the water and some is sold locally.

Volunteers now include young people who have a designated area to maintain, weed and water. In March they helped volunteers from the community and NDH staff to dig compost into raised beds and lay bark pathways. To add their own unique

touch planting areas using painted recycled tyres have been created to grow herbs that can be used in their weekly youth club cooking sessions.

The garden provides opportunities

for learning with AQA courses being available for those who wish to learn more about horticulture. These courses are facilitated through the Grow Jigsaw project in Bideford.

Community Projects: One Ilfracombe

North Devon Homes have been working with partners to support a wide range of community projects during the last year.

An example of this approach is the support that we have offered the One Ilfracombe initiative that has set out to redesign the way that services are delivered locally within Ilfracombe to achieve better outcomes. Marc Rostock, our Director of

Neighbourhoods has been on the One Ilfracombe Board and has been working with other directors to deliver this exciting and innovative approach. Staff and managers from across the organisation have also been getting involved to support projects and initiatives that One Ilfracombe are working on to create a better environment, promote health and well being and support people back into work.

The One Ilfracombe approach puts the community of Ilfracombe at the heart of decision making and is challenging partner organisations to work together better to improve outcomes, reduce costs and to offer better value for money.

More information can be accessed via the One Ilfracombe website: www.oneilfracombe.org.uk

Golden Globe Awards

In celebration of all the achievements made by the young people over the past year, Starfish NDH held "Golden Globes" style awards nights in March at both Forches Community Centre and Slade Valley Vision Centre.

The awards categories were all chosen by staff to reflect the varied personalities, strengths and contributions of individuals within each of the three youth clubs. Young people then voted in a closed ballot for the winners in over ten different categories ranging from the funniest person to the best achiever of the year.

Parents attended the events and proudly

applauded their children's achievements many of whom had dressed for the occasion in true Hollywood style. Other guests included, George Squires the Lord Mayor of Ilfracombe, The Ilfracombe Rotary Club representatives and Martyn Gimber CEO of NDH to name but a few.

In Ilfracombe food for the evening was paid for by the local Rotary Club with parents from all the club communities assisting in collecting raffle prizes and baking cakes making this annual event a truly memorable evening for all who attended.



Evaluation



In December 2014 we invited the University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth, to write an independent evaluation on our Youth project. At that time we were a few months away from the end of the 'Starfish NDH' project funded through the Big Lottery from April 2012 to March 2015.

Over the three years this project has won various awards, attracted high profile visitors and been locally acclaimed. We wanted to capture this success to assist in seeking more funding.

Dr Susan Cooper from the university met with young people, parents, and local residents from Slade Valley, Forches and Gorwell to hear in their own words what difference this project was making in the community.

Here are some of the excellent observations stated within Dr Coopers report;

"The innovative youth work practice model 'Developing Young Communities' should be disseminated far and wide as an example of excellent practice in both practice and academic forums."

"The significant impact of the project on young people and communities should be applauded."

"The development of positive communities is at the heart of North Devon Homes as evidenced by their vision statement; 'Working together to create communities where people want to live' and this commitment can be seen in the youth work approach taken in the Starfish project."

"Collaboration is at the heart of the starfish project and the strength of the relationships between NDH and its partners (professional, parents & customers) is remarkable."

Tenant 2 Tenant



Four members of the Customer Forum are at hand to help you with any questions or queries you may have. Tenant 2 Tenant has been set up to provide impartial support to all customers with any housing related issues. Sometimes it can really help to talk things through, and as tenants ourselves we really understand things from a tenant's perspective. If you feel it would be helpful to have an informal chat with another tenant with no obligation, no matter how small or silly you may think your query is, then please call us on 07740410970. We are available on this number 7 days a week, 9am to 9pm.

