

Annual Report 2010 - 2011

A look at life in Halton



A message from Nick & Ingrid

Welcome to our Annual Report.

We have produced this document using your feedback from last year's report and have listened to your comments throughout the year.

Over the last year we have introduced a number of changes, embraced by our team with the ultimate goal of improving our service to you.

We hope you can see that we have implemented a number of your suggestions, such as offering evening and weekend repairs appointments.

The following report offers an open and honest overview of the last year and we hope you can take the time to read it and tell us what you think using the contact details at the back.

In December we celebrated our 5th Anniversary which was a huge milestone and it was great to see a number of our customers involved in these celebrations.

We completed and handed over our first new development in Widnes and have more new schemes on site. We expect to start other development work as well next year following a successful bid to the Homes and Communities Agency.

We are proud of all that has been achieved so far and know our Board Members and colleagues are keen to take on the challenges to come.

Nick Atkin
Chief Executive



Ingrid Fife
Chair of the Board



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Throughout the report we have compared our performance to other North West Landlords. This key explains the meaning of the stars.

- ★★★★ top quarter
- ★★★☆☆ upper middle quarter
- ★★☆☆☆ lower middle quarter
- ★☆☆☆☆ bottom quarter



Getting to know you

Customer Involvement

The Customer Involvement team continues to support customers who want to be involved and is committed to helping customers to manage their home and shaping the services they receive. We have a variety of ways for customers to get involved, including:

- Editorial Panel who are responsible for REACH
- Scrutiny Panel
- Coffee mornings at sheltered schemes
- Neighbourhood Walkabouts
- Customer Forum
- Tenant and Resident Groups
- Fun Days
- Service Area Focus Group
- Board Membership / Company Membership

We are always keen to hear from customers who are not currently involved and would like to be. We offer as flexible an approach as possible and can organise transport and support childcare costs for customers who would like to become involved.

96%

The amount of information we hold on our customers and their needs has improved. In 2009/2010 we had information on 89% of our customers, in 2010/2011 we have 96%.

This means we can tailor our services to you, for example over the winter period we used the profiling information to contact and visit vulnerable people.

We identified and contacted 65 customers to ask if they had any support available. Five customers indicated they had no support and no one calling in on them.

Housing Officers and Construction Operatives were equipped with an emergency pack and made home visits to these customers, as well as regular contact during the cold days.

Enquiries, Complaints & Compliments

During the year we have had a decrease in complaints upheld and complaint totals which we see to be positive. The number of compliments we have received has also increased.

Year	Enquiries	Complaints	Complaints Upheld	Percentage Upheld	Compliments
2009/10	94	450	294	65%	173
2010/11	68	344	170	49.4%	217

Complaints Upheld

Year	Performance	Quartile
2010/11	49.4%	★★★★

We take any learnings from complaints and compliments to improve service.

18.4%

We continue to seek your views on an ongoing basis. Between April 2010 to March 2011 we distributed 14,688 surveys over a number of areas with an overall return of 2,711 (18.4%) at a total cost of £5,631.

As with all our surveys we strive for a return rate between 20-25% and are looking at different ways to increase the return rate.

The team is currently looking at other ways to gather information.



We have an extensive calendar of events throughout the year including fun days, benefit surgeries and Christmas parties at our sheltered schemes to name a few. The Ditton West Fun Day was a huge success with over 500 attendees.

We held a number of benefit surgeries and a 'better off in work' event. We are looking at new delivery methods and ways to encourage customers to attend.

Your Home

During 2010/2011 we invested £10.1 million in our Neighbourhood Investment Framework (NIF) completing works to over 1,000 homes.

Our commitment to investing in existing homes will continue into 2011/12 as we are planning to spend a further £8.8 million.

Bob and Barbara Doran returned to their Bankfield home in March after the refurbishment of 39 homes on the street, at a cost of £55,000 per house.



Adaptations

We work closely with customers to allow them to live independently in their own home. We have accessed an additional £174,500 made available by Halton Borough Council for adaptations. Except for a couple of extensions this has now cleared the backlog of referrals for adaptations. In 2010/11 the Trust spent a total of £674,500 on adaptations, of which £465,376 was successfully delivered by our Construction Services Team.

355 homes benefited from adaptations during 2010/11. We hope to secure additional funding from the Council again this financial year to further support the budgeted investment of £500,000 in 2011/12. Minor adaptations are still being completed within the targeted 10 days.

Between April 2010 and March 2011 we completed over 8.5 miles of boundary replacements to more than 1,200 of our customers homes by investing just over £1.8m.

By the end of 2010/11 the number of requests for level access showers has reduced to 34, with waiting times reduced from 18 months last year to less than six months.



Right time to move

We launched our right time to move campaign to support customers who are looking to move to a smaller home. We have helped a number of customers relocate to a smaller, more manageable home. Mr and Mrs Marsh moved from a four bedroom property in Runcorn to a bungalow in our new development in Widnes.

Gas Servicing

Gas Safety Percentage of properties with a valid gas safety certificate

Year	Performance	Quarter
2010/11	99.9%	★★★★☆

We have maintained a high standard of performance throughout the year reaching highs of 99.95% and not dropping below 99.89%.

Trust now offers weekend and evening repairs

We launched the improved service in May which means working hours are extended for minor repairs at properties across Widnes and Runcorn, providing customers with more flexible appointment times.

Appointments are now available on Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 9pm and on Saturday mornings between 9am and noon.

Repairs	2009/10	2010/11	Performance against other NW landlords
Emergency repairs completed in timescale	99.5%	99.9%	★★★★
Urgent repairs completed in timescale	89.5%	97.3%	★★☆☆
Routine repairs completed in timescale	86.2%	96.6%	★★☆☆
Repairs completed on first visit	85.0%	96.4%	★★★★
Appointments kept as a % of appointments made	n/a	97.9%	★★★☆☆

90%

How satisfied are you with the repairs and maintenance service?

Target	Achieved Last Year	Achieved This Year
89%	79%	75%

The target for next year is 90%. In order to achieve this we have trained a number of Operatives who are multi-skilled in the various trades e.g. joinery, electrics.

We have introduced a work programme which helps to plan the repairs appointment system as well as the extended hours repair service.

Customers move into £2.3million development

The Trust's flagship development has provided much needed homes for young families and includes 12 apartments at Viking Court and a further six bungalows at Elizabeth Court and Charlotte Walk. The scheme was officially opened by MP Derek Twigg in a ceremony attended by customers and Trust representatives.

Michael Hill and his family were heavily involved in the design of their bungalow, even down to laying the first brick. *Michael said; "It has been fantastic for the family to be so involved in this scheme both in terms of ensuring our bungalow suited our needs but also as the scheme is so important for the Trust. We are so pleased with our new home and looking forward to our future here".* The scheme includes several homes which have included customised adaptations to make life easier for people living with a range of health needs.





New Handy Person service brings joy for many

Customers told us they would like to see some form of handy person scheme. The Trust employed Gary Greenhalgh in October on a part time basis to undertake this role. Gary is now on hand to take on odd jobs around the home for older and vulnerable customers.

The free service can include erecting shelves, building furniture and changing light bulbs to name a few. Since April 2011 Gary is now full time.

Improving the Customer Experience (ICE)

Our ICE programme is well underway; ICE aims to make our services more accessible, enabling employees to spend more time out of the office in the community and improving service delivery for you.

What have we done so far?

We have developed two new customer access points, in our Foundry Lane and Daresbury Point offices.

Trust employees are now working flexibly, using modern, cutting edge technology from various locations, to maximise the time they can be available to visit customers and be on site.

A new Customer Services Team will be in place from 1st October 2011 to answer your calls; the team has been recruited internally along with a new manager to lead the way. The team can be contacted using the free phone number 0800 195 3172 between the extended hours 8am - 7pm. The Customer Services Team will be fully equipped to handle the majority of your calls at first point of contact, without having to transfer them.

What is still to be done?

We are implementing new IT systems from October onwards.

We are starting to use an electronic system to scan files and paperwork; this will make it easier for us to access and will reduce storage space required.

Costs

The cost of the new Customer Services Team is equal to our current expenditure on employees who deliver this service. Savings we have made in the cost of office buildings have been re-invested into improving alternative access points and methods of contact.



Assisted gardening scheme proves a success

In April the Trust launched an assisted gardening service. Gardens across Runcorn and Widnes are now being spruced up thanks to the free service for Trust customers.

So far the service has made a real difference to the lives of 50 customers who would otherwise have struggled to look after their gardens.



Your tenancy

Rent

In April 2011 the Board decided to allow our rents to increase by 8.3% on average. Our rent is still lower than other Housing Associations in the area. This will enable us to maintain the levels of service and ongoing investment into your home and neighbourhood.

83.2%

Do customers agree we offer value for money for rent paid?

In 2010/2011, 83.2% of customers were satisfied that their rent represented value for money, this figure has increased from 80% last year.

Average Rent figures from landlords across the North West

	TSA Website 52 Week rent	This Year 48 Weeks	Last Year	Increase
The Riverside Group	£73	£79	£77	2.4%
CDS Housing	£71	£77	£75	3.3%
Arena Housing Group	£71	£77	£75	2.4%
The Guinness Trust	£71	£77	£80	- 4.3%
William Sutton	£69	£75	£72	4.2%
Liverpool Housing Trust	£68	£74	£72	3.0%
Cosmopolitan	£63	£69	£70	- 1.8%
Places for People	£66	£72	£73	-1.4%
Halton Housing Trust	£67	£73	£67	8.3%

Allocations Choice Based Lettings

We reported last year that the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme would be in place in Winter 2010. The development of the scheme has taken longer than anticipated to finalise.

As there are a number of Local Authorities and Housing Associations involved each legal team had to agree the partnership agreement. The projected date for delivery is Spring/Summer 2012.

28

We are currently working to average re-let times of 28 days, reduced from 30 days last year.



Preventing debt/ Financial inclusion

We work closely with a number of agencies across the borough in order to understand and support customers who may be struggling in difficult times.

Due to the demand and success of the role we have employed Claire Creed as a Welfare Support Officer, to work alongside Amber Cairns with customers to ensure they are in receipt of the right benefits and can offer advice on money management.

Your Community

Events

During 2010/11 we held 39 community events – eight more than last year. During the year we have sponsored community groups via small scale grants which totaled £12,475. Projects that we have supported include providing sports kits, New Shoots fruit and vegetable scheme and a royal wedding street party.

The Customer Involvement team has employed a market research company to undertake research amongst our customers. A strong theme that came from the research was the need for more local events and fun days.

87%

How satisfied are you with the neighbourhood as a place to live?

In 2010/2011 this increased to 87% from 86% in 2009/2010.



The team is planning a programme of events for the forthcoming year which will include a number of new activities such as Zumba as a direct result of our market research.

BEYOND THE GARDEN GATE

We have £40million to invest over the next five years improving neighbourhoods and communities in Runcorn and Widnes. The programme will see money spent on projects that are influenced by people living in the community.

Over the next five years everyone including any local groups from the 14 identified neighbourhoods will have the opportunity to get involved and decide what improvements they believe are needed in the community. The programme has been to West Bank and is currently working in Ditton. The programme will soon move to Weston, Runcorn.

“Beyond The Garden Gate is about much more than the look of an area,” said **Kelly McKeown**, Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer.

“The programme is designed to foster community involvement and give local people the power to influence how money is spent in their neighbourhood and ultimately give a local workforce the chance to transform the areas in which they live and work”.

Trust continues its charity support

Every year the Trust supports two charities in a variety of ways, from providing expertise to raising money through sponsored events. Since 2006 the Trust’s support has totalled approximately £150,000.

During the 2010/11 financial year the Trust’s chosen charities were Halton Haven Hospice and Norton Priory Museum and Gardens and they benefited from over £70,000 of support from the Trust.





Trust teams up with Vikings to support local schools

We teamed up with Widnes Vikings in February to attract more children to watch home games at the Stobart Stadium during the 2011 season.

Schools will be given the chance to sell tickets to pupils for the Vikings' home games and keep 30% of the money that is raised. We are keen to support the Vikings in a number of ways in the future.

Anti-Social Behaviour



HouseMark
with the Social Landlords,
Crime and Nuisance Group

In January we received national recognition for tackling anti-social behaviour. The Trust became one of only a handful of housing organisations in the north west to be accredited by the Housemark and Social Landlords' Crime and Nuisance Group.

Some of the ways the Trust has tackled anti-social behaviour include using noise monitoring equipment, introducing Good Neighbour Agreements and part-funding two Police Community Support Officers.

A number of improvements are planned including investigating the feasibility of creating a witness support group, developing a mapping system to plot anti-social behaviour hotspots and creating a Youth Forum.

82%

82% of you feel the way we deal with anti-social behaviour has improved compared to 76% last year.

The Trust

Governance

Our Board of Management is made up of 12 members. Four customers, four Local Authority nominees and four independents who help to run the business. The Board's role is to make strategic and major policy decisions, set the budget and monitor company performance.

Board Members all have the same voting rights and have a duty to act in the best interests of the Trust. Board Members are remunerated to reflect the significant responsibilities placed on them and the time and commitment required to carry these out.

During 2010 / 2011 our Board Members included:

- Ingrid Fife** (Independent)
- Chair of the Board**
- Bob Gilligan** (Local Authority)
- Ann Macfarlane** (Customer)
- Margaret Walsh** (Customer)
- Mary Lamb** (Customer)
- Steve License** (Independent)
- Judith Winterbourne** (Independent)
- Margaret Ratcliffe** (Local Authority)
- John Swain** (Local Authority)
- Sheila Large** (Independent)
- Stef Nelson** (Local Authority)
- Janice Nicklin** (Customer)

Board meetings are also open to you. Anybody who would like to see how we work and make key decisions are welcome to attend any of our Board meetings to observe.

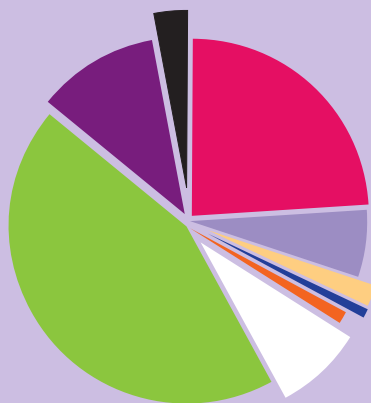
Sheila, Stef and Janice have now stepped down and as of 28th September we will welcome:

- Stephen Pimblett** (Customer)
- Mark Dennett** (Local Authority)
- Mark Forrest** (Independent)

In September 2010 the Board agreed to streamline our Governance structure. The Customer Services and Resources Committees were removed and a number of Lead Member roles were created, each focusing on a specific area of the business. Board Members are now appointed as Lead Members based on their skills and experience.

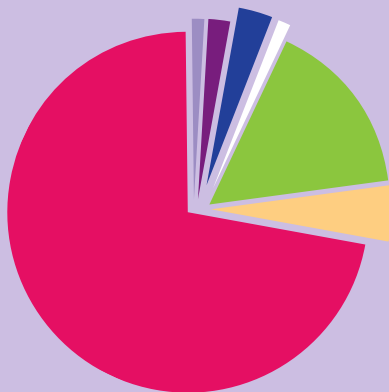
They work with the Leadership Team within their area of responsibility to monitor and challenge performance and support the development of the business area.

In 2010/11 for every £1 in rent, we spent:



- Improvement Work **£0.44**
- Support Costs **£0.03**
- Management Costs **£0.24**
- Building new homes **£0.08**
- Repairs & Maintenance **£0.11**
- Other Costs **£0.06**
- Bad Debts **£0.01**
- Interest costs **£0.06**
- Depreciation of housing properties **£0.02**

Where every customer £1 comes from (2010/11)



- Loans **16%**
- Social Housing Grants **5%**
- Rental Income **72%**
- Service Charges **1%**
- Shops & Garages **2%**
- VAT Shelter Income **3%**
- Housing & other fixed asset sale receipts **1%**

Value[✓]
for Money

£3,200

At the AGM in December 2010, the Company Members agreed to reduce the size of the Trust's Board from 15 to 12 members. This change means that the Trust is now compliant with Governance good practice. It has also brought about approximate savings of £3,200 for the year.



Our Local Offers

On 1st October 2011 we will launch the following local offers:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Estate Services
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Involvement and Empowerment

More information on our local offers will be available from 1st October on the Trust's website.

Introducing the Trust's Scrutiny Panel



The Scrutiny Panel has been created to challenge the Trust, ensuring we deliver excellent customer service that meets local peoples needs. The work the panel will undertake includes:

- Speaking to customers to seek their views
- Undertaking reviews of individual services
- Assessing whether we are achieving value for money
- Comparing our performance to other landlords

Andrew Shaw, Lead Scrutineer said; "After six months of training the Panel was ready to start our first review of the repairs service. Repairs was considered by the Panel to be the most influential part of the Trust because it is the service that every customer will use at some point.

We started by having a briefing from the service manager for repairs as to how the service is made up and which areas have been recently reviewed or are currently being reviewed and what the results were.

Two members of the panel headed to Foundry Lane to shadow employees who take the repair calls.

Other members of the panel have been busy doing a telephone survey of customers who have recently used the repairs service, working at various times of the day and into the evening to capture the widest cross section of customers.

The role requires us to speak to customers as well as working and engaging with Trust employees to gather their opinions and ideas about how the service works, how things could be improved and when areas of the service are working well how can we use this knowledge to better other service areas.

We have had a busy summer visiting other landlords, studying data and speaking to young people. After summer we hope to be able to draw some conclusions and make recommendations to the Board in November".

Contact Us

Runcorn

Daresbury Point, Green Wood Drive,
Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire,
WA7 1UG

Widnes

Foundry Lane, Widnes,
Cheshire, WA8 8TZ

Telephone:

General enquiries and repairs

0800 195 3172 or

0303 333 0101

(low cost from mobiles)

Phone Lines

8am - 7pm

Monday - Friday

Offices

9:00am - 5pm

Monday - Friday

Email:

info@haltonhousing.org

Website:

www.haltonhousing.org

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twitter.com/haltonhousing

Summary

Efficiency Savings

The Value for Money Group meets and reviews any efficiency savings that have been identified during the year and validates them before inclusion on our Savings Register. By using our own pop up scaffolding rather than hiring from third parties the Trust has saved approximately £150,000 this year.

By undertaking our own recycling and not sending our waste to landfill sites we are saving £48 per ton which amounts to a staggering £38,500 for the financial year. In addition to these significant savings other individuals have undertaken negotiation activities and worked creatively to achieve the following savings that were also approved:

• Training customers in house	£9,000
• Reclaiming VAT on asbestos works	£8,750
• Shopping shrewdly for the affordable warmth campaign	£2,765
• Increase of 4,000 direct debit payments	£1,500
• Savings on purchase of fire doors	£35,000
• Sending asbestos sampling direct to the lab	£5,600
• Changes to legal procurement	£50,000

When we asked our customers what their priorities were, they told us to provide more handyperson and gardening services. These additional savings that individuals have identified will pay for this service next year!

What do you think?

Last year we produced over 6,000 copies of the 20 page report and delivered a copy to every customer at a cost of £7,544.

This year – in order to reduce the printing costs we have printed 200 copies of the 16 page full report and printed 6,000 4 page summaries which are delivered along with the quarterly REACH magazine at a cost of £4,333.

We hope you agree this format is better value for money, if you have any suggestions on how we can deliver the report next year please contact us using the details below.

Anna Lambert - Communications Manager

Tel: 0151 510 5107

Email: anna.lambert@haltonhousing.org