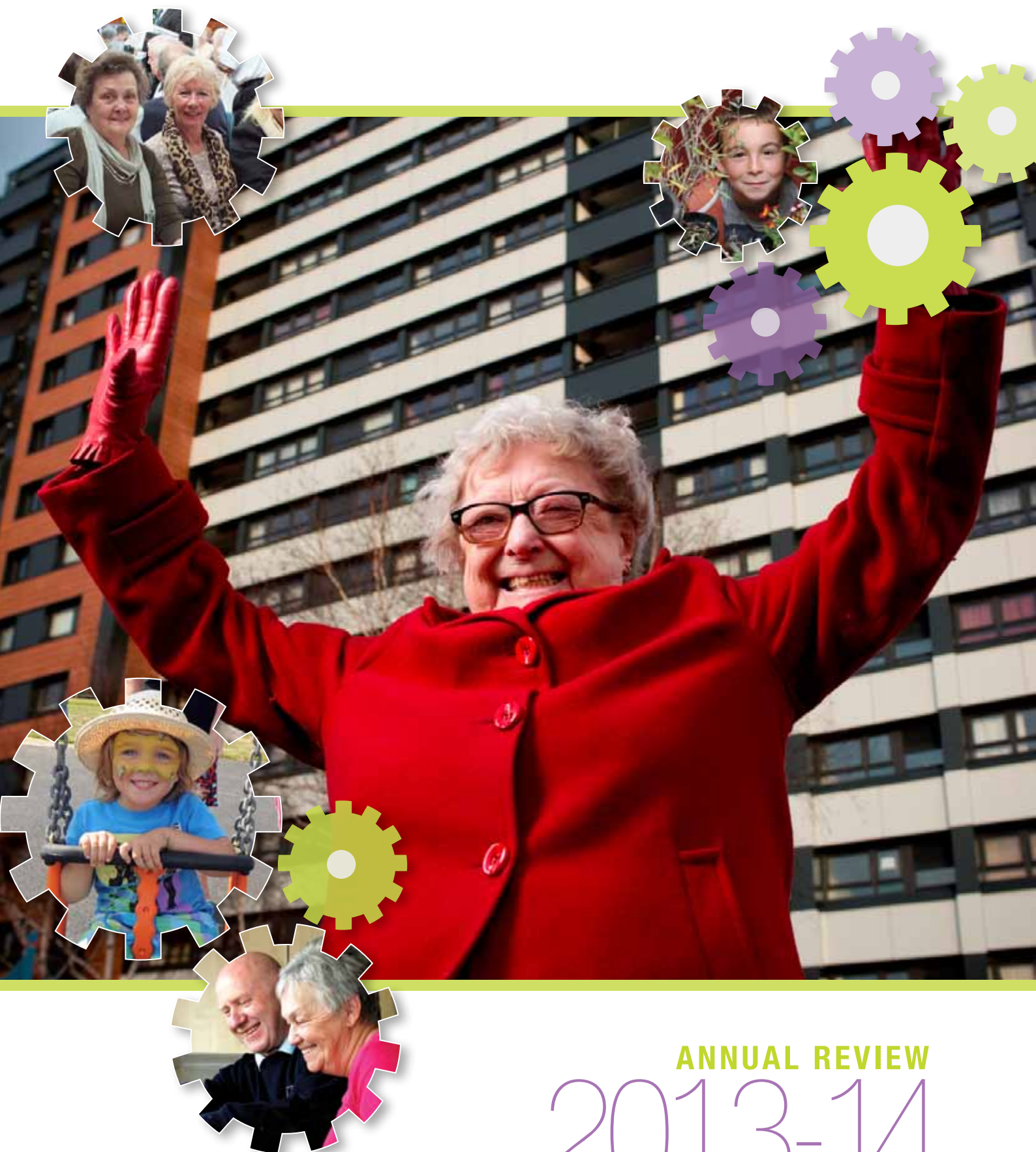




ANNUAL REVIEW
2013-14

• Front cover picture (winner of this year's Annual Review photography competition): Joyce Cotgrave, the longest-serving tenant of the Arthur Millwood Court tower block in Salford, celebrates her new-look home, following a multi-million pound regeneration scheme as part of Salix Homes' Decent Homes Programme



• CityWest Homes residents in 1950s dress attend the opening of a new community garden honouring the Queen's Diamond Jubilee (this photo was a runner-up in this year's Annual Review photography competition)

Welcome

Welcome to our latest Annual Review where we're reflecting on what has been another **hugely successful year** for the ALMO movement – and where we look ahead to what will surely be a hugely significant year.

The sector has never been under greater scrutiny, with benefits and social housing issues being well and truly in the public eye. And for the first time I can remember, housing looks set to be a real policy player at next year's General Election.

The NFA, individual ALMOs and partner agencies have had a very busy year, delivering for tenants and leaseholders top-notch housing management services; building new homes; and helping to kick-start a meaningful debate about the country's housing crisis and how ALMOs are best placed to help deliver a lasting, viable solution to the problem.

We have campaigned tirelessly for new council housing to keep pace with a growing population and a mounting inability for people up and down the country to get on the housing ladder or afford private rents. But despite all political parties wanting to see more homes, not enough are being built, creating dire shortages of private and social accommodation.

Housing is now set to be a key election issue with recent polling showing that 80 per cent of the public believe there is a housing crisis. I was proud that the NFA was the first public body to issue its manifesto ahead of next year's election which was met with widespread approval and cross-party support. You can find out more about the NFA's manifesto and read comment by political parties on pages 5 and 6.

When we look back at 2013/14, it'll be remembered by most as the year of the spare room subsidy - or the 'bedroom tax'. The onset of welfare reforms has had a seismic impact on the sector, which is set to continue further with Universal Credit looming on the horizon. The results of our survey with colleagues at ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) and CWAG (Councils with ALMOs Group) were

disturbing; showing the number of tenants affected by the under-occupation penalty and in arrears rising by 27 per cent so that more than half of those affected (55 per cent) are now in arrears and overall arrears are five per cent higher nationally than they were before the reforms were introduced. This is despite ALMOs putting a lot more resources into supporting tenants through the reforms and taking arrears action when necessary.

This year is also likely to be remembered for the media furore which surrounded White Dee and her neighbours on Channel 4's *Benefits Street* and other shows like *How to Get a Council House*. Despite elevating the public debate about social housing and welfare, these 'shockumentaries' have bolstered the grossly unfair and inaccurate stereotypes of council tenants and benefit claimants. The NFA continues to do all it can to tackle negative perceptions of tenants and we'll continue to present the reality that the overwhelming majority are respectable, law-abiding tax payers who are paying their way through work or who are retired.

And with more than one third of ALMO boards comprising tenants, we need to keep making the point that council house tenants are just like everyone else and shouldn't be stigmatised because of their housing status.

It's been great to see lots of ALMOs continuing to diversify and work in new ways with the private sector. Finding new ways of working following funding changes, varied council relationships and increasing demand for their



• Sue Roberts MBE, NFA Chair

services always poses a challenge but it's been wonderful to see the sector embracing the changes and realising new opportunities. A report on page 12 includes a look at the new Northampton ALMO and the 51 per cent of ALMOs that are now delivering services to the wider market, generating additional income.

It's also lovely to celebrate some of the outstanding success stories from across the movement over the past twelve months. The Bulletin Board notices on pages 21-31, as well as a special feature on page 18, highlight some of the main reasons why the ALMO movement, in my eyes, continues to be a huge success.

With the cogs of the election machine already in motion, 2014/15 could well be the most significant year in the history of the ALMO movement. With people now sitting up and taking notice of the country's housing crisis, this is a huge opportunity for us to champion ALMOs as a viable solution to the country's housing shortage and to influence the future of housing provision in this country.

As the National Federation of ALMOs (NFA), we aim:

- To **promote the ALMO option**
- To assist existing and prospective ALMOs to operate effectively
- To **support ALMOs choosing to diversify or adapt** to changing local or council needs
- To secure a **long-term financial future** for ALMOs
- To persuade central government to take account of the interests of ALMOs and to establish a vibrant, independent ALMO sector that will provide **quality homes, achieve excellence in service provision, build new affordable homes for the future** and help to deliver broader national and local policy priorities
- To **promote tenant empowerment**
- To **promote best practice** in the sector.

Who we are

The **National Federation of ALMOs Ltd (NFA)** is the trade body representing all arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) in the social housing sector.

The NFA represents the interests of ALMOs at a national level. As well as lobbying and negotiating with central government on behalf of ALMOs, the NFA runs a website, organises events for members and provides advice, training and briefings. Membership is also available to other organisations that share the core values of the NFA and have an ethos of delivering customer-led housing services.

The last year has been a time of significant change for the NFA's members, with a new ALMO being created, and existing members diversifying to provide communities with additional front-line services or forming new types of organisations in order to deliver better services to residents and their local authorities. Four ALMOs are likely to see their

stock transferred to new housing associations by April 2015 and another ALMO goes live in January 2015.

The NFA was established in 2003 when there were fewer than 20 ALMOs. After a widespread organisational and structural review, the NFA AGM in April 2008 agreed a new constitutional framework and, in December 2008, the NFA became a limited company. The work of the NFA is overseen by a board of ALMOs elected by members across the four regions (Northern, Midlands, South West and London & Southern). Elections take place every two years. The current NFA Board line-up is provided below.

The NFA does not employ staff directly but instead, appoints a managing agent. In December 2012, after a detailed consultation

with its members to ensure that services are fit for purpose, the NFA appointed CIH Consultancy as the new managing agent from May 2013 for a period of three years, with an option for a further extension of two years. CIH Consultancy is drawing on its wide-ranging experience in the social housing industry to maintain the NFA's current services as well as growing the organisation in new directions.

CIH Consultancy is also supported by The Public Affairs Company (PAC) and Acceleris Marketing Communications Ltd, which are sub-contracted to deliver the parliamentary and communications elements of the service. HouseMark provides member organisation services and runs the NFA's website: www.almos.org.uk/

MEET THE NFA BOARD



Sue Roberts MBE,
Wolverhampton Homes –
NFA Chair



Hugh Broadbent,
Six Town Housing – NFA
Vice Chair



Bill Constance,
Poole Housing Partnership –
NFA Board Director



Melvyn Lunn,
Berneslai Homes – NFA
Board Director



Keith Jenkins,
Homes for Haringey – NFA
Board Director



Tony Churton,
South Essex Homes – NFA
Board Director



Barbara Dennis OBE,
The Gateshead Housing
Company – NFA Board Director

Our core values

- Members of the NFA aspire to provide excellent, value for money and customer-led housing services for residents in partnership with their local councils
- Members seek to promote innovation and continuous improvement in providing, managing and maintaining affordable homes in sustainable neighbourhoods
- Our members are open and accountable organisations that actively promote equality and social cohesion. They remain rooted in their local communities and work in partnership with others to help deliver locally determined priorities
- Members share good practice and help support other members of the NFA.

Our **policy proposals** ahead of key polls

With election fever growing in the run up to next year's general election and May's European and local government votes, the NFA was the **first prominent public body to issue a manifesto**. January's policy proposal was praised widely and won cross-party support.

The NFA 2015 Election Manifesto was prompted by the fundamental importance of decent housing to all of us; today's intense interest in social housing; and the associated issues affecting everybody - balancing the books in austerity Britain and the shortage/affordability of social, rented and private housing. Many organisations and commentators, including housing forum Red Brick, complemented us on being the first housing body to issue a manifesto.

As the body representing ALMOs, which build new homes, improve local communities and support people into work, the NFA is a legitimate commentator on these issues. Our manifesto, therefore, recommends three areas for investment – Homes, People and Communities and Saving Money.

Homes

ALMOs have already built over 2,000 new homes and there will be at least a further 4,000 ALMO-built properties within five years, but

the manifesto outlines how it could be 60,000 over the same period. This would be achieved by removing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing caps and allowing councils to borrow prudentially, repaying those loans from the rental income; providing 'bricks and mortar' subsidies for social housing through grants not housing benefit; and adopting internationally recognised rules to measure government borrowing that excludes council housing investment debt.

The manifesto also laid out policies for improving energy efficiencies of existing homes and helping residents get the most from them.

Detailing how ALMOs are increasingly offering private sector landlords lettings services, we called on all parties to consider using them more widely as vehicles to lift standards, choice and tenant security in this market as well as the social sector.

People and Communities

To alleviate the most adverse impacts of welfare

reform, we urged politicians to consider a number of amendments and refinements. These included giving tenants the choice to pay landlords direct under Universal Credit; reform of the under occupancy penalty so it does not affect those who cannot move or need the extra space; and, crucially, a period of stability so that people and communities have time to adjust and a proper impact assessment can be made of outcomes.

Saving Money

The manifesto advocated bold measures to help tenants cut living costs and heat their homes more efficiently.

These were accompanied by proposals to improve housing providers' engagement with the government's Work Programme by linking funding to results and improving tenants' financial acuity and management skills, as well as access to digital and online services.

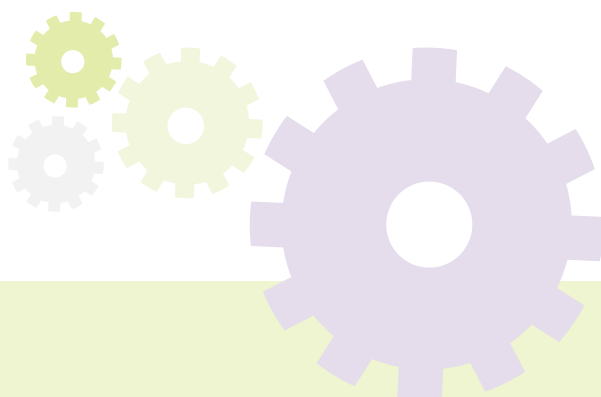
Housing comment: Annette Brooke MP



Representing the Liberal Democrats, Annette Brooke MP, co-chair of the party's policy committee on communities and local government, said: ***"I can claim a long association with my 'local' ALMO, Poole Housing Partnership, and I have witnessed firsthand the excellent work that has been carried out in my constituency."***

"Liberal Democrats have identified the need to provide 300,000 homes per year in order to tackle the under provision of housing encountered during the last 3 decades. In order to address our housing crisis, strong leadership will be needed at all levels to implement appropriate policies."

"We support the NFA's call for unlocking the potential to invest in council housing by removing the HRA borrowing caps and relying instead on prudential borrowing rules to enable councils to invest in new homes and pay back the money from their rental income and we welcome the recent raising of the cap."



Turn to page 6 to read further comment from Labour shadow housing minister, Emma Reynolds.

The invaluable work of ALMOs

It is a great pleasure to contribute a piece toward the National Federation of ALMOs' Annual Review.

When I was appointed as Shadow Housing Minister last year I was delighted because it is an area that I am greatly passionate about. I know the same passion is shared by all those who work for ALMOs across England. You are dedicated to delivering what is important to the communities you serve - building new homes, improving energy efficiency to drive down the cost of fuel bills and getting people back into work.

You put a high priority on delivering good quality housing and meeting the aspirations of the people you serve. Labour shares the same ambition for good quality homes in communities where people want to live. That's why we have marked out housing as a key priority for the next Labour Government. In appointing me as Shadow Housing Minister, Ed Miliband also promoted the position to the Shadow Cabinet, a sign of the increasing importance with which housing is seen by the Labour Party. At the same time, Ed also set out our ambition of getting 200,000 homes built a year by 2020.

It's a big ambition. As a country we're not even building half the number of homes we need and David Cameron is presiding over the lowest levels of homes built in peacetime since the 1920s. But we are determined to make it happen which is why we appointed Sir Michael Lyons to head our housing commission. The commission's task is to deliver a roadmap for the next Labour Government to begin

implementing from day one so that we can start building the homes we need as a country.

While we're developing a long-term strategy to increase housing supply, we know no homes will be built by Whitehall. That's why Sir Michael Lyons is looking at the role that councils, housing associations and ALMOs can take in helping tackle this crisis, as well as private developers and house builders.

I also know of the impact of some of the welfare reforms, the bedroom tax in particular, on ALMOs and their tenants. The National Federation of ALMOs has called for the reform of the bedroom tax but the next Labour government will go one step further and abolish it. We're clear that the bedroom tax doesn't work, is unfair and is punishing some of the most vulnerable in our society. We're also committed to ensuring we reverse the long-term trend of spending more in housing benefit and less on capital investment, which is why we've committed to shifting government spending from benefits to bricks over the long-term.

Labour has also set out radical plans to reform the private rented sector by introducing longer-term tenancies with limits on rent increases and a ban on letting fees to tenants. The private rented sector has an important role to play in meeting housing need but we're clear that it needs to be reformed to provide the stable, affordable and decent homes that tenants need. Encouraging institutional investment in the sector is also key and we're

keen to consider the role ALMOs could play in making that happen as the NFA's manifesto calls for.

Of course I know ALMOs do much more than house current tenants and build new homes. You promote health and well-being, support tenants with their debt through debt advice and support for credit unions, help tackle worklessness and fuel poverty.

Your work is invaluable and I look forward to working with you over the coming months and years to tackle the housing crisis and help meet the needs of the tenants and communities you serve.



Emma Reynolds MP is Labour's Shadow Housing Minister



The view from Westminster

It has been a year of **challenge and success** for ALMOs.

Following high profile lobbying by the NFA, the government's spending review announced that £160 million would be made available for the Decent Homes Programme, to be targeted at those councils with the biggest backlogs of repairs. The NFA welcomed the announcement and will continue to lobby for the final tranche of funding to complete the programme. Underlying much of this year's work has been continued calls by the NFA to remove the cap on the ability of local authorities to borrow for investment in new homes. While ministers have been reluctant to commit to such a policy, significant progress has never the less been made.

Following meetings with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, officials were asked to work with the NFA to establish what a phased or 'laddered' removal of the borrowing caps might look like. Further to that, and with many conditions attached, the Chancellor's Autumn Statement included an extra £300 million of borrowing for local authorities to bid for to spend on new build. This announcement indicates a small but significant step towards our longer term goal of lifting the borrowing caps altogether.

Across the political parties there is growing support for the idea. The Liberal Democrat President Tim Farron MP, has made clear his ambitions to see a manifesto commitment to

removing the caps. For Labour, no official commitments have been given on the borrowing cap but pressure is mounting in the party for movement, with Shadow Housing Minister, Emma Reynolds MP, having said that that there are "voices" within the Labour Party calling for the removal of caps. Emma Reynolds is guest columnist for this NFA annual review – see page 6. While the Conservatives are sticking to the government line against lifting the caps, support has come from the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and also Philippa Roe, the Conservative Leader of Westminster, which has an ALMO.

As the parties continue to work on their manifestos for 2015, the NFA will continue to lobby for greater flexibility as house-building will be a major election issue. The government's welfare reforms, in particular the 'spare room subsidy' or 'bedroom tax', have remained a controversial issue with the NFA having published its own survey outlining the extent of the pressures being faced by ALMOs.

Labour has made a commitment to scrapping the policy if it is elected in 2015.

The Liberal Democrat party conference voted for a full scale review of the impact of the 'bedroom tax' but the Government continues to defend it arguing that it is beginning to work in terms of being fair to taxpayers by saving £500 million a year in housing benefit.

The NFA will continue to present evidence to the parties concerning the practical challenges being faced by ALMOs and their tenants and calling for the reforming of the under-occupation penalty to ensure it does not penalise tenants who either cannot move or who need the extra space.

At the first face to face meeting with a housing minister in this government in January, Kris Hopkins MP expressed his support for the sector and for council housing in general. A number of issues from the NFA manifesto were discussed with some to be followed up with his officials. The minister invited the NFA to come back for another meeting. With just a year left of the current parliament, the APPG for ALMOs continues to go from strength to strength. Membership is now at 54 MPs and Peers and over the past year it has heard from speakers including the welfare reform minister Lord Freud and the lead official at the Department for Communities and Local Government responsible for ALMOs.

With the general election less than a year away, the NFA will continue to be at the forefront of promoting the ALMO model as the most suitable model for parties to achieve their housing objectives. Crucial to this however will be ALMOs themselves briefing their own local candidates and the NFA will ensure they have all they need to build strong and positive relations with those aspiring to be elected in 2015.



An update on the NFA business plan

In July 2013, the NFA Board agreed a business plan for the **years 2013 to 2015**. Delivery is being monitored under the subject areas below.

- Handover to the new managing agent has been successfully completed.
- The NFA Board has refreshed the ALMO mission statement and vision to ensure it reflects the landscape in which we are now operating.
- On new supply, the NFA has campaigned hard for changes to the borrowing caps and rules using its own published documents including *Let's Get Building*. NFA representatives have met with officials from the Treasury, Communities and Local Government and the Homes & Communities Agency to make our case for change. This issue has risen up the political agenda even though we are not anticipating any significant changes before the next general election.
- The NFA is regularly surveying its members to monitor the impacts of the changes in welfare benefits. This provides valuable evidence for discussions with civil servants and other housing trade bodies and enables us to share best practice.
- The NFA has submitted evidence to both the Lyons Housing Review and the Government's independent housing review led by Natalie Elphicke and Cllr Keith House.
- This January, the NFA published an Election Manifesto summarising what ALMOs would like to see from the next government, with a focus on issues such as building new homes, reviewing some aspects of welfare reform, and how ALMOs can help raise standards in the private rented sector. You can read more about this on page 5.
- The NFA is also working on a series of best practice briefings. In April, we published one on the private rented sector and the next one will be on energy efficiency in homes and our response to the government's green agenda. Sharing best practice has always been in the DNA of ALMOs and we are planning to pull together experiences across the sector on preparing for Universal Credit in the autumn.
- Another objective is to maintain good relationships with local authorities and to improve the reputation of council housing. A lot of work has been done to build enhanced relationships with the Local Government Association and the Association of Retained Council Housing.
- Finally, the NFA needs to continue to provide relevant, high quality services to its members in a context of limited resources. To help achieve this, the NFA has completed reviews of its governance and managing agent contract arrangements. Work has also been done to make the budget information more transparent and subject to regular scrutiny at the NFA Board. Steps have also been taken to more closely link business planning and budget setting processes.



The National Federation of ALMOs Awards 2014

The annual NFA Awards **showcase the best people and projects** that are helping to improve social housing for tenants across England.

This year the Awards feature all new categories designed to represent the breadth and diversity of ALMOs' influence in our communities.

Finalists have been selected in each of the ten categories and the winners will be announced at an awards ceremony held during the NFA's annual conference on the evening of 16 July 2014.

Our sincere thanks go to the individual award sponsors from across the housing industry (listed below). We'd also like to thank Willmott Dixon for sponsoring the drinks reception for conference and dinner attendees and 24housing for being our dedicated media partner for both events.

In another new development, this year's ceremony will see an overall award for 'Best Entry' celebrating a truly exceptional or worthy winner.

THE 2014 FINALISTS

Best New Build Scheme

Barnet Homes
The Gateshead Housing Company
Solihull Community Housing

Sponsored by **Campbell Tickell**

Tackling Worklessness

Northwards Housing
Six Town Housing
Wolverhampton Homes

Sponsored by **Esh Property Services**

Most Innovative Social Enterprise Partnership

East Durham Homes
Stockport Homes
Your Homes Newcastle

Sponsored by **Wates**

Managing Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Homes for Northumberland
Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing
Poole Housing Partnership
South Tyneside Homes

Sponsored by **Utilita Energy Services**

Helping Tenants Prepare for Universal Credit Through Digital Inclusion

Salix Homes
South Essex Homes
Stockport Homes

Sponsored by **Kier**

Most Effective Communications Campaign

East Kent Housing
Stockport Homes
Wolverhampton Homes

Sponsored by **Resource Housing**

Improving the Private Rented Sector Offer

Ascham Homes
Corwall Housing
Salix Homes
St. Leger Homes of Doncaster

Sponsored by **Clarke Willmott**

Managing the Impact of Welfare Reform Through Financial Inclusion

Homes for Northumberland
Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing
South Tyneside Homes
Tower Hamlets Homes

Apprentice of the Year

Salix Homes - **Daniel Livesey**
St. Leger Homes of Doncaster -
Lloyd Marshall
Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust -
Jamie Norman
Wolverhampton Homes - **Shadrack Mbatha**

Integrating Housing Care and Support

Homes for Northumberland
Solihull Community Housing
Your Homes Newcastle



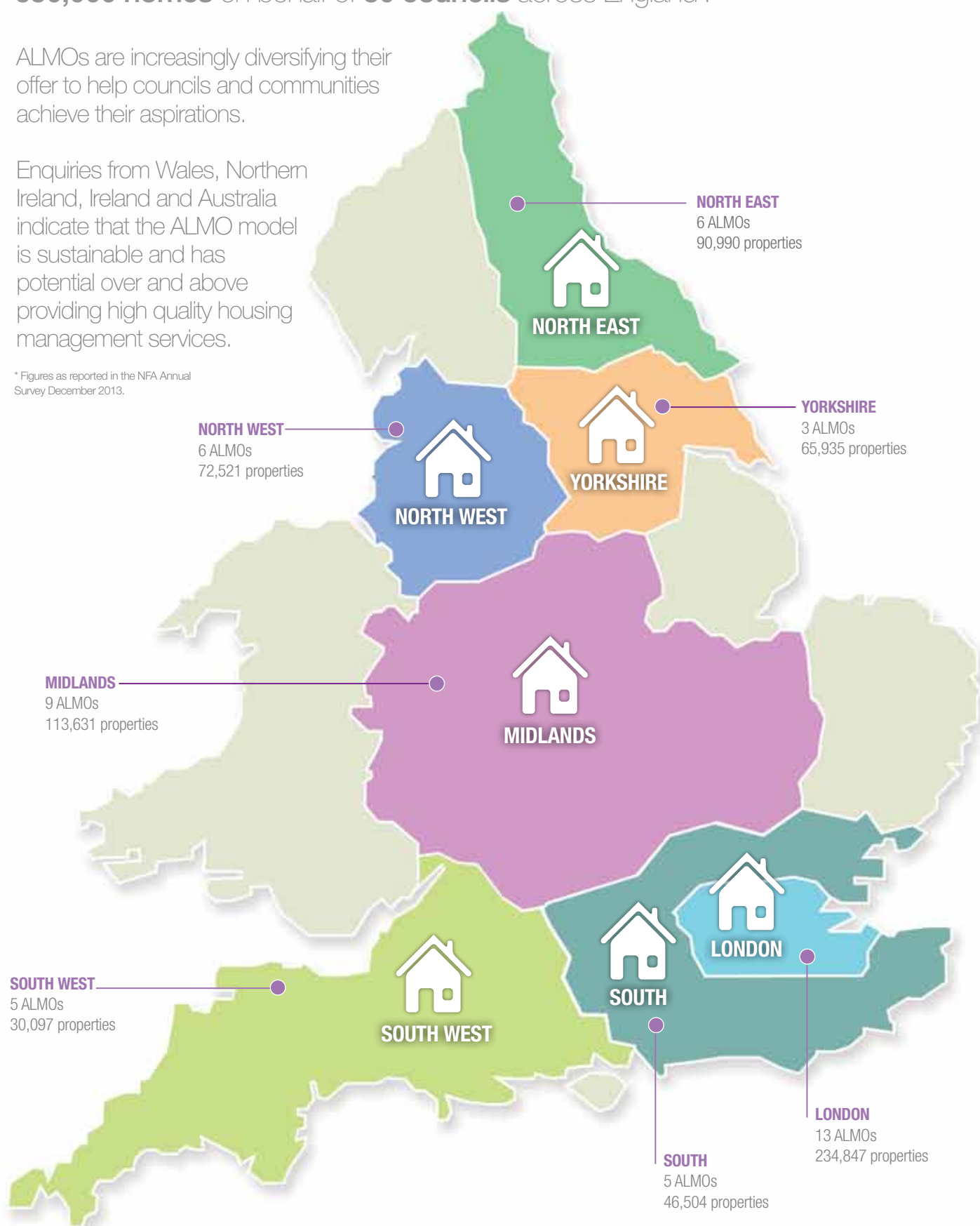
Mapping out ALMOs

The NFA currently represents **47 ALMOs**, which manage more than **650,000 homes** on behalf of **50 councils** across England*.

ALMOs are increasingly diversifying their offer to help councils and communities achieve their aspirations.

Enquiries from Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland and Australia indicate that the ALMO model is sustainable and has potential over and above providing high quality housing management services.

* Figures as reported in the NFA Annual Survey December 2013.



NORTH EAST

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Dale & Valley Homes	4,274
East Durham Homes	8,459
Homes for Northumberland	8,699
South Tyneside Homes	18,592
The Gateshead Housing Company	20,905
Your Homes Newcastle	30,061

SOUTH WEST

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Cornwall Housing	10,914
Cheltenham Borough Homes	5,057
Gloucester City Homes	4,753
Homes in Sedgemoor	4,240
Poole Housing Partnership	5,133

YORKSHIRE

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Berneslai Homes	18,944
Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing	26,083
St. Leger Homes of Doncaster	20,908

SOUTH

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Colchester Borough Homes	7,184
East Kent Housing	17,501
Eastbourne Homes	4,843
South Essex Homes	6,549
Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust	10,427

NORTH WEST

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Blackpool Coastal Housing	6,077
Northwards Housing	13,808
Salix Homes	8,639
Six Town Housing	7,912
Stockport Homes	13,216
Wigan & Leigh Housing	22,869

LONDON

NO. OF PROPERTIES

Ascham Homes	12,286
Barnet Homes	15,000
Brent Housing Partnership	12,765
CityWest Homes	21,300
Enfield Homes	15,860
Hackney Homes	31,350
Homes for Haringey	20,465
Hounslow Homes	15,920
Kensington and Chelsea TMO	9,466
Lambeth Living	33,610
Lewisham Homes	18,049
Sutton Housing Partnership	7,588
Tower Hamlets Homes	21,188

MIDLANDS

NO. OF PROPERTIES

A1 Housing Bassetlaw	6,938
Ashfield Homes	7,091
Derby Homes	14,067
Newark and Sherwood Homes	5,581
Nottingham City Homes	28,801
Rykneld Homes	8,173
Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing	4,271
Solihull Community Housing	11,229
Wolverhampton Homes	27,480



Today's ALMO world

Over the last decade, ALMOs have proved themselves to be invaluable in ensuring the delivery of vital resources to their local communities. Last year's annual survey revealed many are beginning to diversify their services to meet the changing needs of tenants and generate additional income.



• Wolverhampton Homes - Lucia loves her new home in a newly modernised flat

The NFA's most comprehensive survey ever revealed that despite restrictions on public borrowing, ALMOs built 450 new homes in 2013 and 39 organisations plan to build new homes in 2014. More than a third of ALMOs are also expanding their offerings and delivering services to non-domestic properties, such as schools and local authority buildings.

Some 60 per cent of ALMOs are now delivering strategic housing functions and care and support services including homelessness assessment and housing options advice, providing an invaluable lifeline to many tenants. The survey also revealed many ALMOs have extended their experience into the private rented sector (see page 13), providing services to help regulate a growing sector.

Berneslai Homes is one such ALMO, which has helped address the problem of empty properties in Barnsley by introducing a property management scheme to tackle poor-quality homes. It also runs a private sector leasing scheme to help landlords bring empty properties up to the Decent Homes standard.

South Essex Homes, meanwhile, has launched a new subsidiary, Atilius Ltd, following the continued progress South Essex

Homes has made in its core operations but also areas of new commercial business. Through Atilius, South Essex Homes will offer Green Deal and energy efficiency consulting and installation services to businesses and commercial customers, in addition to commercial property management services.

As always, there have been reviews and changes to contracts and we look forward to welcoming new kid on the block Northampton Partnership Homes to the world of ALMOs. Here we take a look at some of the movers and shakers in today's ALMO world...

ALMO: Homes in Sedgemoor

Status: Its management agreement has been extended for 30 years by Sedgemoor District Council.

It said: "The new management agreement provides us with a sound basis on which to move forward and is absolutely great news for tenants and staff."

Future focus: Delivering extra services to work more closely with tenants and the council.

ALMO: Poole Housing Partnership

Status: Its management agreement has been extended for 30 years by Borough of Poole.

It said: "This new contract recognises the excellent work Poole Housing Partnership has done to bring the council's housing stock up to the Poole Standard. The team should be commended for raising the standards of service to among the very best in the country."

Future focus: Driving the development of new affordable homes.

ALMO: Northampton Partnership Homes

Status: Northampton Borough Council has confirmed plans to set up a new ALMO to manage 12,100 council homes.

It said: "We want to make sure that our tenants receive a high standard of service from their landlord and that they will have better homes in the future. They have looked through all of the information and decided an ALMO is the best way forward so we are happy to support them in this as we help them in making this a reality."

Future focus: The ALMO is expected to go live in January 2015, developing a tenant-centred approach to Northampton's housing.

Right **time**, right **place**

With **twice as many more people** renting privately now than a decade ago and the sector continuing to grow, increasing numbers of ALMOs are engaging with private landlords to **promote decent, quality homes** for tenants.

The rapidly-growing private rented sector is expected to increase by at least one million households over the next five years, so it is no wonder that two-thirds of ALMOs in England plan to be working in the sector by the end of 2014.

The findings were detailed in a report *Right Time Right Place - Engaging with the Private Rented Sector*, released by the NFA earlier this year, which highlighted the increasing number of ALMOs working in private tenancies, providing letting services and assistance to landlords.

The private rented sector is now larger than the social rented sector, giving ALMOs the opportunity to offer their knowledge and expertise to help improve conditions and customer service in parts of the market. Regulation has not kept pace with the growth of the sector and despite private rents being on average twice those of social housing, a third of privately rented homes are of poor quality, with low levels of energy efficiency.

The government recently announced a package of measures to improve conditions of privately

rented homes and regulate landlords, but recent cuts mean many local authorities have had to reduce their delivery of services for the private rented sector.

What's more, vulnerable households are increasingly being housed in private accommodation; with current statistics showing nearly one million vulnerable households are living in non-decent homes. Recent research from Shelter also shows that poorer tenants are less likely to have their complaints addressed by landlords.

ALMOs across the country have years of experience in providing high-quality homes and support for tenants. Around half of ALMOs already work in the private rented sector, supplying services such as housing and tenancy management, repairs, gas servicing and community alarms and lifeline services. This number is expected to increase throughout 2014, with more ALMOs developing services as an alternative to letting agencies, channeling their expertise and knowledge of tenants' needs to provide programmes including deposit and licensing schemes and landlord accreditation.

With more than three-quarters of private sector landlords having just one property to let, many may be unsure of tenancy legislation and unfamiliar with finding tenants and entering into contracts.

Half of all private landlords use letting agents, making ALMOs an excellent alternative, offering services at reasonable fees, including letting support, the ability to deal effectively with tenancy breaches including anti-social behaviour and efficient arrears management and benefit advice.

As the role of ALMOs expands to cater for more tenants, both social and private, it is vital that they continue to offer the high standard of care and service to residents. By sharing new practices on work in the private sector, ALMOs can continue to provide high quality, decent housing for all.

To read the report, please visit:
www.almos.org.uk/document?id=6375



Green light for good practice

ALMOs are well placed to **promote environmental responsibility and sustainability within communities**. Here we highlight how three organisations have done just that.



Barnet (Eco) Homes

In February this year, Mayor of London Boris Johnson officially launched the first new council homes to be built in Barnet for over 20 years, by visiting one of the families taking occupancy.

The new 'green' houses on Alexandra Road, Muswell Hill, N10, were built by **Barnet Homes** around responsibly sourced timber frames. They boast a range of energy efficient features, such as solar panels, eco boilers, triple glazing and insulation, which help residents lower their energy and heating costs.

Solar panel photovoltaics can save about one tonne of carbon dioxide and approximately £400 on electricity bills each year. Triple glazed windows reduce heat loss and keep the homes warmer, while shaving as much as £90 from yearly energy costs. Heat loss is slashed further by 250mm insulation in external walls, 400mm roof insulation and 250mm floor insulation. Rain-water butts are also provided in gardens to reduce water usage.

The Alexandra Road development is the first phase of a substantial programme of environmentally sound council homes from Barnet Homes, which will see 40 more new family sized houses and flats built across six sites in the borough by 2015.

Tackling 'northern exposure'

Meanwhile, **Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing** (KNH) has refurbished an 11-storey Huddersfield tower block to Passivhaus standards, including a range of energy efficient features. Among these are boilers and panel heaters; triple glazing; mechanical heat exchangers that recycle 95 per cent of wasted heat, and A+ rated integrated appliances.

The year-long renovation involved the complete remodelling of individual flats at Harold Wilson Court, as well as major changes to the block's structure.

Also included in the upgraded homes are LED lighting and thermal rendering and insulation. It all adds up to a dramatic transformation from draughty and expensive-to-heat 'cold boxes' to welcoming, comfortable, energy-efficient living spaces that cost around £10 a week to run.

The project was funded by rent receipts, with finance for some of the energy efficiency measures coming from the Yorkshire & Humber European Regional Development Fund as part of the Big Energy Upgrade programme - a new approach to energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Harold Wilson Court is also the council's first block of flats to have Wifi installed, giving residents access to more work and education opportunities. This was enabled by a partnership between KNH, providers Montal Solutions and Community UK.

An 'energetic' approach

Rykneld Homes has also been busy on green initiatives this year, with the north-east Derbyshire housing provider tackling insulation, fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues in properties across its footprint.

More than 200 of its non-traditionally built homes benefited from external cladding and were fitted with A-rated energy efficient combi boilers. The ALMO has also worked with national energy providers to bring gas supplies to vulnerable tenants living in rural areas and fitted energy efficient heating systems to these remote, often exposed, homes.

In another move, it has fitted external insulation and energy efficient heating systems to a complex of flats. The £1.5 million regeneration of Stonelaw Green Flats also saw internal upgrades, such as the fitting of new windows and doors.

And a sheltered flats scheme managed by Rykneld Homes became the first in the UK to install a pioneering and highly efficient integrated heating system that helps tenants reduce their energy bills and save the environment.

The breakthrough fuel cell technology was installed as part of an energy efficiency heating replacement project for vulnerable tenants in a sheltered housing complex.

At the cutting edge of domestic heat generation, the scheme attracted national attention and praise.

Working to end worklessness

Rightly or wrongly, worklessness is an issue particularly **associated with social housing**. While anecdotal evidence and emotive headlines belie the true picture, ALMOs across the country strive to help unemployed residents **back to self-sufficiency and out of financial hardship**.

The answer's yes

Northwards Housing and Manchester City Council have set up yes, a new project that is helping people from one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country find employment. Based in Newton Heath in east Manchester, the social enterprise helps people access experience, skills, knowledge and above all, a job.

It is part of Northwards Housing's campaign to get social housing tenants back into work and to deal with the impact of welfare reform. Newton Heath has the highest percentage of unemployed people in the whole of Manchester (ten per cent) and more than half of its residents claim housing benefit.

The yes centre is on Briscoe Lane and is, appropriately, a transformed derelict housing office - symbolising fresh employment and new starts. Among its facilities is a full suite of PCs, with free internet access and Wifi.

One of the first yes success stories was Leo Hardy, 28, who secured a job as an electrician. He said: "It is the perfect place to look for work and I wouldn't have got the job without it."

Manchester Central MP, Lucy Powell, added: "This project is changing lives in Newton Heath and giving hope to people who really need it."

• Joy Division and New Order bassist Peter Hook witnesses the start of a £650 million regeneration scheme that is currently underway in Pendleton. The musician had famously described the area in a book as "rotten and horrible, like a concrete wasteland" as part of his recollections of growing up there. In tribute to the music legend Salix Homes had painted his famous quote onto one of the blocks and 'Hooky' was thrilled to take a sledgehammer to the building to mark the start of demolition and a new dawn for the area

Identifying need

Stockport Homes supported 100 people back into work last year. Its customer involvement team has been particularly active in identifying people in need of a helping hand, then offering guidance and practical support.

An example is Tyler, who lived with his mother in a Stockport Homes property. He was 17 years old, had not worked since leaving school and was looking for routes into employment.

Last November, the team encouraged him to try a six-week construction skills course for young people run by the ALMO that gives participants a taste of different trades and activities. After three weeks, Tyler had impressed the service so much that he was offered a 12-month paid apprenticeship, allowing him to enrol on an NVQ. In March 2014, Tyler was delighted to win *Employee of the Month*, demonstrating his progress.

Another Stockport Homes customer, Leanne Benfold, has been transformed from someone lacking the self-assurance and skills to return to work after having four children into an excellent candidate for a host of job opportunities. She gained confidence, practical skills and qualifications at the ALMO's 'Penny Lane Pantry', a not for profit, community-led initiative in the Lancashire Hill neighbourhood.

Recruiting for Decent Homes

Tower Hamlets Homes believes that Decent Homes is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help residents into employment by capitalising on the milestone investment in social housing.

As such, it recruits local apprentices into the programme and uses it to help other residents acquire relevant skills that help them into work. Aiming to recruit two apprentices for every £1 million spent, 72 were appointed in 2013/14 and 147 are anticipated during 2014/15.

A further 114 local people were employed on Tower Hamlets Homes' Decent Homes programme in 2013/14, with many more signed up by sub-contractors and along the supply chain.

Gateway opportunities via apprenticeships

Wolverhampton Homes has taken on a group of the city's young council house residents for a twelve month apprenticeship. They will acquire and hone building skills as they help transform a local estate, Castlebridge Gardens in Wednesfield.

The team is part of the ALMO's *Wolverhampton Works* social enterprise project, which it established last year to support the improvement projects it is already running across the city. Mentored and coached by Wolverhampton Homes' trade staff, the apprentices are learning about fencing,



Helping older tenants

With a **rapidly ageing population** comes a new set of challenges for ALMOs. These are not confined to housing stock and housing services, but also include **activities and engagement** for elderly residents, while tackling issues such as isolation, vulnerability, independent living and the need for social and medical care.

Keep plugging in

Salix Homes' range of inspiring work with older tenants includes two contrasting but equally useful initiatives this year.

The ALMO has hosted basic IT training courses at its sheltered housing complexes across the city. Designed to usher in a new generation of silver surfers, students gained the confidence and ability to start using computers in everyday life.

And once 'plugged in', the tech savvy seniors opened a fulfilling new window on the world that has allowed them to keep in touch with friends and family, interests and hobbies.

Salix Homes also ensured that elderly tenants stay warm and well during winter. Throughout November and December, staff visited senior occupants as part of its annual *Keep Warm, Keep Well* scheme, which is now in its fifth year.

In 2013/14, the Salford-based housing provider put particular emphasis on tenants aged over 65 in its high-rise blocks. Customer support workers visited more than 90 elderly residents to hand out blankets, offer advice on staying warm and healthy during cold periods and ensure they claimed the benefits they're entitled to.

Salix Homes also installed cutting-edge EcoPod heating systems at eight of its tower blocks, for increased energy efficiency and reduced fuel bills.



Country independent life

Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing has been getting to grips with the attendant issues of living in a rural area and ageing. Shropshire is an agricultural county of sparsely populated areas and dispersed market towns where the rise in the number of older people over the past ten years is double the national average.

The number of elderly residents increased from 51,192 in 2001 to 63,400 in 2011, according to census records. In addition, many senior citizens are living with long-term medical conditions or have other special needs.

These factors present unique challenges for the county's services for older people. In response, the ALMO supports its elderly tenants through the SUSTAIN consortium, which offers a host of facilities to help them develop the skills to live independently for longer. Among these are:

- Welfare and benefits advice and assisted access to specialist services;
- Support for carers;
- Practical support to live independently;
- Supply of social, leisure and community connections;
- Delivery of training, activities and employment skills;
- Making available buildings and facilities for community-based working;
- Ageing Well guidance/support; and
- Signposting health and wellbeing services, such as falls prevention and public health initiatives.

Focus on staying active

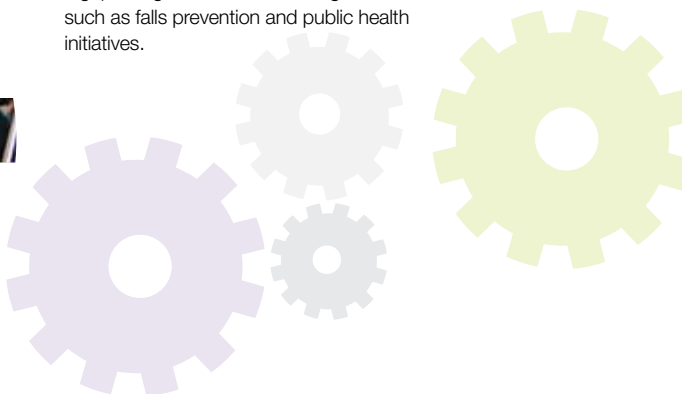
Barnsley ALMO, **Berneslai Homes**, employs a scheme manager in each of its sheltered housing centres who is onsite between 12 and 15 hours a week. As well as responsibility for health and safety in the building, they also co-ordinate, arrange and deliver social activities and events.

There's a great focus on health and wellbeing and Berneslai Homes works in partnership with other agencies to provide gentle exercise, cook and eat classes as well as more traditional resident engagement activities, such as bingo sessions.

The ALMO is also a proud member of the Dementia Action Alliance, working alongside partner organisations in Barnsley to promote dementia friendly communities. This sees staff becoming *Dementia Friends* and having a dementia action plan. They also act as good neighbours and maintain a general awareness of the health and wellbeing of tenants, dealing with any concerns.

Berneslai Homes has introduced digital technology to all sheltered schemes and community centres so older residents can access online services that allow them to save money and contact relatives around the world.

A Berneslai Homes digital inclusion officer and Get IT Together Barnsley tutors provide IT taster sessions, supported by volunteers.





• A St. Legers Homes of Doncaster plumber, Steve Oakley, pictured with tenant Susan Bailey, performing a repair in her home

Recognising achievement of people and organisations

If you are ever asked to demonstrate why ALMOs work, you could do worse than to show people this **round-up of achievements** over the last year by individuals and organisations alike. The glittering 'trophy cabinet' of plaudits, gongs, awards and positive feedback for the movement amply details how our exemplar housing organisations are a **force for good**, recognised both within and beyond the housing sector.

An **Ascham Homes** resident, Naseem Saleemi, was shortlisted for the 2014 Housing Heroes Awards in the *Tenant/Resident Lifetime Contribution* category.

Barnet Homes was applauded by London Mayor, Boris Johnson, for building the first Barnet council homes for over 20 years. The three homes in Muswell Hill are the vanguard for 40 more across six further sites within the ALMO's footprint.

Affirmation for **Berneslai Homes** included the NFA Award for *Championing Digital Inclusion*, a number four ranking in 24Housing's Top 50 Social Landlords and the Investors in People Gold Standard and Health and Wellbeing Award.

Homes for Northumberland acknowledged its many active tenants and community groups at its *Spirit of the Community Awards*, designed to reward those who go the extra mile to help others.

The active interest of **Homes in Sedgemoor** tenants in a new 30-year management agreement led to a key role for them in the process, with real influence on outcomes.

Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing became the first ALMO and only the second housing provider to gain a third Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) re-accreditation for resident involvement.

Meanwhile, engaged **Lambeth Living** residents were awarded £70,000 worth of grants to 42 projects, 26 tenants' and residents' associations, involving more than 3,000 occupants.

Northwards Housing received the Silver SHIFT Award (Sustainable Homes Index for Tomorrow), which uses rigorous measurements to test housing providers' green credentials.

Gold in the *Community Relations* category of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Pride Awards went to **Rykneld Homes**, who also scored 90% tenant satisfaction rates - its highest approval ratings to date.

Salford's **Salix Homes** celebrated winning the Excellence in Tenant-led Scrutiny category at the national TPAS Awards.

St. Leger Homes of Doncaster achieved the government standard accreditation for Customer Service Excellence for the fourth consecutive year and won the prestigious British Safety Council *Sword of Honour* for the third year running; one of just 68 organisations worldwide to achieve that particular award.

The past year saw **Stockport Homes** take a wide range of awards, including being named the top ALMO and second best social landlord in the country by 24Housing Magazine and the Housing Quality Network in December 2013.

Tenant and **NFA Chair, Sue Roberts**, was named 'Most Effective Woman Board Member' at the National Women in Housing Awards - presented by *Apprentice* assistant, Karren Brady.

Wolverhampton Homes was ranked in the top 50 places to work in the *Sunday Times* not-for-profit sector list. It also scooped the *Community Impact Award* at the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) Awards for the work of staff across the business and its high profile 'Stop Hate in Wolverhampton' campaign.



• The Colchester Borough Homes team gets stuck in at a MAD (Make a Difference) Day in Colchester in 2013

Taking a **strategic approach** to communications

This year, the NFA's communications agencies, Acceleris and the Public Affairs Company (PAC) have continued to support the federation in **spreading positive news** about its members, work and people to key audiences including politicians and the general public.



By Simon Baylis
Account Director
at Acceleris
(NFA communications
update covering June 2013
to May 2014)

A main focus of the 2013 campaign has been the development of a more strategic approach to communications in order to ensure consistent messages and an integrated approach across all channels.

To deliver this, Acceleris has worked closely with the NFA team and PAC to devise and develop the communications strategy for 2013/14. Following consultation with the NFA's executive steering group, Acceleris amended and refined this plan to incorporate feedback from a range of stakeholders.

The communications strategy focuses around five key themes:

- **Promoting the ALMO model**
- **Increasing housing supply**
- **Welfare reform**
- **Securing support for the NFA manifesto**
- **Improving the reputation of council tenants and council housing**

To support the strategy, Acceleris produced the communications strategy action plan schedule spanning press releases, features and other opportunities over the next twelve months. The team also revised and developed the NFA's key messages in line with its changing role and priorities. Key achievements to date include securing widespread media coverage around the launch of the NFA Manifesto, the NFA's report on the private rented sector and the NFA's first welfare survey. The diversification survey into the changing face of the sector and the John Perry report Treating Council Housing Fairly have also been well received with many of the key titles.

Generating 127 media cuttings across national, housing, local government and online media, Acceleris has continued to build strong relationships with key journalists including editors Martin Hilditch from Inside Housing and Jon Land from 24housing.

To counter negative stereotypes of council tenants, discussions are currently being held with the NFA and ALMO communications officers around the development of a sector wide campaign to promote a more positive image of social housing tenants.

The NFA has further developed its digital strategy using online channels including social networking sites Twitter and Yammer for members and those working in the sector to share updates and best practice. With more and more tenants using social media each year and a focused push on digital inclusion from many ALMOs, the NFA is confident this commitment to social channels will prove invaluable.



It has been an excellent year in the media for the NFA and ALMOs and issues affecting the sector. Here are just some of the highlights...

Above and beyond

The National Federation of ALMOs awards showcase the lengths to which staff and residents are going to make their communities better places. Lydia Stockdale presents this year's winners

"The awards honour the ALMO staff and residents who play an essential role in improving their communities"

As the year's longest running award for housing professionals, the awards honour the ALMO staff and residents who play an essential role in improving their communities. There was some competition in all the categories this year, she says. Here's how the winners stood out from the rest.

Photo: NFA/ALMOs



Winning team from the National Federation of ALMOs awards ceremony, 2013. Photo: NFA/ALMOs

24 housing
The magazine for housing professionals

COMMENT THE VOICE

Customers like dealing with one provider

Eamon McGoldrick

This month I've been:
Reading: The Secret Footbalter. It's fun trying to guess who he is!
Watching: The Great British Year. I know we mean about our weather but we also love seasonal changes.

Local Government News

Evidence from council housing bodies first arrears increasing across the country since introduction of bedroom tax

Feb. 25/10/2013 - 10:45 | Michelle McLennan

Best community initiative League action, City West Homes

When the first ALMOs were established in 2002, one of their key objectives was to improve housing management standards. This proved to be a very successful model and we are now being an increasing number of ALMOs entering into new long-term agreements with their parent local authorities. Congratulations to Brent Housing Partnership, Wolverhampton Council, Colchester Borough Homes and Newark and Sherwood District Council who have all signed new agreements for a minimum period of 10 years.

Long-term agreements enable councils and ALMOs to look at new opportunities for service delivery because there is stability and certainty in the relationship. Councils are increasingly asking their ALMOs to take on services such as allocations, homelessness assessments, management of temporary accommodation or housing advice. The collective description of these services is 'new opportunities for service delivery because there is stability and certainty in the relationship'.

Long-term agreements enable councils and ALMOs to look at new opportunities for service delivery because there is stability and certainty in the relationship.

The first ALMOs to deliver such services were Ascham Homes and Barnet Homes and they took on these new responsibilities in April 2012. Only 18 months later, the number of ALMOs providing a wide range of housing options services has risen to eight. This will become nine in December this year, when Cheltenham Borough Homes also start to deliver these services.

There are a number of reasons for this significant change. Firstly, ALMOs were originally housing management providers. When the ALMOs were set up, services such as housing advice, management functions which often meant splitting accommodation, and even moving into separate office buildings.

There is no longer a requirement for ALMOs to prove how 'innovative' they are and councils can return to a position where they are able to provide housing services. Secondly, ALMOs specialise in managing property and front line services and this experience is transferable to the management of housing services.

Finally, and most importantly, customers only have to deal with one organisation for the full range of services, from basic housing advice through to management of long-term tenancies. Many households, especially in London, may have to wait for long periods in temporary accommodation before they get permanent housing. They would rather have one provider looking after them throughout that journey.

The provision of joined up housing services brings major benefits to councils and local residents so it is no surprise to find more and more ALMOs taking on the provision of housing services.

Treating council housing fairly

INSIDE HOUSING

ALMOs pledge to deliver 429 new roles in campaign drive

The National Federation of ALMOs backs Homes Work campaign

"We are proud to support this campaign, which encourages social landlords and contractors to take on apprentices."

Eamon McGoldrick, managing director, National Federation of ALMOs

Building skills

Young people residents were not taking skills

2.5 million people ALMOs have played role in tackling worklessness

Fletcher argues reform of public borrowing could double England's output

Councils urged to provide land for affordable housing

Councils will need to provide more land if the Government is to meet its target of building up to 105,000 new homes

Creative thinking

ALMOs are using creative thinking to work with residents in raising standards, which can benefit local communities. It is a time of great change for ALMOs, with many new roles and responsibilities being created. ALMOs have a key role to play in supporting the government's ambition to create 250,000 new jobs by 2020.

Bulletin Board

Individual ALMOs report on a year of **activity and achievement**

13-14

A1 Housing Bassetlaw



This year will see A1 Housing, along with Bassetlaw District Council, embark on its first major social housing building project in more than 30 years as outdated Airey houses are replaced by 71 new homes.

In a year of change, other firsts included taking over the management of six properties from a registered social landlord and a new self-funded *Major Improvements* scheme that will replace the Decent Homes Programme at the end of this year and ensure the standard of homes will continue to be maintained.

The Decent Homes project has been of great value to Bassetlaw and an impact report we commissioned in 2013 showed that lives have been saved through heating and insulation upgrades, crime has been cut with better home security, and

jobs and apprenticeships have been created.

We have also been recognised with a Fair Train Gold Standard for Work Experience, while other achievements include becoming the second ALMO in the country to receive CORGI's Gas Safety Management in Social Housing accreditation, and an RSPCA Bronze Footprint.

Our commitment to the community and those in need has continued with a Dragon's Den style event that donated £10,000 to local community groups. Meanwhile, the team that delivers our Branching Out gardening and handyperson service starred in their second episode of the BBC's DIY SOS: The Big Build.

Ascham Homes



Ascham Homes is continuing to improve performance in key areas across the business in its second year as a modern ALMO, tackling the challenges of homelessness as well as housing management.

Exciting achievements in the last year included:

- Winning *Best Green Initiative* at the NFA Awards for our work installing solar panels at our properties;
- Continuing our green credentials through the launch of the Ascham Energy Partnership with our repairs contractor Osborne and British Gas to improve energy

efficiency for our residents through Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) funding;

- Becoming the first London ALMO to be awarded an HQN accreditation for our income collection service;
- Achieving our end of year targets for repairs, caretaking, homelessness, engagement and allocations; and
- One of our residents Naseem Saleemi being shortlisted for the 2014 Housing Heroes Awards in the *Tenant/Resident Lifetime Contribution* category.

Ashfield Homes



Ashfield Homes has continued to improve performance and increase levels of customer satisfaction against a backdrop of national austerity measures.

Among other achievements this year, we:

- Expanded our call monitoring service to more than 900 self-payers, bringing in an additional income of £134,000 per annum;
- Successfully retained the Customer Contact Association Global Standard Version 5;
- Successfully retained the Investors in People Standard;
- Retained the BSI ISO 9001 quality management accreditation for our supported housing service;
- Attained the RoSPA Gold Achievement Award for occupational health and safety management;
- Successfully achieved an HQN accreditation for our direct labour organisation;
- Took on four new trade apprentices as part of the government's Apprenticeships scheme;
- Developed the roles of welfare reform advisor and money management advisor to support customers, accessing nearly £22,500 in charitable donations or grants and

backdated housing benefit;

- Beat our challenging target on rent collection, achieving end of year performance of 98.75 per cent, with nobody being evicted for non-payment of 'bedroom tax' only;
- Continued to deliver the *Spade Aid* gardening project, which supports elderly and vulnerable customers across Ashfield;
- Developed a new complaints handling policy and designated tenant panel in conjunction with the Ashfield Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations;
- Developed a partnership with Sutton Community Academy to provide a range of training for community volunteers;
- Continued with a programme of carbon saving initiatives to improve the average SAP rating of the housing stock;
- Developed investment programmes to make best use of ECO funding, and other associated funding streams such as the Renewable Heat Incentive; and
- Made major improvements to several sheltered housing complexes across the district.

Barnet Homes



Barnet Homes celebrates its tenth anniversary this year against the backdrop of an ambitious 2013-2018 business plan.

In 2013 we announced a substantial building programme in partnership with Barnet Council to build the first new council homes in the area for over 20 years. Five months later the first three homes were built, three sets of families moved in and the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, launched the initiative.

Other achievements included:

- Results from the 2013 Leaseholder Survey showing an eight per cent increase in satisfaction about repairs and maintenance since the 2010 survey;
- The introduction of an *Early Intervention and Prevention* project which will benefit

young people in Barnet and includes peer mentoring in the borough's schools;

- The kick-off of the third year of our apprenticeship scheme with the selection of 15 new apprentices;
- A partnership launched with the Credit Union to give residents financial support and advice; and
- The recruitment of a new chair and deputy chair for our Performance Advisory Group (PAG). PAG was closely involved in the procurement of our new gas contractor and continues to review the quality of our services on behalf of our 15,000 residents.

Berneslai Homes



It's been a great year for Berneslai Homes. Here are just some of our key highlights:

- Recognised in The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* list for the second year running;
- Achieving the Gold Standard and Health and Wellbeing award from Investors In People;
- Winning the NFA Award for *Championing Digital Inclusion*;
- Setting up our in-house tenant support service giving tenants money advice and support;
- Being ranked 4th in 24housing Magazine's Top 50 Social Landlords;
- Expanding our e-communications offer including sending out 3,000 e-newsletters

per month;

- Continuing to invest in green energy, particularly air source heating, saving tenants £15-20 a week;
- Committing £18 million to a five-year new build and acquisition programme to deliver more than 200 affordable homes;
- Doubling our community refurbishment scheme, providing training for up to 100 NEETs (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) per year; and
- Employing 19 apprentices offering valuable work experience and training as part of our *Improving Skills, Improving Neighbourhoods* programme.

Blackpool Coastal Housing



As well as continuing to manage a network of 5,000 properties the company has successfully dealt with significant changes to housing allocation policies.

Blackpool's home improvement scheme, *Care and Repair*, joined the Blackpool Coastal Housing family from our partners at the local council, helping the company to better care for and engage with tenants, while apprentices continued to play a hugely important role.

Exciting work to redevelop our portfolio continues with the refurbishment of

Queens Park estate, replacing 1960s tower blocks with modern family homes, while our *Tenant Project Fund* is also helping our customers to have a say on which community work we support.

Creating and working with the community remains vital, with our contractors helping with an extension at a local primary school and community centre.

A new chief executive, John Donnellon, is in place for the year ahead and the company is also taking to social media for the first time.

Brent Housing Partnership



Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) is the ALMO that looks after 13,000 council properties in the London Borough of Brent. BHP also now owns and manages 300 of our own properties.

2013/14 has been a very exciting year for BHP. We appointed a new managing director, Tom Bremner, in June 2013 and a new executive team including a director of operations, director of finance and a director of development & growth.

We also embarked on an exciting change programme, which will ensure we deliver an effective, customer-focused service that achieves the aim of our 'vision'. The *BHP Vision 2014-2018* is a document that sets out the direction of the organisation for the next four years. The dynamic document summarises the vision, values and key strategic objectives of BHP. We are planning to finalise and launch this in the summer.

BHP was awarded the Investors in Diversity status in May 2013 which is accredited by the National Centre for Diversity. We went one step further and applied for the Leaders in Diversity status and were assessed in March 2014. We are currently awaiting the outcome of our application.

We welcomed two young apprentices to the organisation in March. They are part of a group of 14 enthusiastic young apprentices aged 16-23 years old who have embarked on Brent Council's apprenticeship scheme and will work in various teams. The council intends to offer 100 apprenticeship jobs during the next three years and BHP is working closely with the council on this scheme.

BHP has achieved a great deal this year, which has all been a result of working closely with our residents and partners in all aspects of our business. We want this method of working to continue and are looking forward to the year ahead.

Cheltenham Borough Homes



2013 marked a special year for Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) as we celebrated our first ten years as a successful ALMO, delivering high quality homes and services, strengthening communities and helping people make a difference to their lives.

This past year's highlights include:

- A high-performing housing options team transferring from the local council to CBH;
- The redevelopment of four former garage sites to provide a further 14 new homes;
- A new community hub opening at the heart of our award-winning St Paul's regeneration scheme, which includes 48 new homes and transformational

improvements to 93 existing homes;

- Transformed communal areas at several sites;
- The launch of a successful Polish community forum;
- Growth of our employment initiatives service with an additional work club; and
- The launch of a successful new youth club, set up by younger members of the community.

The coming year will see us review our business strategy to continue making a real difference to people, homes and communities.

CityWest Homes



CityWest Homes is an award-winning property services provider based in London. As Westminster's leading housing manager, CityWest Homes manages over 21,000 homes, which includes 9,000 leaseholder homes, 12,000 social homes and the communities in which they are situated.

Since launching as an ALMO in 2002, the organisation's dedication to customer service has resulted in an expansion of its offering to the private sector. Services

now include a private estate agency and managing an energy facility providing heating to more than 3,250 homes and businesses.

This customer focus has resulted in numerous accolades including Investors in People Gold status and rising to eighteenth place within The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* in 2012.

Colchester Borough Homes



What an exciting year it has been for Colchester Borough Homes!

We have signed a new ten-year management agreement and welcomed Anne Grahamslaw as our new chair.

We have taken on housing advice and homelessness services, disabled facilities grants and responsibility for facilities management of the council's non-housing stock. In the year we also commenced a modest new homes programme.

Meanwhile we won a Colchester Business Award for *Efficiency and Innovation* in

Property and obtained the ISO 14001 to run alongside the ISO 9001, the international standards for environmental and quality management systems.

We continued to support tenants tackling the welfare reform changes, including holding *The Big Event on Tour* in the summer of 2013 which had a focus on tenants maximising their income, provided practical money saving skills and promoted the mutual exchange process.

Cornwall Housing



During our second year of operation we saw some major achievements – we have built our first properties, exceeded our performance targets, completed all assimilation and TUPE transfers and successfully met the challenges created by extreme weather conditions.

Achievements include:

- Improving our housing options service by introducing a new self-service package online and developed an improvement plan to enable us to achieve Gold Standard service;
- Achieving 88 per cent in our tenant satisfaction survey;
- Introducing energy advisors, funded by reinvesting the money generated by solar

panels, to give tenants fuel poverty advice on their energy options and how to reduce bills;

- Sixty-nine per cent of homes achieving our *Cornish Housing Standard* (the new version of Decent Homes) against a 40 per cent target;
- Rent collection standing at 100.8 per cent due to the proactive work of our welfare advisors;
- Reduced use of temporary accommodation beyond target for the 2nd year running; and
- Our in-house repair team delivering 38,000 repairs.



• Lesley Roberts, Wolverhampton Homes chief executive (in red), celebrating the completion of a community garden built by staff volunteers



Dale & Valley Homes

Here at Dale & Valley Homes we've had another great year with cause for celebration after coming third in The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* list for the second year running. This makes us not only the highest ranking company within the north-east region but also the highest ranking ALMO in the country. We're very proud of the Dale & Valley culture and with 90 per cent of our workforce feeling there is a strong sense of family, it's no wonder we had the highest levels of team spirit of any other organisation in our category.

We also received further national recognition through our energy advice service by

winning a *Community Action Award* from National Energy Action, with a trip to the Houses of Parliament to receive the honour.

We are beyond delighted to have received this national award. Our customers already tell us that the great service our energy advisors provide is invaluable to them; to be recognised nationally means we can spread the word further afield to help tackle fuel poverty for those vulnerable people in our own communities and beyond.



Derby Homes

This was a year of big changes and even bigger achievements for Derby Homes. Derby City Council's review of housing management supported the ALMO and we have taken on management of further housing services and implemented other changes as a result of a new and innovative partnership agreement with the city council.

We launched a new *Intensive Housing Management* service, following the loss of Supported People funding. This integrates into the existing service, is free and is available to all tenants that need it.

Two new build bungalow sites are now completed, with tenants ready to move

in. A joint venture with Derby City Council, OSCAR (local residents' group), the HCA and Strata for 95 new homes is underway. We are setting aside further funding to subsidise our new build programme.

We completed a £1 million refurbishment of a derelict sheltered housing complex to create 25 new, high quality flats, managing the site ourselves using a mix of our own workforce and small, local builders.

Over £2 million has been spent on estate improvements across the city and we've taken on 24 apprentices. We are aiming to build on this and have around 10 per cent apprentices in our workforce.



East Durham Homes

East Durham Homes is an ALMO of Durham County Council and we manage 8,301 properties in the East Durham area on the council's behalf.

2013/2014 has been another busy year and just a few of our achievements are listed below.

- We delivered a £27 million investment programme - we have made more than 1,700 homes 'decent' this year and the majority of homes will have been made decent by the end of March 2015.
- Equality and diversity - we have been awarded Leaders in Diversity and are only the third organisation in the country and the first ALMO to achieve this standard.
- IIP Gold - we were awarded the Investors in People Gold Standard.
- Customer service excellence - we passed the annual assessment for the Customer Service Excellence Standard (CSE) and achieved 'compliance plus' in three elements of the assessment.

- Resident scrutiny - our customer inspection and improvement panel has made three inspections and recommended 41 improvements to services and most of these have been implemented.
- Customer involvement - we have awarded 12 community *Quick fix it* grants worth £3,730 to help local groups and carried out four *MAD* (make a difference) days in the local community.
- Supporting customers - we continue to support our customers and have a dedicated tenancy sustainment service, offer welfare debt advice and recently employed two energy and wellbeing advisers.
- Communications - *Open House - Your Annual Report for 2012/2013* was shortlisted in the *Excellence in Annual Reports* category of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Northern Awards.



East Kent Housing

Keeping tenants at the heart of our services continued to drive improvements during 2013/14, including:

- Championing tenant involvement through our successful scrutiny groups and tenant inspectors;
- Recognising the amazing contributions of our tenants at our first ever *Tenant Star Awards*;
- Using a holistic approach to rent collection which has brought rent arrears down for the third year running;
- Supporting more than 450 applications for discretionary housing payments and more than 200 tenants to move home in response to benefit changes;

- Recruiting six local unemployed young people to join our apprentice and graduate scheme;
- Creating ten new jobs to strengthen our maintenance team;
- Reducing our operating costs by a further 2.2 per cent, building on the savings already delivered to the councils in previous years;
- Winning best maintenance contract and being named finalist for our *Monty the money dog* financial inclusion project in three national awards; and
- Spearheading innovative communications by creating the UK's first 'good neighbour' cartoon, launching a new and improved website and being commissioned to produce 'tenant-made' films for partners.



Eastbourne Homes

There has been considerable change at Eastbourne Homes since the last NFA Annual Review. We said a fond farewell to Jo Ellis, our former chief executive, and welcomed Tim Harris who took up the role of interim chief executive. There was also a change on the Board when Gordon Sims and David Turner stood down after a combined 18 years of sterling service as chair and vice chair, respectively.

Over the last 12 months a great deal of building work has started in Eastbourne thanks to a major new housing initiative. Developed in partnership by Eastbourne

Homes and Eastbourne Borough Council, the Housing & Economic Development Partnership is overseeing the five year programme to develop more affordable housing. It's really exciting to see much needed housing development taking place on numerous sites across the town.

A final word too for Ann Murray who sadly passed away earlier this year. She served on the Board from its formation in 2004 through to her retirement in 2013. Ann made a much valued contribution to the social housing sector in Eastbourne.



• Fired up for a safer Sedgemoor - Homes in Sedgemoor and the local Fire Brigade are forging a safer future with a smart new initiative to equip fire crews with the latest technology to improve efficiency and help save lives. The new powered saws will enable crews easier access to properties in the event of a fire.

Enfield Homes



During the summer of 2013, a survey of our customers showed satisfaction with our services reaching its highest ever point at 74 per cent. The findings also demonstrated a strong level of satisfaction with repairs and maintenance at 79 per cent, although it suggested that more work is needed on ensuring that our customers think they are being listened to. In terms of overall performance, our rent collection performance at 100.78 per cent remained strong despite the impact on

welfare benefit. Our voids performance at 34 days to re-let empty homes reflected the difficulties experienced in allocating sheltered accommodation.

In terms of Decent Homes, 1,337 homes were made 'decent' against our target of 1,330 and our total allocation of funding achieved full spend.

The organisation is currently preparing for re-integration into the council without losing focus on some of the performance improvements that have been made.

The Gateshead Housing Company



The Gateshead Housing Company works with residents and the wider community to create homes and neighbourhoods that meet the aspirations of the people of Gateshead.

During the year ahead we will continue to aim to meet our key priorities, which include:

- Supporting tenants affected by welfare reform;
- Working with Gateshead Council to support vulnerable tenants;
- Exploring emerging technologies and developing funding opportunities to improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of our stock;
- Looking to further improve our repairs service;

- Developing a three to five year programme to build new homes with our not-for-profit partner Keelman Homes;
- Bringing other homes back into use and manage more properties on behalf of other housing providers;
- Looking to attract funding to the housing company or to Keelman Homes; and
- Carrying out an updated stock condition survey.

Regular updates on our work can be found at www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk and www.facebook.com/gatesheadhousingcompany or by following @gatesheadhc on Twitter.

Gloucester City Homes



During 2013/14, our work has focused on securing future investment in our housing stock, services and communities by obtaining approval from the government to proceed to a tenant ballot on a potential stock transfer to Gloucester City Homes.

We have continued to deliver a significant investment programme of internal, external and community improvements, as part of our on-going commitment to our residents to provide better homes, better lives and stronger communities.

We ran a highly successful series of *Community Roadshows*, providing residents

with advice and information, plus opportunities to develop new skills through various activities and workshops linked to welfare reform.

We were proud to be listed in The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For*, achieve Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation with a record 33 'compliance plus' awards, receive the *Best Customer Service Award* at the Believe in Gloucester Awards and achieve reaccreditation with BSI ISO 9001:2008.

Hackney Homes



Hackney Homes continued to deliver its mission of providing excellent, accessible services and quality homes that people want to live in. Highlights include:

- Achieving the target of 1,530 homes made 'decent'. This is in addition to the £25 million capital invested in planned maintenance;
- Completion of the Shoreditch Heat Network, a combined heat and power scheme serving 462 homes;
- Switching all oil powered communal heating systems to gas;
- Securing funding to install new communal heating systems to replace electric heating in 750 homes; and

- Working with Hackney Council to produce a 30-year housing revenue account business plan, including an investment programme to follow on from Decent Homes.

We have also received the following awards:

- The Housing Heroes award for *Inspirational Mentor of the Year 2013*;
- Winner of the Construction Industry Training Board for our *National Skills Academy* project; and
- Winner of the NFA's *Young Resident of the Year 2013*.

Homes for Haringey



This year we were delighted to win the 2013 WOW! Award for *Best Local Authority/Housing Association*. In 2013, we also:

- Were named one of Britain's Top Employers for the fifth year running;
- Successfully retained our Customer Service Excellence accreditation;
- Carried out Decent Homes work which has seen a total of £170 million investment in stock improvements since 2008 with 9,550 council homes having received works and 6,800 homes being made 'decent' in total;
- Launched a new online account system for tenants to check and manage their rent account and report repairs and housing services;

- Launched a new telephony system to improve our call handling;
- Carried out an efficiency review, which resulted in the highest rent collection rate in our history to date of 100.01 per cent;
- Held a very successful resident board member election which saw a 46 per cent voting turnout; and
- Won the 2013 Race for *Opportunity Future Workforce* award and were named runners-up in the grassroots excellence category at the Guardian Public Services Awards for our work as part of *Project 2020*, which helps to improve training and employment opportunities for young people aged 16 to 25 in Haringey.

Homes for Northumberland



The last 12 months have been an exciting time for Homes for Northumberland (HfN).

This past year has seen the introduction of a free handyperson service, several new build sites being developed and the hiring of ten new apprentices all of whom live in HfN-managed properties.

Highlights also included our customer conference and *Spirit of the Community*

Awards which was designed to reward those tenants and community groups who go the extra mile to help others.

We have conducted our first STAR survey since 2009 and were thrilled to see the results with over 88 per cent of tenants satisfied with the quality of service they receive. We will continue to work tirelessly to improve this over the next year or so.

Homes in Sedgemoor



The key achievement in the year was the confirmation from Sedgemoor District Council to enter into a 30-year management agreement from 2014/15. This was developed in partnership between the council, tenants and Homes in Sedgemoor.

The tenants were given a key role in the process and a real ability to influence the outcome.

2013/14 also saw us achieve the following:

- Completion of 3,500 Decent Home improvements and on track for completing the remaining 500 homes by September 2014 – six months ahead of schedule;

- Delivery of our *Young Apprentice* programme helping young people develop the skills they need to access employment and having this shortlisted at the National Housing Federation's Community Impact Awards;

- Development of our approach to resident involvement and community engagement, resulting in more than 4,000 tenants being involved, including 1,000 young people; and

- Development of a new approach to neighbourhood planning to help us deliver estates and environments that people want to live in.



Hounslow Homes



It has been a busy transitional year at Hounslow Homes with a number of key achievements. These include:

- Expansion of new business activities as we secured a contract to provide a neighbourhood warden service to A2Dominion covering 20 sites in five London boroughs;
- The development of our facilities management capability to secure a number of grounds maintenance contracts;
- Continuation of our successful new build programme as work commenced to deliver 120 affordable homes and also the identification of further sites for future developments;
- Expansion of our tenancy fraud programme following the successful recovery of 78 illegally sub-let properties;
- Attainment of the *Telecare Services* Accreditation for our Linkline Community Alarm service in recognition of the excellent response and monitoring service it

provides to users;

- Developing stronger links with Hounslow Borough Council through a number of shared service projects for corporate services;
- Our 'mutual exchange events' held in partnership with neighbouring housing associations that target households affected by the welfare reform 'size criteria' to assist residents secure mutually beneficial moves;
- Successful implementation of generic working, merging tenancy management and void and rents activity to provide a more streamlined service and to meet challenges resulting from the Welfare Reform Act;
- The launch of an initial core activity sheltered scheme to provide a range of fun and interesting social activities for residents 60+ living in the borough; and
- An overall satisfaction rating of 83 per cent registered by residents with the services we provide.

Kensington and Chelsea TMO



As a TMO (tenant management organisation), residents are at the heart of our organisation. This is proven by our test of opinion results, when 86 per cent of residents who voted said that they wanted us to carry on managing their homes on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. There was record participation in the vote, with 3,420 people - 32 per cent of all residents - taking part. This is 122 per cent higher than the last one in 2006, when 1,535 people responded. Overall satisfaction is also at its highest, with 75 per cent of those who

voted saying they were happy with the service that we provide.

These results followed a successful five year review by the council. Our performance has improved across the entire organisation; for example, our arrears figures are now at their lowest ever.

Another landmark was reached when the borough's first council homes since the 1980s were developed. Also, we are now reaping the benefits from carrying out day-to-day repairs through *Repairs Direct*, which we set up in late 2013.

Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing



KNH was set up in 2002, and completed our Decent Homes Programme in 2007. Since then, we've been focusing on the second part of our mission of *Quality Homes and Services in Successful Communities*.

Key achievements for the past year included:

- Improving services while also making efficiency savings;
- Implementing a range of changes to respond to welfare reform;
- Increasing our capacity to help tenants with benefits changes and financial management;
- Beating our rent collection targets again, thanks to a successful early intervention and prevention approach;
- Investing £9 million in maintaining decent homes;

- Improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty through a variety of schemes, including:

- o 1,000 A-rated boiler renewals
- o Solid wall insulation to 200 non-traditional homes
- o Increased loft insulation in 1,100 homes, and
- o New gas supplies and heating systems in 70 all-electric homes;

- Helping to regenerate town centres and creating new council homes through matched Housing Revenue Account funding; and
- Continuing our partnership with private company Quality Social Housing to manage new social housing in Kirklees.

Lambeth Living



With the highest ever capital spend in the history of the borough (£91 million) Lambeth Living brought 2,000 residents' homes up to the Lambeth Housing Standard and we achieved the highest level of reassurance from a PricewaterhouseCoopers audit on programme governance, financial management and value for money.

Independent benchmarking figures released in December 2013 revealed that Lambeth Living was number one in London with the best in-year rent collection performance. The same central income team responsible for that achievement was

proud to be shortlisted for an NFA award - *Championing Financial Inclusion* - for its work with residents dealing with the impact of welfare reform.

The year brought strong progress on repairs, low voids and our best turnaround time.

There was more resident engagement than ever with the launch of the *Getting Involved* and *Estate Pride* initiatives and the awarding of £70,000 worth of grants to 42 projects, 26 tenants' and residents' associations, involving more than 3,000 residents.

Lewisham Homes



We are excited to be development partners to build Lewisham's first new council homes in a generation. The Mercator Road development is part of the *New Homes, Better Places* programme - a joint initiative between Lewisham Council and Lewisham Homes - which will build 250 council homes over the next four years.

More than 4,000 of our existing homes have been bought up to the Decent Homes Standard. The partnership with contractors has also seen 300 residents take up training opportunities to improve their DIY skills and employment prospects.

The *Love2Dance* street dance programme was one of 16 resident projects supported through our *Community Fund*, which kick-starts projects aimed at empowering residents to undertake activities in their neighbourhoods. Attracting more than 100 residents, *Love2Dance* was created to enable young people to

access free street dance and drama workshops exploring the fundamental issues that affect young people today. Other projects included a business enterprise course, nature garden, outward bound courses, weekly seniors' social club and a fashion master class.

As a major local employer we are proud to support apprenticeships. Alongside our contractors we have given 35 young people their first steps on the career ladder. We've been recognised as a great place to work by Investors in People with a Bronze award and Silver from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for our approach to health and safety. We're committed to delivering great customer service, investing in Lewisham neighbourhoods and growing our business to shape a bright future.

Newark and Sherwood Homes



We were delighted that our achievements to date were recognised with the award of a 30-year management agreement aligned to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan. This has rejuvenated our relationship with our parent council and we are now working even more strongly together to make the most effective use of the resources available to meet our challenges – predominantly the need for affordable housing within Newark and Sherwood. We have continued to play a predominant role within the NFA - meeting and hosting treasury officials to lobby, with some success, for the lifting of the borrowing cap which supports our aspirations for growth.

We have developed practical solutions to support those tenants whose income

has been challenged by the introduction of welfare reforms. We have up-skilled our staff to enable them to deliver the GOALS UK programme, provided empowerment and motivational training that supports tenants in taking control and enhancing their employment potential, and also developed tenancy sustainment solutions which seek to avoid evictions.

Moving forward, we will continue to support tenants to maintain their tenancies as we believe this ensures the sustainability of the company's and the HRA business plan and will underpin the delivery of year-on-year growth to meet the aspirations of our shareholders and the communities we serve.

Northwards Housing



'Yes' is a small word that can do big things. In fact, it's the name of a social enterprise we've launched to help people find work. Since it opened last August, more than 3,000 residents have visited yes for help applying for jobs, training, benefits and starting businesses. Now 100 people are in work or training as a direct result.

yes has been a vital facility in light of the welfare reforms, the impact of which we helped shine a light on when we were the focus of Channel 4's *How to Get a*

Council House. The programme showed how hard it is to help find people a home when there are so few properties to move into. BBC1 also invited Tracy, our money advice expert, onto The Politics Show to talk about the effect of the 'bedroom tax' on tenants.

The past year has been hectic but we still found time to help 84-year-old tenant Jim Giles knit the biggest scarf in Manchester (measuring 1,050ft) to stretch around his historic home in Victoria Square!

Nottingham City Homes



Nottingham City Homes (NCH) is continuing to create homes and places where people want to live, and has this year delivered record tenant satisfaction. It is investing millions of pounds in the properties it manages on behalf of Nottingham City Council, and has embarked on the biggest council house building programme in the city in a generation.

NCH is building almost 400 new homes for families across the city, helping to regenerate areas and making sure tenants now and in the future live in decent homes that are energy efficient and built to high standards.

In addition, NCH started work on the first new homes to be built by the company's in-house workforce and which will be owned outright by the company. This has given NCH's apprentices valuable experience of building new homes.

NCH continues its investment in its customers through the *Tenant Academy*. This has helped hundreds of tenants gain new skills and confidence, enabling them to take a greater role in their community, gain employment and even become a tenant board member.

Poole Housing Partnership



As Poole Housing Partnership looks forward to celebrating its tenth birthday in 2014, we have a lot to be proud of, including:

- Being awarded a 30-year management agreement from Borough of Poole to secure the long-term management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock;
- Finishing in the top 50 of The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* for the sixth consecutive year;
- Starting work on two new-build sites and making significant progress with a major refurbishment project in the town;
- Securing planning permission to develop a modern, 54-unit extra care scheme for older people, with work due to commence in November 2014;
- Counting over 600 actively involved residents in our *New Roots* community

food-growing projects (there are two successful community gardens and another on the way!);

- Supporting the launch and promotion of two jobs hubs in deprived communities in Poole, where residents can drop in for help with job searches, filling in application forms and creating CVs;
- Achieving over £950,000 in savings and gains for residents living across Poole, thanks to the work of our in-house financial inclusion team, *Your Money*;
- Winning a government *Customer Service Excellence Award* for the fourth consecutive year; and
- Matching our 99 per cent income collection rate for the second year running and being named *Best in Class* by HouseMark.



• 'The Great Sutton Bake Off' finals saw a range of culinary delights by residents from Sutton Housing Partnership sheltered housing schemes and a special appearance by celebrity judge Lionel Blair

Ryknel Homes



The past year has seen tenant satisfaction at its highest level with 90 per cent of tenants happy with the services we provide. Other highlights have included:

- A major new build programme that has seen the first new council properties built in a decade with plans for more new homes in the coming year;
- Completion of an ambitious long-term regeneration scheme on hundreds of non-traditionally built homes. The programme has addressed structural issues and made the properties easier to heat and keep warm;
- Ryknel Homes successfully applied to the Homes and Communities Agency to

become a registered provider and is the council's chosen housing partner to deliver more new homes in future;

- We have accessed national energy funding to make hundreds of homes more energy efficient and have helped pioneer the use of fuel-cell technology to benefit vulnerable tenants in a sheltered flats complex; and
- We have continued to deliver a highly successful Decent Homes Programme – investing £19 million in local housing.

Salix Homes



The past year has marked the start of an exciting journey of transformation at Salix Homes, as we embarked on our first steps to becoming a stand-alone registered provider.

In September we celebrated a pivotal moment in our history when we were named as the chosen landlord to take ownership of the 8,500 homes we currently manage in Salford in a proposed stock transfer. This was followed by a landmark announcement that we'd work alongside our customers to become a 'mutual' if the stock transfer goes ahead, jointly owned by employees and tenants and building on the successes we've had as an ALMO.

Elsewhere in the organisation we've celebrated a raft of achievements and accolades including a national TPAS award and a Housing Excellence Award. Our

multimillion pound Decent Homes improvement programme has continued at pace and we've revamped many of our estates and high-rise blocks, totally transforming the Salford skyline and creating modern and energy-efficient homes our tenants can be proud of.

Tackling welfare reform has also been at the forefront of our agenda, but despite the challenges it has posed, thanks to the additional support and extra resources we've put in place we've bucked the trend and reduced our levels of rent arrears, tenancy terminations and void properties.

With a stock transfer on the horizon, we now have a challenging, yet exciting time ahead as we work closely with our customers to build a bright future for social housing in Salford.

Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing



New ALMO Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing, has made significant progress in its first year.

The housing organisation, formed in April 2013, has made efficiency savings in excess of £200,000 which will be invested in service improvement over the next 12 months.

Other milestones include the investment of over £7,000 in community projects and recruitment of a dedicated financial inclusion officer to help tenants work themselves out of financial hardship.

Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing has been working hard to support tenants to adjust to the welfare reforms, in particular helping approximately 20 tenants to downsize. The housing organisation took part in the national direct payment pilot scheme and has made a significant contribution in supporting and enabling tenants to pay their rent via the new system. With the support from the new financial inclusion officer the housing organisation has maintained rent collection performance, despite changes in benefits.

Six Town Housing



A misconception about organisations that provide housing is that this is all they do. Six Town Housing is no exception.

A *Steps to Success* initiative was launched to tackle employment and develop skills in our neighbourhoods. Three hundred and five people participated in *Access to Learning* courses, ten apprenticeships were undertaken, 16 work placement and training opportunities were brokered and 24 entered into further education.

The results reflect the positive difference being made to people's lives. Eleven youth and homework clubs were also established.

In October in partnership with Bury Council and Manchester Credit Union, we successfully launched the Credit Union in Bury, which has become the fastest growing member of the Manchester Credit Union family. All targets have been surpassed in the year-to-date. We have successfully mitigated against the under-occupancy charge with rent collection at year end standing at 99.4 per cent.

The number of affordable homes in the borough has increased and Six Town Housing now has 100 properties in its ownership, with further development planned.

Solihull Community Housing



We have just celebrated our tenth anniversary of managing homes on behalf of Solihull Council.

A new management agreement has recently been agreed so we look forward to continuing our programme of growth and investment with increased scope to diversify into new areas.

Over the past year we have:

- Continued our external wall insulation and sustainable biomass heating programme on our high rise buildings;
- Upgraded communal areas and enhanced 'kerb appeal' of 83 low rises;
- Built 19 extra homes, with work underway on 40 more;

- Introduced *ThinkChange*, a Facebook-style forum for staff suggestions;
- Recently been commissioned by the council to take over the response service to domestic noise nuisance in the borough;
- Staff donations enabled us to make up Christmas hampers for local people in need;
- Won the contract to deliver assistive technology and telecare services for the borough; and
- Supplied our area caretakers with handheld tablets to enable them to give and receive updates 'on the patch'.

South Essex Homes

Following a positive endorsement from tenants and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council last year, South Essex Homes is in the process of reshaping our front line services, in order to provide an even greater service to the tenants of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

This new approach to delivering our core business, alongside the continued progress we have been making in areas of new commercial business, serve to demonstrate our ambitious plans for the coming years. We are confident that our new subsidiary, Atilius Ltd, will help our company to evolve into one which is sustainable as we move forward into the future.

In particular, the past year has seen us push ahead with our government-funded *Digital Deal* project, which has enabled us to promote digital inclusion amongst tenants through innovative means including the introduction of *Digital Leads*, whereby computer literate residents help their neighbours to reap the benefits of getting online.

We have also focused our efforts on helping tenants to *Save for Life* by spreading energy-efficiency and money-saving tips to help them better deal with the effects of the welfare reform changes.

South Tyneside Homes

It's been another fantastic year for South Tyneside Homes where we have been recognised for our achievements supporting our staff and customers in the 19,000 homes we manage.

• The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For

South Tyneside Homes reached number 43 in The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* list. We also scooped the *Best Training and Development* award at The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work for Awards.

• Stonewall Top 100

In January we successfully broke into the Top 100 Employers of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index 2014. We were placed at number 72, having moved up 42 places from the previous year.

• South Tyneside Housing Ventures Trust

South Tyneside Housing Ventures Trust Limited (STHVT) has been set up to be a registered provider of social housing and a HCA Investment Partner. The company will take the lead role in building desperately needed affordable homes for rent or shared ownership on behalf of the council, with objectives to build 400 social rented properties over the next five years; to build new homes for sale; to facilitate the renting of new homes; and to provide social housing. The first properties were built and let by March 2014.

• Housing Plus funding

We secured more than £8 million from the Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015.

St. Leger Homes of Doncaster

Over the last 12 months St. Leger Homes has continued to deliver excellent services to tenants and drive improvements in our communities.

Our highlights include:

- Launching our *World of Work Academy*, an innovative project that is supporting people in our properties who are trying to find a job. It provides work experience placements, and offers training on job search techniques, CV writing and interview skills;
- We were one of just 68 companies worldwide to be awarded the British Safety

Council's prestigious Sword of Honour award for Health and Safety management. This was the third consecutive year we have achieved this accolade;

- We received the government's Customer Service Excellence award for the fourth year in a row in recognition of our focus on the needs of customers; and
- Our apprentice programme is continuing to develop a highly skilled workforce, with two apprentices picking up awards from Leeds College of Building and national apprentice training charity JTL.

Stockport Homes

We are proud of our achievements over an exceptional 12 months. These include:

- Completing a £10 million biomass heating project to four tower blocks under the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) and starting a £4 million ECO investment to install biomass heating to another nine blocks;
- Building 77 new homes and acquiring 60 through mortgage rescue and purchasing empty homes;
- Supporting over 2,500 vulnerable households through a range of housing support services;
- Setting up *Furniture Stop*, helping customers make a home and reduce waste;
- Launching the *Penny Lane Pantry*, a co-operative scheme run by volunteers to

offer healthy, low cost food to members, saving households £670 per year;

- Collecting 99 per cent of under occupation charges as part of an overall rent collection rate of 99.87 per cent with arrears at only 1.03 per cent of the annual debt;
- A fifth consecutive listing in The Sunday Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* and a top ten ranking for *Giving Something Back* to the community; and
- Being named top ALMO and second best social landlord in the country by 24housing magazine.

For more information visit www.stockporthomes.org

Sutton Housing Partnership

Over £35 million has been invested in Decent Homes' improvements to thousands of our residents' homes. We have started our most ambitious project to completely modernise Chaucer House, a high-rise block in Sutton, both inside and out, which will include the installation of an innovative sprinkler system.

Among many achievements from last year, here are some of our highlights:

- Through a successful partnership with the Building Lives Training Academy, we have delivered 25 apprenticeship opportunities for local residents in the construction industry; this will increase to 50 apprenticeships in the year ahead.
- Balaam House has been transformed after receiving £3 million of Decent Homes works, including new windows and an innovative cladding system fitted to the outside of the building, the first of its type to be used in social housing in the UK. The system is making a huge impact towards improved insulation and energy

efficiency for residents, as well as significantly improving the look of the building.

- Together with residents and partners we continue to deliver a variety of successful involvement events. The St Helier Festival, Sutton's *Great Sheltered Housing Bake Off* and street athletics support our strong commitment to building communities where residents feel happy and secure.
- The resident scrutiny group has been working on a number of scrutiny exercises, ensuring we are meeting our residents' expectations. We will continue this year to work with the group to continue to improve satisfaction with our residents.
- We are proud to have achieved the following accreditations: the TPAS Resident Involvement Quality Standard, Investors in People Gold, the British Safety Council 'Five Star' accreditation and 'Best Business for Health and Wellbeing' at the Sutton Business Awards 2013.

Tower Hamlets Homes

Tower
Hamlets
Homes

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) has had an exciting and challenging year, which has led to a number of significant achievements including:

- Successfully completing the third year of the Tower Hamlets Decent Homes programme, which in total has made more than 4,000 homes 'decent' and has unlocked year four funding of £70.5 million;
- Recruiting 58 apprentices as part of our Decent Homes Programme;
- Starting a programme to build 65 new homes for local residents;

- Inclusion in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for the first time, coming 44th of all UK companies which entered and fourth in the housing sector;
- Becoming the first London housing provider to achieve an 'Excellent' rating in the Social Housing Equality Framework;
- Receiving Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the second year running; and
- A TPAS Southern award for our work with LGBT residents and staff.

Welwyn Hatfield Community Trust

Welwyn Hatfield
Community Housing Trust

Last year saw the Trust go from strength to strength, improving performance across all core service areas and also looking to move into new ones. Among our key highlights, we:

- Were awarded Investors in People Silver status;
- Delivered over £250,000 of efficiency savings through our partnership contract with Mears;
- Worked with the council to 'buy back' properties, and identified development sites for new homes under Trust management;
- Successfully continued the roll-out of our welfare reform action plan, including helping families affected by the reforms to downsize and record rent collection figures;

- Managed a smooth transition to a new contract for gas services, with TSG plc, designed to deliver improved customer satisfaction;
- Started discussion to take over a community centre and community bus service from later in 2014; and
- Launched innovative *Waste Cage Days*, helping local residents to recycle unwanted items.

We also eagerly await the results of our recent assessment for the Customer Service Excellence accreditation, and hope to use the feedback from that to improve yet further next year!

Wigan and Leigh Housing

WIGAN & LEIGH
HOUSING
Better Homes. Brighter Futures.

The last year has been both challenging and rewarding for Wigan and Leigh Housing. The main challenge has been to support tenants through the introduction of welfare benefit reform. We have been working closely with partners on financial inclusion and helping residents into employment and training. In total between ourselves and our contractor partners we have successfully recruited more than 100 apprentice placements.

The main rewards have come from working with tenants. Through our *Better Neighbourhoods Fund* we continue to help tenants improve their local communities. Taking pride in estates and 'grow your own' have been a key themes. Residents won a number of Britain in Bloom awards and have even been asked to display a

garden at the Tatton Park RHS flower show.

We are continuing to build new affordable homes and have begun the roll-out of our five-year bathroom improvement programme planned closely with tenants. Reducing fuel poverty is another key aim and we have installed 1,334 energy efficient boilers this year saving tenants an average of £300 per year, and reinvested for tenants over £1 million of income received from installing photovoltaics on further energy efficiency measures to their homes.

We anticipate this year will be equally as challenging and rewarding. However we will continue to build on our strong partnership with tenants.

Wolverhampton Homes

Wolverhampton Homes

Achievements last year include:

- Signing a new 15-year deal with Wolverhampton City Council;
- Marking the completion of 20,000 Decent Homes;
- Our LEAP apprenticeship programme going from strength to strength, helping more than 100 tenants to find work, skills or training (the project's even picked up two national awards!);
- Launching our first staff volunteering project where 80 members of staff transformed a derelict site into a new community garden;
- Staff engagement remaining right at the top of our agenda with our first staff sports day and being named the second best ALMO employer in The Sunday

Times *Top 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For* list;

- Moving more and more tenants online. More than 3,000 are signed up to our Do-It-Online service as our web wizards work their digital magic; and
- Equality and fairness remaining at the heart of what we do. Winning an award for the work our *Equality Champions* are doing was a highlight of last year; as was our on-going commitment to becoming a gay-friendly place to work thanks to our *Proud to be Me Network*.

We're proud to be an ALMO – we think the movement can play a massive role in influencing the political agenda and we think that together, we're stronger.

Your Homes Newcastle

Your Homes
Newcastle

The past 12 months have presented daily challenges for Your Homes Newcastle as the true impact of welfare reform became clear, but it's been another positive year for us.

To help raise awareness of the changes, we visited the 5,000 affected tenants at home. Here, staff talked through residents' individual circumstances and explored their options.

These included moving to a smaller home, entering or re-entering work and getting advice and support on budgeting and making the most of their money. We ran a series of 'swap it' events to assist mutual exchanges and continue to work with those who are struggling to adjust.

The impact of the reforms has underlined the importance of protecting and maintaining the revenue that our services generate. In June, several housing providers signed up to our *Furniture Service*, so more tenants can furnish their homes. Similarly, our re-launched *Own Your Own* scheme allows them to pay for items such as TVs, tablets and games consoles with low weekly payments – discouraging many from turning to high-interest providers.

At the close of the year, we completed a review of our tenancy services division. The changes identified here will be implemented this summer and are set to further improve the customer experience for our residents.



• Now you see me - a young resident of the Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust at a community engagement event organised by the ALMO. The day included residents learning valuable gardening skills to grow their own fruit and vegetables (this photo was a runner-up in this year's Annual Review photography competition)

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