



COMMUNITY- BASED HOUSING MANAGEMENT



The ALMO advantage

COMMUNITY-BASED HOUSING MANAGEMENT is one of six briefs that assemble learnings from the ALMO model and its potential for delivery of high quality, compliant and value-for-money local authority housing through a specialist council-owned organisation. Drawing on 20 years of operational experience, these findings will also be useful to other council housing management models, including housing advisory boards and direct in-house service delivery.

What the Regulator expects

The spirit of the new regulatory regime, as set out in the White Paper – A Charter for Social Housing Tenants – is that landlords should accept responsibility not only for the bricks and mortar of their homes, but the quality of the neighbourhoods that surround them. This intent is expressed in the new compulsory tenant satisfaction measures surveys which include two questions specifically about how well residents feel their landlord cares their communities.

- *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?*
- *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour?*

First analysis of early TSM results shows that councils who manage their stock through an ALMO score higher with residents for ASB handling and community work. This is almost certainly because ALMOs are housing and neighbourhood-focussed, and take a holistic approach to stock management. They have also been at the forefront of partnership working with other agencies in the health, social care and financial wellbeing sectors.

Local focus and the ALMO experience

ALMOs OUTPERFORM DIRECT MANAGEMENT ON THE TWO 'NEIGHBOURHOOD QUALITY' TSMS

ALMOs score almost eight percentage points higher on making 'a positive contribution to the neighbourhood' than local authorities. They score 11 percentage points higher for satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.

ALMOs, WHOLLY OWNED BY THEIR PARENT COUNCILS, ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

They draw on the local labour force – often offering employability initiatives to train and recruit from among residents. They know their neighbourhoods and needs.

THE ALMO FOCUS ON TENANT ENGAGEMENT BUILDS EXPERTISE WHICH TRANSLATES INTO BETTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Because ALMOs are already connected to local residents through tenant scrutiny, residents' associations and active tenant governance initiatives, they have ready-made routes to wider community engagement.

ALMOs ARE STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED WITH THEIR PARENT LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This means they can be a key strategic partner for delivery of a council's wider goals around health, employment, net-zero targets or stronger places.

ALMOs HAVE A STRONG TRACK RECORD ON HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

Whether working directly with tenants struggling with arrears or finding the right support for vulnerable individuals, tenancy sustainment is a core goal of ALMO housing management culture.

ALMOs GIVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES A VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH THEY CAN DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE TO OTHER LOCAL HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

This was a key finding from the NFA's Excellence in Management and Partnership report. ALMOs retain their local democratic oversight and can model good practice, lead conversations and demonstrate local partnership working to other landlords.

ALMOs GIVE THEIR COUNCILS AN INDEPENDENT CROSS-AGENCY HOUSING VOICE

They bring housing expertise to wider local and regional discussions around, for example, social care issues such as safeguarding, to domestic abuse, ASB, employment and training, supporting physical and mental wellbeing, initiatives for young people, income management and financial wellbeing.

ALL THIS FEEDS INTO ALMOs' ABILITY TO 'STACK OUTCOMES'; LEVERAGING AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO YIELD THE MAXIMUM COMMUNITY RETURN – Case study: St Leger Homes of Doncaster.

122

People rough sleeping at start of initiative

Leveraging resources across services and sectors can make them all more cost-effective – and having a distinct housing-only organisation that is sufficiently flexible to join multi-agency initiatives makes this easier. These figures show first results from the Doncaster Complex Lives Alliance, a 'whole system' approach to homelessness.

100

Now in settled accommodation with continuing support from Alliance partners

Half a dozen housing specialists from St Leger Homes, the ALMO owned by Doncaster Council, joined the initiative's delivery team to reach rough sleepers and vulnerable, at-risk 'sofa-surfers' with specialist housing advice as a key element of co-ordinated support from a wide range of agencies look for long-term, sustainable solutions to rough sleeping in the area.

9

The number of Town Centre rough sleepers at first year-end – but the goal remains zero

Tenancy sustainment, housing benefit and lettings specialists from the ALMO have worked alongside the local council, two local hospitals, primary care providers, community rehabilitation services, NACRO (a charity advocating for former offenders), the national probation service, local police, the Department for Work and Pensions, and other community and voluntary sector workers.

Housing expertise combined with the decent, long-term tenancies offered by social housing have been key to the Alliance's success.

ALMOs are:

- 100 per cent owned by and accountable to their local authority;
- expertise-led housing managers embedded in their communities;
- flexible and outcomes-focused organisations, ready to learn, develop and innovate;
- subject to strategic independent board oversight that involves tenants and external experts;
- tenant-focused, making sure residents' views are heard and acted upon;
- high-performing and value for money.