

YARLINGTON HOUSING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2011

A REPORT ON YARLINGTON HOUSING GROUP'S
SERVICES, PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PLANS

**HOW ARE WE DOING?
WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING?
HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

THANKS GO TO THE LEAD MEMBERS OF THE RESIDENTS
FOCUS GROUPS WHO HELPED TO COMPILE THIS REPORT.





Introduction by the Chairman, Roger Powell

Well what a year this has been!

In the current economic climate, like other housing associations, we have faced many new challenges, not least cuts in government grant and other funding, some of our key contractors going out of business and, most seriously, very real social and financial pressures on our residents. We also have a growing aged population in the South West, where the ratio between earnings and house prices is the highest in the country. In the face of these pressures, many housing associations have decided to cut back on development and have been content merely to maintain their current standards.

Not so Yarlington!

In the past year we have:

- completed 349 new homes and started 365 more, expanding our field of operations into Sedgemoor, Devon and Dorset.
- met our pledge to achieve 100% Decent Homes Standard by December 2010.
- found new ways to get our residents involved, including through focus groups, neighbourhood planning events and the formation of a new Scrutiny Group.

- introduced Local Service Offers to meet higher targets for involvement and empowerment, dealing with customers and service standards.
- improved our performance in virtually all areas, including customer satisfaction, vacant homes, rent arrears and property maintenance.
- continued to introduce greener, energy saving technologies.
- opened new and innovative retirement living schemes, such as Bishops Court in Chard, and enhanced on-site support to our older residents.
- strengthened our resolve to help improve the communities in which our residents live.

How has this been done?

Only by all of us, staff and residents, not giving in but rather finding new ways of doing things and working together to make Yarlington something positive in our lives. That is what we are about and I, for one, am proud to be part of it.

TABLES THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT
SHOW HOW YHG COMPARED TO OTHER
SOCIAL LANDLORDS IN SOMERSET
AS AT MARCH 2010

Registered Provider	Very or fairly satisfied with landlord services
Flourish Homes	89.9%
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	79.3%
Magna Housing Association Limited	80.9%
North Somerset Housing Limited	84.7%
Somer Community Housing Trust	80.0%
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	80.2%
Yarlington Housing Group	89.0%
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	89.0%



Statement from our Chief Executive, Gary Orr

Yarlington Housing Group's successes over the years have been built upon a strong sense of awareness of our communities' needs and then responding accordingly. Much has been achieved since our establishment in 1999. Our latest annual report and published results continue to demonstrate this commitment to providing excellent services to our customers and wider communities.

Looking to the future, we will not waiver in our pursuit for further improvement. At a time of significant reform and change across the affordable housing sector, we remain both poised and active in responding to the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead. We also recognise that during the present economic downturn individuals and communities may require additional support. Indeed across our area of operation, we have seen an increase in number of people turning to us to meet their housing need. Despite significant funding cuts in the national affordable housing programme, we are making the best use of our resources by continuing to build new homes and providing services that our customers require.

Building Communities in its widest sense represents both our vision and mission for the future. In this context, our organisation is committed to maintaining

effective services and developing new solutions which support our communities.

Later in 2011, we will launch our new 3-year improvement plan. The six pillars that the new plan is built upon challenges us to both maintain and develop:

1. **Great homes and services that people need and want now and in the future.**
2. **Place our residents at the heart of everything we do.**
3. **Invest in our communities as places where people choose to live, learn and work.**
4. **Deliver growth that supports our business objectives.**
5. **Be a people centred organisation and**
6. **Ensuring the long-term viability of our business.**

We will consult further with customers and stakeholders on how best we can deliver our six key priorities. This work will translate into practical based actions that customers will directly experience and ultimately, will judge us against.

On behalf of the entire team, thank you for your valued custom, feedback and involvement with Yarlington Housing Group. Be assured that we remain totally committed to Building Communities.

Gary Orr
Chief Executive



Resident Involvement

Yarlington Housing Group places a high priority on resident involvement, recognising the benefits that working in partnership with residents can bring.

We offer a range of ways in which residents can engage with us. These include a variety of focus groups which give residents an opportunity to have a say in many matters concerning their home and environment. The Residents Forum Steering Group acts as a conduit between the Yarlington Board of Management and the Focus Groups.

During the year, the Focus Groups met regularly, and one of the most significant issues considered by them was the development of the three local service offers:

- Resident Involvement and Customer Service.
- Neighbourhoods and Community
- Repairs service and quality of the home

The process was a positive experience for residents, who appreciated being able to influence local services.

The Green Focus Group showed great enthusiasm for Photo Voltaic (PV) panels, which have since been installed on the roof at both Head Office and Armoury Road, Yeovil. More are planned for five sheltered housing schemes, where residents will benefit from the new Feed-in Tariff and see a reduction in their service charges for electricity and/or heating.

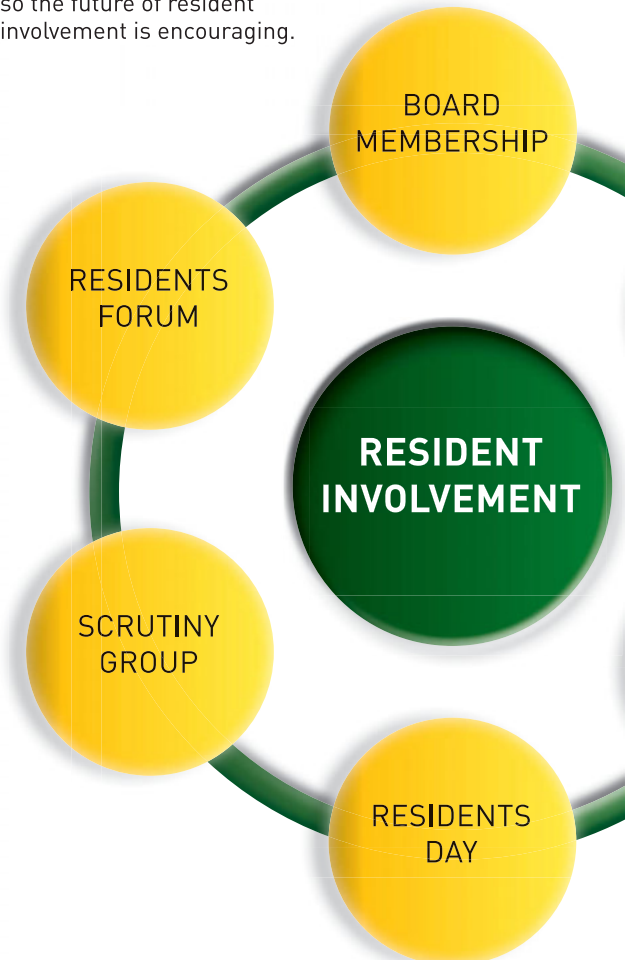
The Communications Focus Group continues to have a strong influence on corporate publications.

Following involvement in the tender evaluation

process, members of the Horticultural Focus Group saw a new grounds maintenance contract start in April 2010.

Members of the Board and the Residents Forum Steering Group met twice during the year. These liaison meetings have proved to be both popular and productive and have strengthened the links between the Forum and the Board.

There are challenges for resident involvement in the coming year, including the development of new local service offers and increasing the number of younger residents who engage with us. However, for both, there is enthusiasm, energy and ideas, so the future of resident involvement is encouraging.



Local Service Offers

All housing associations are now expected to develop their own local service offers tailored to what tenants want. We are pleased to have achieved the target date of April 2011 and believe that the offers will make a real difference to things that matter to residents.

The Focus Groups and the Resident Forum, under the direction of their Steering Group, took an active role in developing the offers.

Local Service Offers have been agreed by:

- **The Neighbourhood Management Focus Group** - for neighbourhood and community (which includes neighbourhood management and antisocial behaviour).
- **The Repairs and Maintenance Focus Group** - offer for the home standard (which includes repairs and maintenance).
- **The Residents Forum** - for resident involvement and customer service.

All were approved by the Residents Forum Steering Group and recommended to the Yarlington Housing Group Board, which gave its approval in March 2011. Details are available on our website or in hard copy form upon request.

Our residents have a key role in monitoring the local service offer. Standards of performance will be monitored, scrutinised and reviewed regularly.

We want the process of agreeing and reviewing local service offers to be dynamic and to involve a wider cross section of our residents. In addition to the Focus Groups, we will actively involve other residents in the formulation of future local offers as part of discussions at Neighbourhood Planning days, the Residents Conference and other key events.



FOCUS GROUPS

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

Registered Provider	Very or fairly satisfied that views taken into account
Flourish Homes	63.1%
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	56.7%
Magna Housing Association Limited	59.8%
North Somerset Housing Limited	62.1%
Somer Community Housing Trust	84.0%
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	54.8%
Yarlington Housing Group (2010)	82.2%
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	82.2%

Community Investment

We believe in Community Investment. We want to engage with our communities, responding to their wider needs and aspirations. Community Investment is one of the six key strands in the company's new three year strategic plan.

We want to provide sustainable communities; places where people want to live and work, now and in the future" providing:

- Decent affordable homes
- Highly responsive, Value for money local services - right first time and exceeding expectations

- Quality Support services
- Ability to influence local decisions
- Clean and safe environment
- Education & employment opprotunities
- Public amenities
- Support for socio/economic mobility
- Championing of the community
- Readiness for the next generation

We are now taking a much more pro-active approach to community investment. We are going out into the community and finding out what the communities - our customers - want. We are investigating which organisations are out there already working in the communities, that we can work in partnership with or signpost others towards. We have appointed a new post of a Community Partnership Worker who is specifically tasked with fulfilling this role.

In 2010/11 we have provided significant funds for a number of community projects, including:

- Football coaching for children in conjunction with Yeovil Town Community Sports Trust

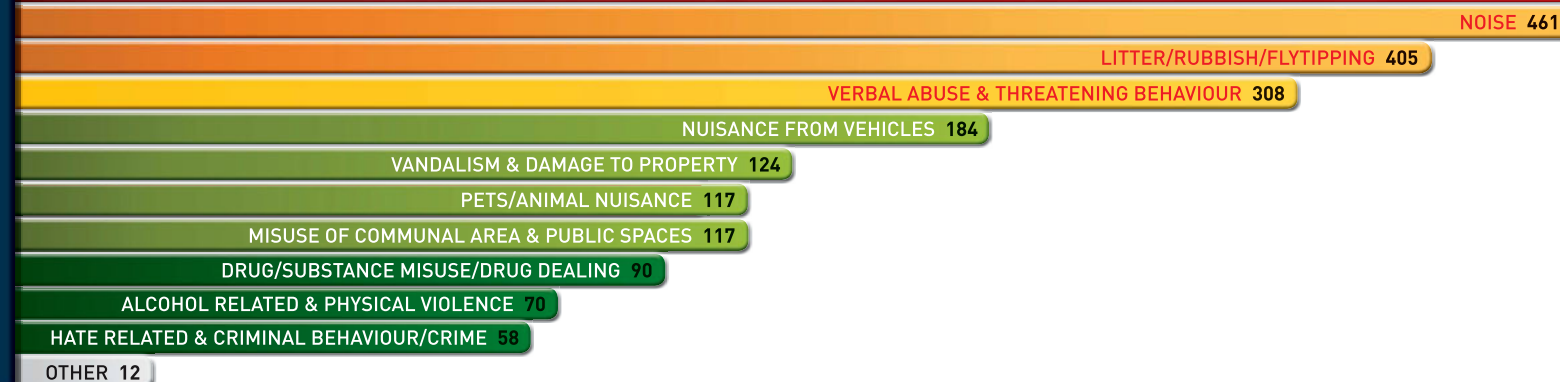
- Hi-vis jackets for pre-school children
- StreetFest community dance event
- Shopmobility - who provide scooters for less abled people to do their own shopping etc
- Improvements to recreational facilities in towns and villages
- Life Education Wessex - health and drug education for children
- Chard Street Pastors - reducing anti social behaviour etc
- Barnardos - helping vulnerable children
- Helped with setting up website for local community groups

Funding is deliberately aimed at meeting the aspirations of diverse groups in the community.

In 2011/12 we will be developing our Community Investment Strategy further. We will be doing more, working together with more community groups and organisations with the overall aim to "make a difference" to the communities in which we live.



ANALYSIS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR INCIDENTS 2010/11



Neighbourhoods

The Neighbourhoods team takes an active role in managing our housing stock and communal areas, including responding to breaches of tenancy and reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB). A dedicated Community Safety team deal with the more serious cases of ASB.

We realise that a small minority of antisocial tenants can cause misery in a local community and we take a firm approach to dealing with ASB, working closely with the Police and other agencies. In the past year, we received over 1,700 reports of antisocial behaviour.

The majority of cases were resolved without the need for legal action but the following actions were taken:

- 5 starter tenancies were extended or ended
- 27 court orders for possession were obtained
- 7 injunctions were gained
- 5 tenancies were demoted
- 6 cases were referred to the Community Justice Panel
- 16 households were evicted

81% OF CUSTOMERS WERE SATISFIED WITH OUR HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (TARGET 80% - JUNE 2011)

Our approach to neighbourhood management also includes Neighbourhood Planning, which involves residents and other stakeholders in agreeing priorities for each neighbourhood.

By the end of 2010/11 over 57% of our neighbourhood plans had been completed. As a result we helped to fund a tepee youth shelter in Odcombe and organised a community litter pick in Springfield. Looking forward to 2012, the neighbourhood planning events will feed directly into the development of local service offers.

During the year, we redeveloped areas such as Northbrook Road, Yeovil and

Cox's Close, Bruton. This required detailed liaison with tenants to find suitable alternative accommodation.

A new programme of tenancy audits has helped to identify tenancy fraud and illegal subletting and has also increased our knowledge of our tenants and their households. The audits will help identify tenants who want to move to smaller accommodation, releasing larger homes to families on the housing register.

Environmental improvements are often identified during neighbourhood planning events and estate inspections, or from suggestions made by residents. This year, we provided additional parking at West Park in Castle Cary; new communal bin stores at Compton flats in Yeovil; bulb planting at Uphills in Bruton and fencing at Henson Park in Chard. All of these improvements were carried out in consultation with residents and have made a significant improvement to the area.

Leaseholders and Shared Owners

In addition to its rented housing stock, Yarlington has a portfolio of low cost home ownership products. This includes over 300 shared ownership properties and nearly 290 leasehold flats.

Yarlington has an active Leasehold Management Focus Group and has appointed a Leasehold and Customer Services Officer to enhance the standard of communication with leaseholders and shared owners. This has already led to a 15% increase in the satisfaction of shared owners and leaseholders to 64% (February 2011), compared to 49% (in January 2010).

Yarlington is keen to improve the range of services offered and during the year started to offer gas servicing to leaseholders and shared owners. In addition, we appreciate the difficulties faced by some shared owners in the current economic climate and are now able to offer them financial advice.



Retirement Living

Yarlington Housing Group provides a wide range of housing for its older tenants, with over 1600 living in sheltered or extra care housing. We have 40 sheltered and 10 extra care schemes across South Somerset.

In September 2010, our newest retirement living scheme was opened at Bishops Court in Chard.

This brand new scheme which provides 62 flats is built on the site of 12 older bungalows. Bishops Court provides much needed sheltered housing in a modern, state-of-the-art building.

In April 2010 our contract for 24/7 alarm monitoring, was awarded to Sedgemoor District Council's monitoring centre. A representative from the Older Persons Focus Group was a member of the tender evaluation panel, which also saw the introduction of a Service Level

Agreement which requires a response to 97.5% of calls within less than 60 seconds.

In 2010/11 scheme makeovers have been completed at

- Bowhayes Lodge, Crewkerne
- Lockwood Court, Yeovil
- Windermere, Yeovil
- Davies Close, Winsham

These were all part of a planned programme of refurbishments, with residents consulted over the furnishings and colours.

Burrells House, West Coker will see major refurbishments in 2011/12. Built in the 1960's it contained 16 bedsitting room flats. Following the remodelling work, it will provide a mix of modern 1 and 2 bedroom apartments.

During the year, a planned restructure of the retirement living service took place. The changes followed discussions with the Older Persons Focus Group, which highlighted the value that residents placed on the scheme manager service and their concern about it being depleted by the withdrawal of support funding.

Uncertainty over the funding of support in our sheltered and extra care schemes continues and further changes are likely. However, our Board recognises the importance of sheltered housing and is determined it has a bright future within Yarlington Housing Group.

Customer feedback

Yarlington Housing Group encourages residents to let us know when we have got things wrong, so we can put things right promptly, and learn for the future.

During 2010/11, we received 105 complaints (compared to 127 in 2009/10) of which:

- 33 related to Neighbourhood Issues
- 23 related to Repairs and Maintenance.
- 20 related to Supported Housing
- 16 related to Development
- 5 related to Finance and Rents
- 5 related to Company Policy
- 3 related to Lettings

95% of these were resolved at Stage 1 of our complaints procedure, with only 7 complaints being dealt with at Stage 2. No complaints progressed to Stage 3.

During the year, 34% of the complaints received were upheld. As part of our response we identify how we can improve and the lessons learned are reported to the Board on an annual basis.

The Residents' Scrutiny Group will review the complaints report each quarter and make suggestions for service improvement. It will also be considered by our Management Team and by the Residents' Forum Steering Group.

A new scheme at Givelle Close, Yeovil



Development Activity 2010/11

Over the past year we have been working hard to provide homes for rent and shared ownership for those in housing need. Some of the new houses came from the new building we do and others by developers as part of large new estates.

In 2010/11, we completed 349 new homes for rent and shared ownership.

We exceeded all of the targets set for us, by both our Board and by the Homes and Community Agency. Our excellent track record will help us to attract government funding in future to develop even more new homes.

Over the years, the majority of our building activity has been in South Somerset. Many new homes have resulted from the redevelopment of concrete houses that failed the decent homes standard, but that programme is coming to an end. To continue building communities we will need to look in other local authority areas. A large number of the homes we will build this year will be in the Sedgemoor district, with others in Devon and Dorset. But we still have land in South Somerset and this year we will start work on 140 new homes that already have planning permission.

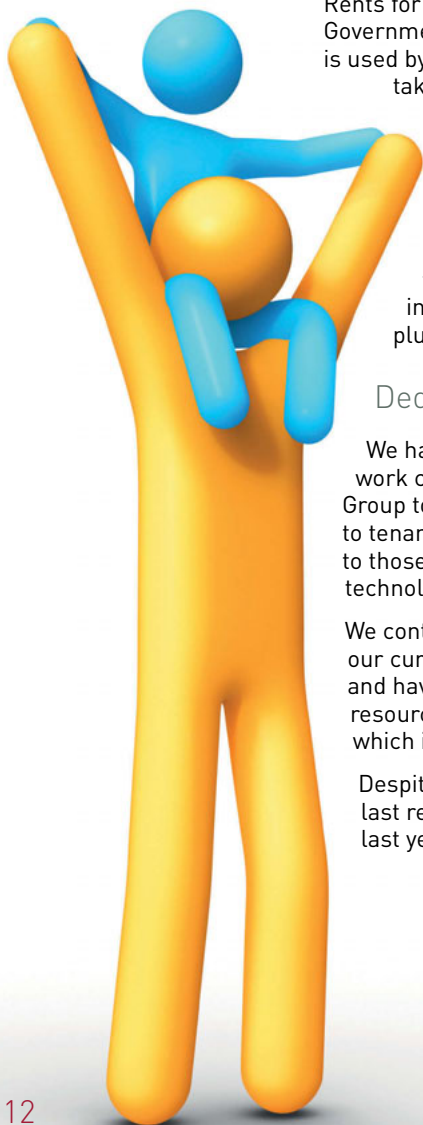
We are always looking for ways to improve what we do. At St Georges Avenue, Yeovil we needed to complete the regeneration of inefficient concrete houses. Yeovil District Hospital wanted to provide accommodation for their trainee doctors and consultants. We were able reach an agreement with the hospital to use some of the houses at St Georges for hospital staff. Work on this project has now started and will enable us to replace all of the existing houses with new modern homes suitable for the needs of today's residents, as well as providing flats for the hospital staff.



This table shows the location, number and tenure of the new homes built between April 2010 and March 2011

SCHEME NAME	NEW HOMES BUILT IN 2010/11					
	REPLACEMENT FOR DEMOLISHED	RENT	SHARED OWNERSHIP	INTERMEDIATE RENT	BUILT FOR SALES	TOTAL NEW HOMES
Alvington Fields, Yeovil			2			2
The Orchards, Langport			4		7	11
Givele Close, Yeovil		29	8			37
Copse Lane, Ilton	4	13	5			22
Cherry Court, Eastover, Langport	7		6			13
Poets Way, Dorchester		18	10			28
Flax Meadow Lane, Axminster			2	9		11
Hillcrest Road, Templecombe	29	10				39
Bishops' Court, Chard	12	50				62
Foxes Rest, Yeovil		13				13
Heritage Mews, St Andrews Drive, Charmouth		11				11
Milford Road, Yeovil	26	6	10			42
Blackberry Court, Wincanton		2			5	7
Cuckoo Hill, Bruton		4	4			8
Bramble Road, North Petherton			16			16
Woodhayes, Henstridge	14	10	3			27
TOTAL NEW HOMES	92	166	70	9	12	349

Registered Provider	% Social housing stock failing the Decent Home Standard
Flourish Homes	5.4%
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	14.9%
Magna Housing Association Limited	6.9%
North Somerset Housing Limited	1.9%
Somer Community Housing Trust	4.9%
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	0.3%
Yarlington Housing Group	1.8%
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	0.03%



Rental Income

How rents are set

Rents for our homes are set according to a Government system introduced in 2002, which is used by all Registered Housing Providers. It takes into consideration size, number of bedrooms, property value and an average level of income for the area. The intention is that all similar properties in the same area will have the same rent by 2012. The rent increase for any year is based on the rate of inflation (RPI – Retail Price Index) plus 0.5% in the previous September.

Dedicated approach

We have a dedicated Incomes Team and we work closely with the Money Matters Focus Group to shape how we deliver the service to tenants with arrears and provide support to those in financial difficulty. We use today's technology to deliver a flexible service.

We continue to perform well in keeping our current rent arrears as low as possible and have recently introduced a dedicated resource to pursue former tenant arrears which is already having a positive impact.

Despite all our efforts and only as a last resort, we evicted 12 households last year for rent arrears.

Support

In the current climate, it has been important to be able to offer practical solutions to tenants facing financial difficulty

We have two specialist members of staff to help tenants obtain the correct welfare benefits and tackle financial capability. We assess all new tenants to ensure they are in receipt of the correct benefits and continue to assist them throughout their tenancy.

An example of the work we do.

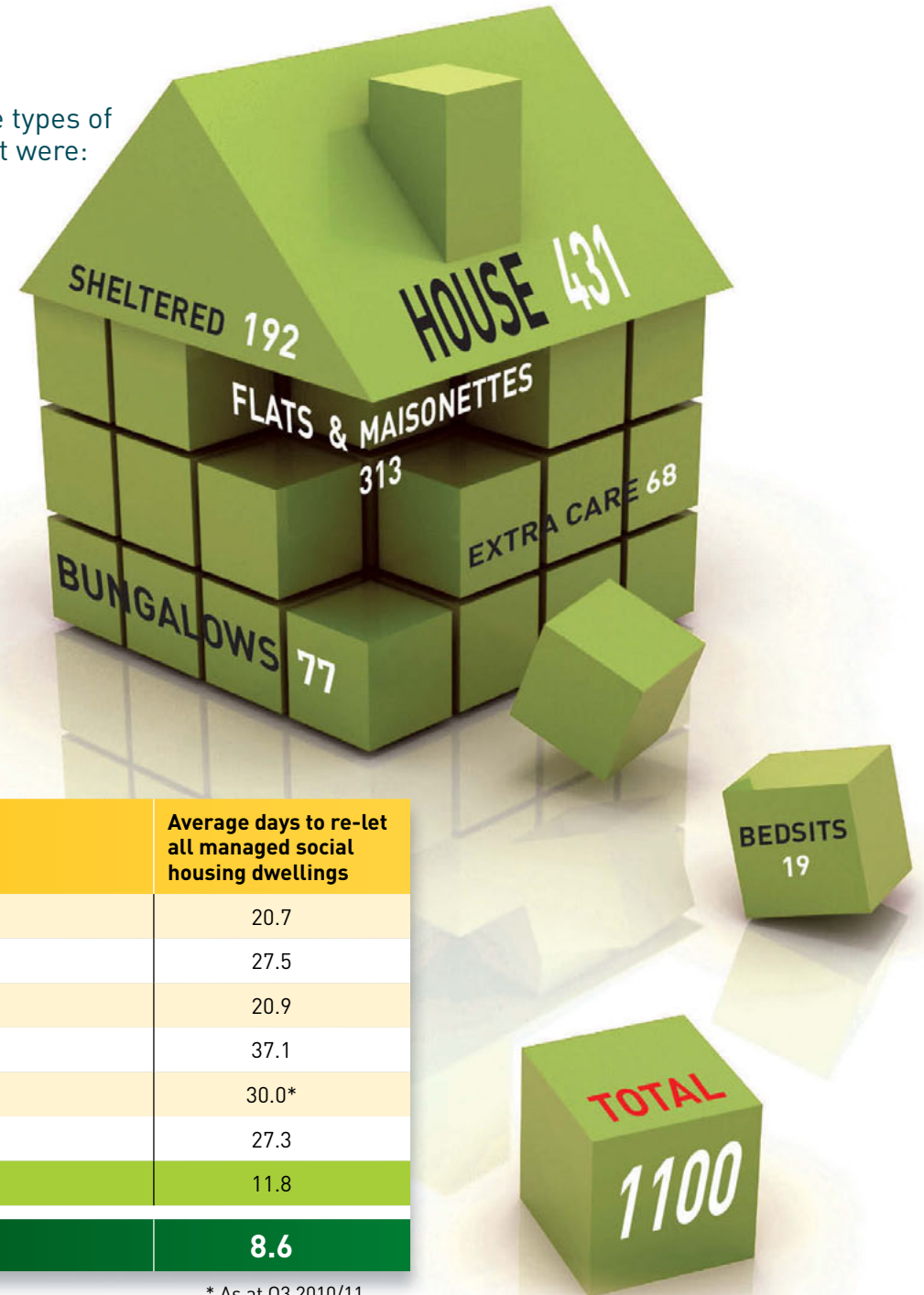
Case Study

We were contacted by a tenant who was struggling to pay her rent and other bills. She was on Income support, but because she had two children over the age of 18 she did not think she could claim any additional benefits. We assisted her in completing a claim for Housing Benefit and, as she has mobility problems, Disability Living Allowance.

She is now entitled to full Housing and Council Tax Benefit and was also awarded additional Income benefits of over £100 per week. We also managed to secure a Community Care Grant and money from a charity to assist in having basic furniture and decoration in the home.

Registered Provider	Rent arrears of current tenants
Flourish Homes	1.8%
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	3.5%
Magna Housing Association Limited	2.4%
North Somerset Housing Limited	2.3%
Somer Community Housing Trust	4.2%
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	3.2%
Yarlington Housing Group	1.3%
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	1.3%

In 2010/11 the types of properties that we let were:



Lettings

In 2010/11 we let 1,100 properties. Although the majority of these were in South Somerset, some were in other local authority areas.

Yarlington Housing Group is a member of the Homefinder Somerset choice based lettings scheme that is used by all local authorities and housing associations operating within Somerset. It allows people to register for housing and to bid for properties that are advertised. In Dorset and Devon similar schemes are used.

All applicants in Somerset are allocated a priority band – Gold, Silver or Bronze – which helps to determine who will be successful when bidding.

After the bidding has finished, our Lettings team carry out a 'verification' process to check the details given by the applicant.

Our average time to re-let vacant general needs properties (not including hostels)

which did not require major repairs was 11.8 days. This was below our target of 14 days and was amongst the best in the South West.

We ask people moving into our homes how satisfied they are with the overall lettings process. During 2010/11, 99% said they were fairly or very satisfied. Some people are not happy due to the amount of prior notice we are able to give. Others are unhappy with the condition or layout of their new home. We will be reviewing our lettings standard, which sets out the standard or condition that people can expect their new Yarlington home to be in when they first move in.

DISTRICT	Properties let 2010/11
South Somerset	1056
Sedgemoor	3
West Dorset	35
East Devon	6
Total	1100

Registered Provider	Average days to re-let all managed social housing dwellings
Flourish Homes	20.7
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	27.5
Magna Housing Association Limited	20.9
North Somerset Housing Limited	37.1
Somer Community Housing Trust	30.0*
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	27.3
Yarlington Housing Group	11.8
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	8.6

* As at Q3 2010/11



Responsive Maintenance

Responsive Maintenance consists of day to day property repairs; void property refurbishment; gas servicing and maintenance, and electrical works.

The in-house workforce of 65 tradesmen complete 88% of the jobbing works and servicing with specialist contractors predominantly undertaking electrical works and void refurbishments.

We continued to exceed our targets with regard to performance:

100% of emergency repairs were attended within 24 hours

97.5% of urgent repairs (completion within 5 working days) were completed on time, target 95%

97.9% of routine repairs (completion within 26 calendar days) were completed on time, target 95%.

In 2010/11 the customer satisfaction level was **99.5%** (compared to 99.3% 2009/10).

Customer satisfaction is very important and we follow up negative comments either by a phone call to the tenants or in writing within 10 days.

Registered Provider	Very or fairly satisfied with repairs & maintenance
Flourish Homes	86.2%
Knightstone Housing Association Limited	74.8%
Magna Housing Association Limited	71.5%
North Somerset Housing Limited	77.5%
Somer Community Housing Trust	78.0%
Sovereign Housing Association Limited	72.7%
Yarlington Housing Group	85.0%
Yarlington Housing Group (as at march 2011)	85.0%

HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE YEAR INCLUDED:

- The successful transfer of the Gas Servicing Team to Yarlington following the contractor going into administration. Not only has this led to an improved service, it also offers better value for money, saving an estimated £300,000 each year.
- The success of our apprentice scheme with two plumbers completing their 3 year course and progressing into the main workforce.

Planned Maintenance

Planned Maintenance is work that is scheduled in advance and mainly undertaken on a periodic basis. It includes kitchens, bathrooms, heating replacements, door and window upgrades, re-roofing contracts and external and communal area decorations.

We continue to procure efficiently through the Advantage South West (ASW) Procurement Club, where the combined purchasing power of 17 local housing providers generated savings for YHG of over £145,000 in 2010/11 when sourcing boilers, windows, bathrooms, kitchen units, sanitary ware, doors and radiators.

Works are undertaken in a variety of ways:

- Kitchen and Bathroom replacements are part of a new 10-year partnering contract with Jones Building Contractors.
- Door and window replacements are through the ASW nominated suppliers.
- Other elemental programmes are won by contractors bidding on smaller tendered packages of work.

During 2010/11, we spent £7.286m on planned maintenance (£6.34 million in 2009/10), with the following number of properties benefitting from the improvements:

- Heating 180
- Rewire 110
- Kitchens 432
- Bathrooms 176
- Doors 573

There were consistently high levels of customer satisfaction, with the kitchen and bathroom programme achieving

98.5% satisfaction.

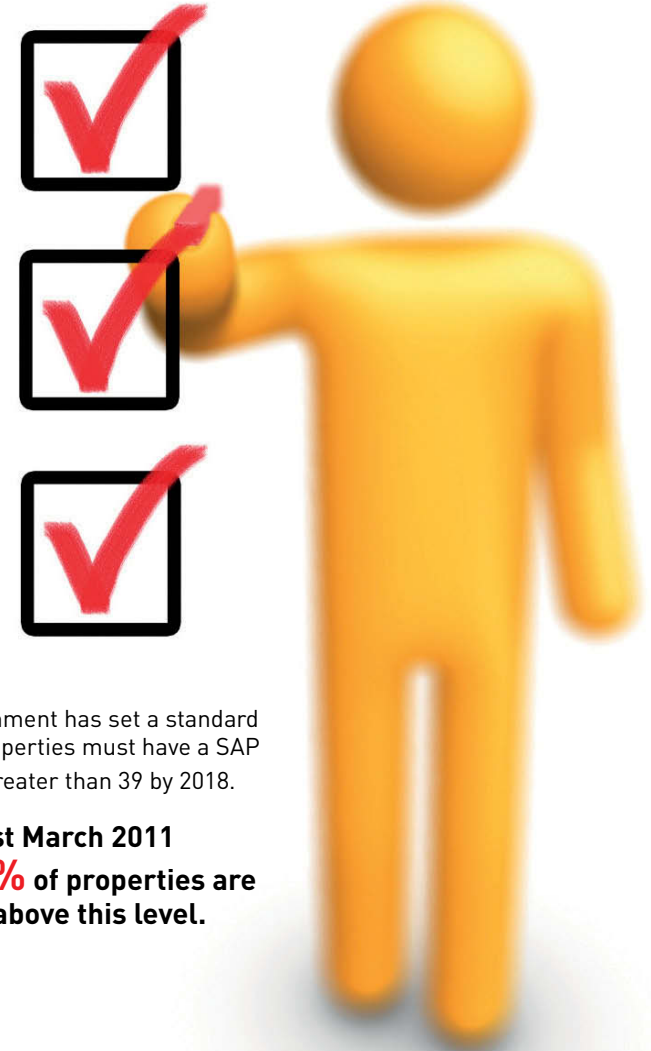
Yarlington Housing Group ensured early in the year that all (except 3 of its properties which are all due for redevelopment) were Decent Homes compliant by the 31st December 2010.

Communal painting was relaunched in 2010 with the formation of an in-house team, responsible for bringing all general needs communal areas back up to standard over the next 3 years.

We continue to increase the energy efficiency of our properties. 2010/11 saw the completion of the following projects:

- All properties have had their loft insulation upgraded to a minimum of 200mm depth
- All suitable properties have had their cavity walls insulated
- All solid wall properties with low energy efficiency ratings have had the option of the internal walls being insulated.

All of these measures have increased our overall energy efficiency rating (SAP rating) from 64.2 to 66.5.



The government has set a standard that all properties must have a SAP rating of greater than 39 by 2018.

**As at 31st March 2011
98.85% of properties are already above this level.**



About the money

At the end of each financial year our accounts are audited to make sure that they are accurate and correct.

These figures are for the year 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011, and show you where our money comes from and where it is being spent.

The value of our business	2011 (£000's)	2010 (£000's)
The cost of all of our properties and garages	152,739	131,365
The value of other assets e.g. offices, computers and equipment	4,194	4,206
How much we are owed by other people or businesses, and the value of new properties we have for sale	21,570	32,709
Less the amount that we owe to other people that must be paid this year	-8,278	-7,837
Total	170,225	160,443

How the business is funded	2011 (£000's)	2010 (£000's)
Loan taken in 1999 to buy the homes from the council. (This amount has since been increased to build and buy new homes.)	156,280	156,729
Overall surplus to date	2,606	-11,219
Estimated contribution to employees pensions	11,339	14,933
Total	170,225	160,443

Income and Expenditure	2011 (£000's)	2010 (£000's)
Income from rents and other properties we manage, shared ownership and other property sales.	40,339	40,521
Less the cost of managing and repairing homes plus running the business	-22,606	-26,918
Surplus from sales under 'Right to Buy' scheme, less the value of the property	922	1,018
Less the interest charges and other financial costs we have to pay	-6,041	-5,588
How much we have left	12,613	8,389

How we spent this money

Maintaining the properties	48%	31% Planned	17% Responsive and other
Employing our staff	25%		
Sales costs	11%		
Managing our estates	5%		
Running the offices	5%		
Depreciation	4%		
Other	2%		

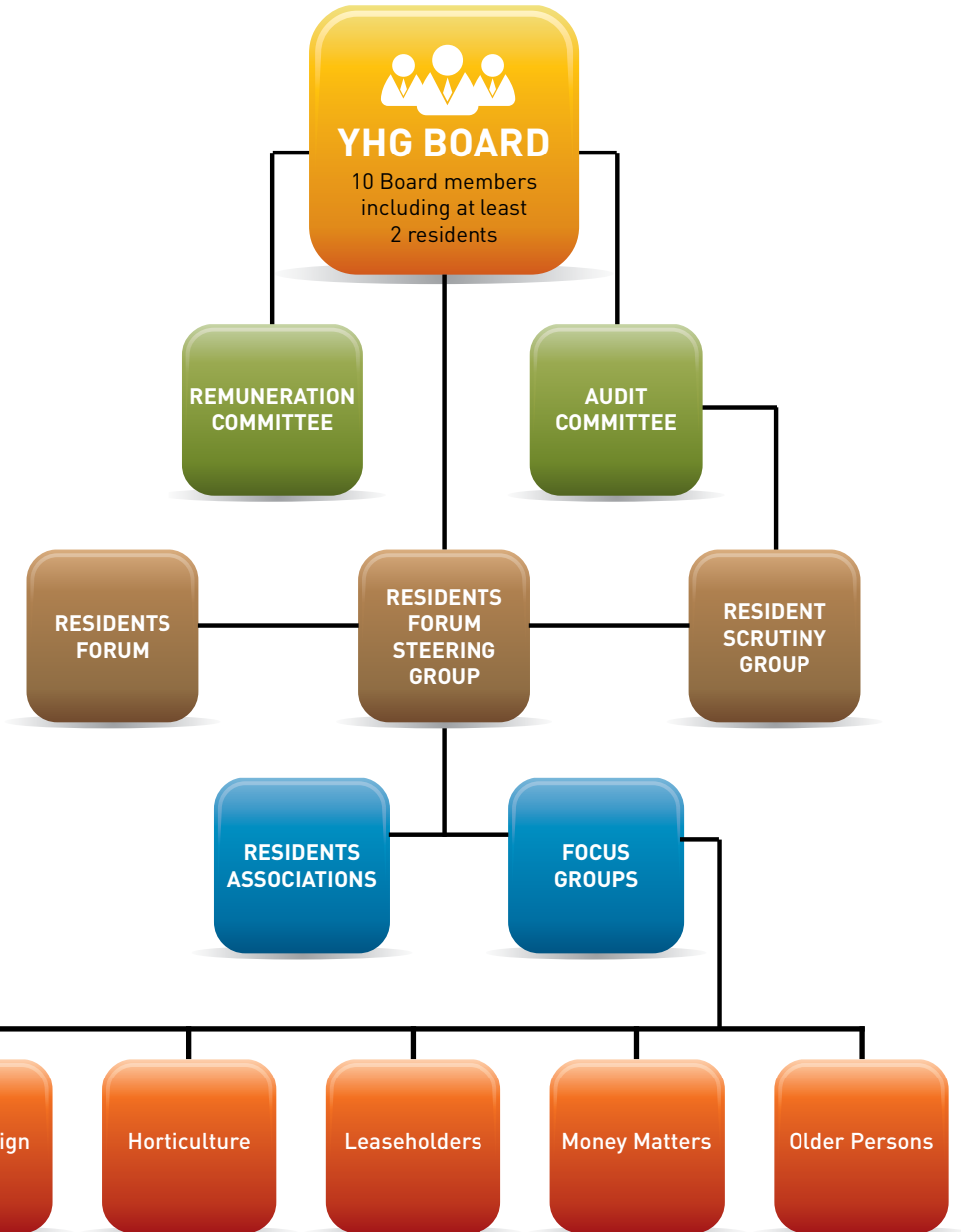
Governance and viability

Governance and Financial Viability

Good governance is a key priority at Yarlington and during the year there were a number of changes in membership which have helped to further strengthen the Board.

Yarlington has a robust financial business plan. This has been acknowledged by the Tenant Services Authority in its annual assessment that says 'the group meets the expectations set out in the Regulatory Code in terms of financial viability'.

We have a comprehensive approach to value for money that is based around our key objective to deliver excellent services to our customers. During the year good progress was made, with value for money initiatives forming an integral part of the operational plans. Notable examples include the significant savings generated from bringing in-house the gas servicing contract, together with certain aspects of legal and marketing design work.





Resident scrutiny

The Residents Scrutiny Group was set up in January 2011 and independently assesses and scrutinises the company's performance from a resident's perspective. The group consists of between six and ten members. Its main purpose is to raise the standards of service and to make improvements to YHG's performance. It looks at services from the customer's view point and already the group has been successful in making improvements to the way YHG conducts its business.

Appendix 1

YHG's Local Service Offer : Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Customer Service, Choice and Complaints

Involvement and Empowerment

YHG will provide residents with a wide range of opportunities to get involved and support and empower residents in their involvement:-

- The Residents' Forum holds a "Residents' Day" or Conference twice a year to which all residents are invited. The Conference is planned and organised by the Residents' Forum Steering Group.
- There is a Scrutiny Group for residents' scrutiny of YHG's performance in service delivery.
- There are regular Focus Group meetings covering a number of service areas (Neighbourhoods, Repairs and Maintenance, Older Persons Services, Communications, Money Matters, Leasehold Services, Horticultural Services, Green Issues and Home Design). The Focus Groups each have their own budget to promote their activities.
- YHG will help to set up Residents Associations and provide financial and other support to help them keep going.
- There is a minimum of two tenants on YHG's Board of Management and joint workshops are held for Board members, Residents Forum Steering Group members and Scrutiny Group members

to discuss progress and plans for resident involvement and empowerment.

- YHG will provide and arrange training for residents as well as ongoing staff support.
- YHG will provide out of pocket expenses for travel and child care costs for attendance at meetings and conferences.

Customer Service, Choice and Dealing with Complaints

YHG aims to provide residents with an excellent service at all times and will:-

- Treat everyone fairly and with respect.
- Understand resident's needs and provide services accordingly.
- Provide choice wherever possible.
- Provide information about services so that residents know how to access them and know what to expect.
- Provide Customer Service Standards for dealing with correspondence, appointments, telephone calls, service delivery and complaints. These standards are provided below.

Customer Service Standards

What can you expect from Yarlington Housing Group?

We think that it's important to give our customers the kind of service we would want for ourselves. This straightforward way of looking at things influences our whole approach to the communities we serve.

At the heart of this are three basic beliefs:-

- Our customers have a right to expect a good service which is tailored to meet their needs.
- They have the right to be treated with equal respect no matter what their circumstances.
- Finally, our customers are entitled to be listened to and we owe it to them to respond helpfully, politely and promptly.

Our Service Commitments:-

- We will make every effort to help you if we can.
- We will always try to be fair.
- We will provide friendly and professional services.
- We will ensure you know your rights and obligations as a tenant.

Making this happen

If you phone us we will:-

- Answer your call promptly and let you know who you are speaking to.
- Answer any phone message by the next working day.
- Deal with your call immediately if we can or arrange to get back to you within an agreed time.
- Avoid you being passed from one person to another where we can.
- Use answer phones and voicemail as little as possible.
- Arrange to use Language Line if you have difficulty speaking English.

If you fax or email us we will:-

- Acknowledge receipt within one working day.
- Respond in full within 5 working days.

If you write to us we will:-

- Write back in plain language.
- Provide translation services for those of our customers who need them on request.
- Use large type or audio.
- CD's where required.

If you visit us we will:-

- Always try to have someone available who can answer your query when you call in.
- Provide a comfortable, accessible and friendly reception area with private interview facilities.

- Keep the reception staffed from 8.30am to 5.00pm (Headquarters and Armoury Rd).
- Ensure that reception is accessible to everyone, particularly people with disabilities.

If we arrange to visit you we will:-

- Come prepared and arrive on time or contact you if we are delayed.
- Carry photographic ID.
- Treat your home with respect.
- Leave a calling card if you are not in, giving the name and phone number of the person to contact.

We will always:-

- Treat you with respect and be polite, patient and honest.
- Not discriminate against anyone because of their sex, race, age, cultural beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, disability or marital/civil partnership status.
- Be responsive to the special needs of any of our customers.
- Contact you by your preferred method (visit, letter, phone, e-mail etc) provided you let us know what this is.

Help us to help you by:-

- Having any reference numbers to hand when contacting us.
- Telling us about any housing problems you have and what you want us to do about them.
- Allowing reasonable access for repairs including gas servicing inspections.

- Keeping appointments with us or our contractors or giving us as much notice as possible if you need to change them.
- Keeping to the terms of your tenancy agreement.
- Being polite when you deal with us, even if you feel we have done something wrong.
- Advising us of any changes in your circumstances or household, so we can update our records.
- Advising us of any changes to your phone number or e-mail address so we can communicate with you.

How we will achieve this:-

- All our staff and contractors will abide by our service standards.
- By investing in staff training.
- Encouraging your involvement/feedback on our services.
- Advising you of any changes to our services in a timely way.
- Providing information in a range of formats.
- Producing a regular newsletter.
- Regular reviews of our services that include customers where we can.
- Involving customers in setting and reviewing our service standards

Putting things right

We aim to operate all our services within these standards, but if things do go wrong we want to know so we can put them right.

We will:-

- Apologise if we make a mistake or fail to meet our standards.
- Advise customers of the complaints procedure if our service fails to live up to the standards. This includes rights of appeal and access to compensation in specific circumstances.
- Acknowledge your written complaint within 5 working days.
- Reply in full to your complaint within 10 working days.
- Record, monitor and learn from complaints so we can improve our services.

There are challenges for resident involvement in the coming year, including the development of new local service offers and increasing the number of younger residents who engage with us. However, for both, there is enthusiasm, energy and ideas, so the future of resident involvement is encouraging.

Appendix 2

YHGs Local Service Offer: Neighbourhoods And Community

Neighbourhood Management

We will provide you with the following services:

- A Neighbourhood Officer who is responsible for a specific area of properties and regularly visits and identifies (with residents) improvements to communal areas and open spaces.
- Grounds maintenance of grassed and horticultural communal areas which is undertaken by our partner contractor South Somerset District Council.
- The opportunity to join the Neighbourhoods Focus Group which assesses neighbourhood standards and influences policy and improvements.
- Environmental Improvements funded through a specific budget and agreed by the Neighbourhoods Focus Group.
- A Community Fund which can help finance community related projects and initiatives.
- The annual Garden Competition which encourages well kept gardens and rewards those who have exceptional gardens.

Our service ensures that:

- Neighbourhood Plans are produced for 25% of our neighbourhoods annually.
- Routine neighbourhood inspections based on community need are carried out at least twice a year.
- Tenants are visited within 8 weeks of signing their tenancy agreement.
- Before a tenant moves we aim to inspect their property.
- Tenancy audits are completed regularly.
- Routine neighbourhood management issues are dealt with in 12 working days.
- Mutual Exchanges are dealt with in 30 working days.
- Applications to succeed a tenancy are registered in 3 working days.
- Communal areas are cleaned to a consistent quality of service and that residents get value for money.
- When a new tenancy agreement is signed tenants receive appropriate information about their home and signposting to relevant services.

Tenancy Compliance.

We will provide you with the following services:

- An experienced Tenancy Compliance Team which can deal with anti-social behaviour and other breaches of tenancy.
- Information in the Residents Handbook, Talking Tenants and on the YHG website www.yhg.co.uk (under General Housing – Anti-social behaviour) which tells you what to do in the event of nuisance or anti-social behaviour in your neighbourhood.
- Support for you if you are the unfortunate victim or witness to anti-social behaviour.
- Access to mediation services or restorative justice if required.

Our service ensures that:

- We will follow our written procedures on responding to anti-social behaviour and racial harassment.
- We will allocate a risk rating to all reported cases of anti-social behaviour and ensure that they are visited within 24 hours to 12 working days.
- We will investigate serious anti-social behaviour or racial harassment where a resident is a victim or apparent perpetrator.

- We will work to persuade the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and racial harassment to stop. This may involve working with partner agencies for example the Police.
 - We will work to prevent racial harassment; working in partnership with other agencies.
 - We will take any appropriate action, including legal action if necessary.
 - We will organise repairs to make a victim's home safe
 - We will consider finding the victim or witness another home if necessary.
 - We will carry out investigations impartially.
 - We will remove offensive graffiti within one working day, other graffiti in 5 working days.
 - We will arrange the removal of sharps within 8 hours on a working day.
 - We will put all incidents of anti-social behaviour reported to us in categories according to their seriousness and investigate the most serious as a priority. If an incident is made up of several different types of anti-social, our staff will treat the most serious part of the complaint first.
- That we identify improvements by reviewing customer feedback on use of our anti-social behaviour service.

Appendix 3

YHG's Local Service Offer : Repairs Service And Quality Of The Home

- Responsive emergency repairs are carried out within a maximum of 24 hours and usually under 2 hours.
- Responsive urgent repairs are carried out within 7 calendar days.
- Routine repairs are carried out within 21 days.
- Priority is given to elderly, vulnerable and frail tenants.
- We have a policy of getting the repair right on the first visit whenever possible (tradesmen have vans which are fully equipped with parts and stock).
- Annual servicing of properties is carried out during one visit to include gas servicing, smoke detector testing, carbon monoxide detector testing, hot tap temperature checks, water tank condition checks, back boiler checks and stop tap operation checks. (This provides less disturbance for residents and better value for money). Testing and inspection of the safety of electrical wiring is now carried out every five years rather than as part of a ten year programme.
- Planned maintenance (including replacement kitchens, bathrooms, rewiring and structural work) is informed by our Asset Management Database which indicates which properties need work at specific dates. (Kitchen replacement has been brought forward to a 20-year cycle with improved specification). Planned maintenance includes the provision of external water taps, additional kitchen unit above the cooker hood and an automatic sure stop button (to turn off the water stop tap) on all sheltered and extra care schemes. Residents are involved with monitoring completed planned maintenance work and carrying out residents' surveys.
- Decorating communal areas of general needs flats is carried out by an in-house two-man team and cleaning of communal areas will be brought in-house from April 2011.
- Empty properties are repaired and made available for letting as soon as possible with an average turnaround of 10 days per property. The re-letting standard of work to empty properties has been enhanced with most properties now being decorated. Residents are involved in the inspection and monitoring of completed work.
- YHG will provide aids and adaptations for those with disabilities. Works of up to £1,000 in value are carried out by YHG and higher value work is funded by the Local Authorities through Disabled Facility Grant. Internal decoration will be carried out for certain older and disabled tenants under the Assisted Decorations policy.



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