



Self Assessment Submission

2 July 2007

Wakefield and District Housing Self Assessment – 2 July 2007

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Section 1: Setting the Scene

Organisation Overview

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) is on an exciting and challenging journey to transform the Wakefield district through partnership and regeneration. Our Vision is to create confident communities by 2020. WDH inherited 32,000 homes, 62% being non decent, with plans to spend over £700m in the first ten years. The principal driver is to improve all homes to the Wakefield Standard, exceeding the Decent Homes Standard. We have started our ambitious New Build Programme with an initial investment of £10m, helping to address the shortage of housing in the district. The financial framework, within which WDH operates, has been set by the transfer agreement and associated arrangements. WDH is a Registered Charity with an annual turnover of £86m and a VAT shelter that maximises our investment programme outcomes. However, the transfer agreement does not allow us to keep any of the surpluses generated by selling properties under the Right to Buy scheme.

WDH has a strong financial base, recognised by funding partners to include uniquely, a £100m facility to enable us to accelerate delivery on our regeneration aspirations. Our funding partners include the European Investment Bank as well as other leading financial institutions. We have recently expanded the funding partnership to create capacity for future borrowing. We have a good treasury management record, annually outperforming Business Plan assumptions. During 2006/2007 we saved an additional £149k through innovative interest rate management solutions.

We employ over 1,200 people in four directorates and have achieved Investors in People, Charter Mark and Tenant Participation Advisory Service accreditations to help drive change throughout the organisation. Focussed employee development is a major factor in creating the capacity for employees to improve services and enhance individual and organisational performance levels. Our OneCALL contact centre, available 24 hours a day, deals with telephone enquiries and our 12 Service Access Points support our local delivery. We have an in house Technical Services Team and 53 Sheltered Units as well as a Choice Based Lettings bureau. Tenant and employee satisfaction have increased by 7% to 83% and 15% to 72% respectively.

Our mock inspection, six months after transfer, clearly identified short and medium term challenges that we must address to provide excellent services from the resulting One Star assessment. Momentum still needs to be maintained in areas such as Value for Money and Equality and Diversity before we can say these are truly embedded. Our Improvement Programme is on track and had already reduced the number of non decent homes from 62% down to 40%, but our tenants wanted more. Therefore, after consultation, we applied for a Decent Homes extension to bring our Wakefield Standard forward by three years to 2012. This has been approved by the Housing Corporation.

Some of our major challenges are still in areas where we have split responsibility with Wakefield Council, such as disabled adaptations and grounds maintenance. Significant improvements have been made in improving the adaptations service and we are in the process of tendering the Grounds Maintenance contract.

Our latest Housing Corporation Assessment clearly identifies our successes and challenges, which has seen the previous three green lights increase to four.

The Environment in which WDH Operates

Wakefield Council's recent 'The State of the District' report concluded that there were significant socio economic challenges for the district in areas of education, employment, health, environment and housing. Therefore, WDH is a key partner within the Local Strategic Partnership, which endorsed our ambitious Vision to 2020 to regenerate Wakefield's diverse communities by investing in people, property and places. The Vision underpins the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement targets.

WDH is the largest rented housing provider in the Wakefield district, housing 100,000 people, 19% of the population, and providing over 31,000 homes, representing 23% of the housing. The district's population of 320,900 is expected to increase in line with national averages, people over the age of 65 is going to see the largest percentage increase up to 2020. 22% of the population, at that time, will be over the age of 65. The current Black and Minority Ethnic population of 3.3% is expected to increase through the influx of Eastern European migrants, disproportionately to black households, which are expected to remain static at 2.2%.

We know from our Tenant Survey and recent Tenant Census we have some work to do to accurately verify who our tenants are. What we do know, from our Census returns so far, is that 50% of our tenants are over the age of 65, 51% are single person households, 33% have a long term illness or disability and only 1% class themselves as Black and Minority Ethnic. 60% of the properties we manage are three bedroomed houses. Therefore under occupation and an increased need to support older tenants, as well as community integration, are seen as emerging issues. We aim to use area profile information and Tenant Census results to inform how we can deliver bespoke services. One of the main challenges is that over 70% still wish to be contacted by post.

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision to 2020 sets WDH's strategic direction, with three key milestones. These move the organisation from being landlord dependent to one that supports and encourages people to reach their full potential by offering real choice and influence the way local services are delivered. The Vision is an integral part of our Corporate Planning Framework to reinforce the contribution each of our employees makes towards achieving our objectives and overall brand. Through our rigorous Performance Management Framework, WDH has a strong performance management culture to retain the focus on core business objectives.

The Vision is delivered through a five year Strategic Planning Staircase, which sets out our annual Corporate Priorities to our first milestone. The Board and Local Management Committees review this quarterly for 'on track' progress and appropriateness of the priorities. Our Corporate Planning Cycle outlines the key events throughout the year to ensure we complete projects within the set deadlines. These events are supported by forward plans.

Our Financial Plans are aligned to ensure we have the resources available to deliver these priorities. We have also developed inclusive Local Visions for each of our five management areas that support the aspiration of providing local solutions to local issues.

A key element of our development is our Regeneration Model, which sets out how, through six stages, we understand local needs by assessing levels of disadvantage to deliver confident communities. These Local Visions are one of the vehicles aimed at helping us meet our Vision's first milestone of creating neighbourhoods where people want to live by 2010, and develop our existing management areas to become more regeneration focused. By helping WDH communities to take responsibility and become self governing, we hope this will also be expanded into areas where WDH do not have an interest. Through our sustained £700m investment to meet the Wakefield Standard, two years after transfer, our approach has already delivered better places for our residents to live, physically, environmentally and socially. However, more needs to be done to link Wakefield Council's area based priorities with those of our investment.

Governance and Accountability

WDH has a Board, which comprises five council, five tenant and five independent members. In addition to the Board, there are five Local Management Committees, covering the existing management areas, with the same representation as the Board and with tenant members appointed as Chairs. This ensures that WDH puts residents' interests at the heart of decision making processes, reflecting local needs and requirements. The Chair of the Board and Chief Executive meet Tenant Board Members and Tenant Local Management Committee Chairs on a regular basis. We have developed Board and Local Management Committee Intranet Sites and provided ICT equipment for them.

Local Management Committees scrutinise and challenge the organisation from a local perspective, in areas such as performance, service delivery and policy development. Our recent Local Management Committee Review identified that this accountability role should be extended. In addition to the Local Management Committees, the Board delegates certain responsibilities to its three other Committees covering Finance, Organisational Development and Audit. A quarterly Advisory Panel of influential key leaders, with contributions from invited speakers, helps WDH understand the wider regional and national agendas.

Our Long Term Financial Plan (30 Year Business Plan), the Medium Term Finance Plan (three year plan) and the Annual Budget commit the necessary resources to deliver the Corporate Priorities; the Board review these plans each November and approve the Annual Budget each March. The Board and Local Management Committees agree the annual Corporate Priorities through the Service Planning Review and the Annual Budget proposals, which are set following consultation with residents and there is clarity about priorities. Projects are risk assessed using cost benefit analysis and there is an integrated approach to setting priorities and allocating resources against them.

Delivering Services

It has been recognised that WDH has clear leadership with a strong and committed senior management team demonstrating, through the Corporate Planning and Performance Management Frameworks, a clear understanding of the organisational challenges and the context in which we operate. These Frameworks invite external and internal challenge in our drive for continuous improvement. WDH's active and visible leadership is recognised by partners, stakeholders and employees, which has led to improvements in customer services.

Investors in People 2005	'There is a good cascade of information through Management Support Meetings and Communication Hour'. The Mission, Vision and Values have been well communicated and employees have a good awareness of them and their contribution towards them.'
TPAS Accreditation 2006	'WDH exercises its vision for community development and integration to an impressive extent. Its funding of the community mediation project was just one of its many areas of excellence.'
Charter Mark 2007	'It is an organisation that serves its customers well and knows where it wants to be, employees are trusted to get on with their job.'

Engagement

We are committed to increasing local capacity in all areas to ensure residents can have an informed choice about how local services are delivered, our objectives and methods are detailed in our Resident Involvement Strategy and Statement. 72% of tenants are satisfied with opportunities for participation in management. Resident engagement is approached through a wide range of traditional and unique approaches such as: surveys, challenge days, focus groups, fun and feedback sessions, virtual forums, text and digital communications.

We work with 56 tenants' groups, covering most of the district, 40 of which are registered with Wakefield Tenants' and Residents' Federation, an independent body. The Federation undertook mystery shopping exercises, which have helped us in developing our Tenant Led Inspections. All our learning informs the development of new services and challenges our Customer Charter standards, in areas such as our Service Access Points and information sent out to tenants.

Our work with tenants was recognised by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Resident Involvement Quality Accreditation, making us the first Large Scale Voluntary Transfer in England to achieve this award. WDH has become one of the first pilots in the Active Learning for Residents project, a new Chartered Institute of Housing initiative designed to give recognition to the achievements of tenants and residents, without the need for them to engage directly with an assessment process.

Part of our plan is to develop the leaders of tomorrow and our Community Leadership Programme, recently accredited, commenced in April 2006 to engage 1,000 young people, over the next five years, on a journey of self discovery and personal development.

Working in Partnership

WDH has developed effective Procurement and Value for Money Strategies to ensure our partnership arrangements are effective. They can be divided into three categories; those where resources and risk are shared; commercial opportunities and; those where other developmental opportunities have been explored to improve service delivery. Whoever's expertise we use, we develop our own people to maximise internal capacity to move services forward.

Shared Risk	The Synergy RSL Group for our New Build Programme, our role as a key player on the Boards of the Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreements to meet stretched targets, the incentivised strategic partnership with our construction partners for our improvement work, Wolseley Stores Group, Dulux and IBS our ICT supplier.
Commercial	WDH takes advantage, as a Northern Housing Consortium member, of efficiency and cost savings of partnership contracts, without the need for OJEU procedures. Local suppliers are used wherever possible, as a means of boosting the local economy where we can demonstrate Value for Money criteria. Further system efficiencies will be delivered through Vanguard in repairs, Payzone for rent collection, Lombard and Veolia for transport and waste collection.
Developmental	<p>WDH is working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, Wakefield College, Groundwork and Wakefield Council through the successful Homebuilder and Junior Homebuilder programmes to increase construction skill capacity. To date, 50 graduates have found permanent employment with WDH or our construction partners.</p> <p>We are also further developing our partnership with Chartered Institute of Housing to build organisational capacity with the Board, Local Management Committees, employees, tenants, and residents to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to shape the delivery of housing services within the district. WDH has also been invited to be a part of a School Trust arrangement, to further our Community Leadership work. We have long standing partnership agreements with Tunstall Telcom, the Police and Health Authority.</p>

The major challenge to our partnership working will be to ensure that agencies with whom we work, can match our appetite and pace of change to meet local needs.

Summary

We are an ambitious, self aware organisation, demonstrated through our Vision to 2020, committed to providing the best services possible for our tenants. From the outset we aimed to be thorough, detailed and strived to be the best, keeping pace with national, regional and local agendas. The mock Inspection, six months into the new organisation, set our challenges and changed and refocused our thinking. In the last two years we have managed significant changes, not only in establishing the organisation, but improving service delivery through our Contact Centre and Choice Based Lettings approach. By listening and positively acting on comments about us, our resident involvement and engagement work has successfully improved service delivery, putting tenants at the heart of everything we do.

We recognise that we still have some way to go in reducing poverty, disadvantage and improving well being. Our consultation, feedback and partnership working inform the challenges that we face. We welcome the inspection as an opportunity to learn more, share our good practice achievements and change the way people think about regeneration in the context of Large Scale Voluntary Transfers.

Section 2: Service Areas

KLOE 3 – Stock Investment, Asset Management and Repairs and Maintenance

Context

A key driver in the creation of WDH was the need to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. The extensive consultation and involvement process undertaken with our tenants showed that they aspired to better improvements than those offered by the Decent Homes programme. In agreement with them, the Wakefield Standard was devised and incorporated into the Tenant Offer Document. Our target of 2012 is three years ahead of the timescales set out in the Tenant Offer Document for delivering the Wakefield Standard and has been backed by the Housing Corporation, our tenants and Wakefield Council and can be fully contained within our Business Plan.

A full OJEU compliant tender process was undertaken to appoint three Strategic Partners, Bullock Construction, Keepmoat and Mears Ltd to undertake the improvements using the PPC 2000 partnering contract. Improvements need to be made to deliver a true partnership approach.

We have an in house team with over 550 employees to carry out over 100,000 responsive repairs a year. We improve over 2,000 void properties a year, carry out gas services to over 21,000 properties. The Board has approved a Technical Services Business Plan to deliver £2.5m efficiency savings by 2010, leading to a full market test.

Structure and Process

Planning

Our Asset Management Strategy informs our investment decisions. The Strategy is based on stock condition and a sustainability matrix. WDH has a full understanding of stock condition through an independent Stock Condition Survey carried out by Savills and a Non Traditional Survey undertaken by Dysons Limited.

Local Management Committees developed the programme for the improvements, based on a 'Traffic Lights' approach, using asset management and stock condition information. This enabled WDH to consider local sustainability issues to ensure our stock investment is protected.

We carry out a detailed survey of every property that is due to have Improvement Programme works. The surveys provide us with accurate and up to date information allowing us to specify which individual components need replacing for properties to comply with the Wakefield Standard and record essential property details to allow us to develop our asset register.

All stock details and changes are recorded using IT solutions. Our database records which properties have been improved, component details and the life span of components, which have not been renewed. It is also linked to the 30 Year Business Plan allowing accurate tracking of costs.

Following completion of improvement works, details of components fitted, warranties and guarantees are loaded on to our IBS Planned Maintenance System. This ensures full integration with the responsive repairs system, ensuring that the Strategic Partners carry out the warranty works. The recorded stock details, mobile working, van stock and skills profiling will also facilitate a 'right first visit repair' as our in house Technical Services Team will know what they are going to attend to, in terms of equipment installed, prior to arriving at the property.

Improvement Programme

Estate improvement is undertaken by our programmed approach. This allows for maximum impact through coordination of catch up repairs, painting and environmental improvements, as well as smooth programming and delivery.

Prior to works commencing, there are 'choice events' and exhibitions where tenants and residents can meet the contractors to discuss any issues of concern. We have also appointed dedicated liaison officers who act as contact points before, during and after the improvements to deal with issues at source and resolve any problems that may occur. We offer tenants a bespoke computerised kitchen design service.

Our delivery model means tenants have been involved at every level from the appointment of contractors and suppliers, to agreeing the order in which properties are improved. Tenants are also involved in the strategic and local management of the Improvement Programme. A Tenant Sounding Board is in place, which has helped develop the wide range of choices available on the programme, as well as commenting on documentation and developing our Improvement Programme DVD.

WDH Technical Services Team also undertake Improvement Programme works, using their experience in dealing with those schemes where the pace of improvements best suits the needs of the tenants. Our strategic partners welcomed this approach.

We have undertaken Peer Comparisons with other housing associations and made over 20% savings on component prices through value engineering and supply chain management. Our arrangements allow 'Synergy', a group of eight housing associations, to benefit at the rates negotiated by WDH at merchant and supply outlets at their convenience. These principles are now being extended to the Synergy new build partnership.

A Value for Money review has also been undertaken regarding our current arrangements for professional services procurement. This indicates that WDH have been able to negotiate a competitive fee base for this service of 4.41%, which is below the current market rate of between 6% and 8%.

A '30 point' Customer Care Standard has been introduced following consultation with tenants. This clearly sets out the standards that our customers can expect during improvement works. This is monitored using a random sample involving hand held technology. Results are discussed with contractors at weekly meetings.

Following completion of works a Tenant Post Scheme Evaluation Panel is held to discuss improvements we can make. An Action Plan is developed and is monitored by the Tenant Sounding Board. Some improvements to date, include introduction of a Vulnerable Persons' Decoration Service and a 'Here to Help' Team. Customer Care improvement learning experiences have also been carried out with Strategic Partners using actual complaints about the programme, as case studies to improve customer care.

We have clearly documented procedures for management of the programme set out in a Quality Assurance Manual, which is available through the Intranet to all partners. The overall programme is managed through a Project Board under PRINCE2 project management methodology.

Responsive and Cyclical Repairs

Our in house Repairs and Maintenance Team benchmarks responsive repairs using HouseMark, which reports that our administration costs are low but our average cost per responsive repair is high by comparison. The results will be further investigated through work due to start with Vanguard.

The Tenant's Handbook lists the level of repair services tenants can expect. Repair standards are 24 hours for emergency works, seven days for urgent repairs and 30 days for routine repairs. However, emergency repairs are prioritised and we aim to respond within four hours for vulnerable tenants. Satisfaction with the repairs service has increased significantly since transfer from 78% to 91% at 31 March 2007. Performance of the service has also increased with 98% of appointments carried out on time.

The breakdown of planned repairs to responsive repairs is 60.3% : 39.7%. Post repair inspections are carried out by depot supervisors, based on a 10% sample.

Repairs appointments are available, during weekdays morning or afternoon, evenings and Saturday mornings on request, from three depots for all internal repairs from a mixture of general trades and multi trades personnel. The service also operates an out of hours Emergency Call Out service that runs 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Access to a range of services is available through our OneCALL customer contact service, by way of the Internet, Digital TV or Service Access Points. We are implementing an improved online defect analysis tool 'Locator Plus' to allow better diagnosis of repairs which complements the Repairs Handbook (hard copy available) issued to all tenants.

A repair receipt is sent to the tenant with each appointment and, where possible, a text message is sent the day before the appointment to reduce the number of abortive visits. Tenants are involved in the development of the repairs service through our Repairs Focus Group. They have also helped develop services such as the Repair with Care and Gardening Services, which are to meet the needs of elderly and vulnerable people. Both provide a day to day maintenance service aimed at reducing accidents, trips and falls around the home. We are developing a joint initiative with Your Home, Newcastle to expand this type of service.

The Estate Impact Service deals with estate environmental works including fly tipping and graffiti removal. They also provide caretaker and office cleaning cover. In addition to Pest Control, other specialist services include Target Hardening, which provides increased security for victims of repeat crime. Between June 2006 and March 2007 we completed 327 jobs, 46 to non WDH residents. 100% of the people receiving work were satisfied with the service and 94% have not been the victim of repeat crime. This service complements the Wakefield Council's Neighbourhood Strategy.

We operate a Cyclical Painting Programme, which is aligned to the Improvement Programme and offer a Vulnerable Persons Decoration Service, for tenants with disability related benefits, to make good the decorations following major investment. The annual Painting Programme is £2m and Customer Satisfaction Survey is rated excellent by 83% on the Vulnerable Persons Decoration Service.

We have outsourced our Stores Management, Fleet Management, Waste Management and Lift Maintenance services to increase efficiency. We are in partnership with Wolseley UK to provide two bespoke stores in the East and West of the district, which will be operational by October 2007. Lombard has been awarded the contract for transport for WDH after a tender exercise in 2006. The contract included the provision and supply of vehicles, racking, servicing and fuel. New vehicle provisions have already commenced and include the use of 'Tracker' to help aid operative safety and assist in achieving business efficiencies. Waste management contracts have been awarded to Veolia and lift maintenance and servicing is carried out by KONE.

We are currently piloting mobile working within the repairs service. Appointments will be clustered around individual home addresses to minimise travelling costs. Hand held technology is being introduced over the next 12 months to provide a better more cost effective service to our tenants.

WDH has in house domestic and industrial Gas Services Sections that are responsible for the management, servicing, testing, installation, commissioning and maintenance and repair of domestic and industrial gas appliances in 21,461 homes. The service has full CORGI membership, which is renewed annually. Customer satisfaction with the service is currently 98.5%, an increase of 3.1% compared to March 2005. We use limiters and public notices for the most difficult cases where access is a problem.

A gas service certificate is given to the tenant and a copy is retained for our records. Services are carried out on an appointment basis and weekend and evening appointments are available. WDH's duties to service gas appliances are outlined in the Tenant's Handbook, the Customer Charter and on the Internet.

WDH also has an in house Electrical Section that is responsible for the management, servicing, testing, installation, commissioning and maintenance and repair of domestic and industrial type electrical systems. The service is National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting Registered, an Approved Contractor and an approved National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting Domestic Installer. Certification for this service is renewed annually.

Voids

We have a single agreed minimum standard for voids supplemented by a detailed Voids Policy along with supporting flow charts. The standard, which has been developed by tenants, covers all components up to and including the boundaries of the property.

All major components replaced are to the same standard as the Improvement Programme, which has the added benefit of reducing the need for future maintenance. The standard of work on voids is inspected to ensure it is completed to the same high standard as the Improvement Programme work. We have designed a revised process for voids following the introduction of Choice Based Lettings. We have single point of responsibility for inspection for voids, following notification to terminate, determining the extent of works needed, accompanied viewing and sign up.

A decoration voucher system is in place for new tenants. This provides a range of wallpaper, paint and tools agreed with tenants from a catalogue or local supply centre. The system that operates in partnership with Dulux provides materials to a value of up to 40% over the equivalent retail value.

Asbestos

WDH has an Asbestos Register on our IBS system. The details on the register are being updated following a detailed inspection of each property in connection with our Improvement Programme. The register is updated on completion of works to each property. This information is available to operatives on the Responsive Repairs Service through the IBS system. We inform our tenants about the risk of asbestos through the Tenant's Handbook and Leaflets.

Adaptations and Disabilities

We carry out a wide variety of adaptation works through a team, that employs Occupational Therapists, to respond to the needs of tenants or families who, due to their age or restrictive illness or caring requirements, wish to stay in their own homes for as long as practically possible. All adapted properties are recorded and when available they are initially offered to applicants with similar requirements, reducing the need to reconvert. This information is being updated as part of our 100% survey in connection with the Improvement Programme. Information about the need for adaptations is gathered at survey stage for the Improvement Programme. This ensures that adaptations are coordinated as much as possible with the improvement works to reduce duplication of costs and disruption to the tenants.

Following transfer there was a backlog of 489 adaptation requests; these had been cleared by March 2006. WDH has invested £1.8m to clear this backlog and is now dealing with new referrals and upgrading previously installed bathrooms to the Wakefield Standard in conjunction with the Improvement Programme. We have allocated £2.2m for 2006/2007 to meet requests for adaptations. WDH works in partnership with Wakefield Council helping tenants to access Disabled Facilities Grants funding to install adaptation equipment. WDH has redirected £55k to fund occupational therapist work and improve the system.

Outcomes

- Reduced the level of non decent homes to 40.1% on 31 March 2007 from 62% at transfer. We had made 8,407 properties decent against a target of 6,047 by 31 March 2007 fitting 3,196 new bathrooms, 3,452 new kitchens, fitted new windows to 5,150 homes, and upgraded 4,624 central heating and 4,231 electrical systems.
- Saved 20% in the costs of purchasing components for the Improvement Programme as a result of our supply chain arrangements.
- Increased customer satisfaction with the Improvement Programme to over 90%.
- Increased satisfaction with the Repairs Service from 76% to 91% since stock transfer.

- Increased productivity within our Technical Services Team, from £16m turnover to a £21m, projected turnover within existing resources. As well as introducing more services such as Handy Persons Service and Vulnerable Persons Decorating Service.
- Market tested the responsive repairs element of the Technical Services Team, as part of the OJEU process to appoint Strategic Partners. It concluded that the in house team offered Value for Money.
- Provided a Gas Servicing Section, which operates below local market prices with the cost of service calculated at £66.20 compared with seven other providers.
- Reduced outstanding gas servicing from over 2% to less than 1% of all properties.
- Increased satisfaction with void properties from 84% in 2005 to 97% in 2006 and our void turn around time has improved by 20% over the same period.
- Improved the average Standard Assessment Procedure rating of the stock from 55 to 57. We also anticipate further savings for our tenants on their heating bills due to cavity wall insulation and have a target to increase the average Standard Assessment Procedure rating of the stock to 62 by 2009.

Challenges

- Develop more of a partnership ethos with our strategic partners.
- Fully implement the Technical Services Business Plan in order to release more resources into income generating activities.
- Develop a Systems Thinking approach to the Repairs and Maintenance Service.

KLOE 4 – Housing Income Management

WDH has an annual turnover of £86m, including income from social lettings, allotments, garages and commercial assets. We process over one million transactions annually, 99.5% of rent is collected, arrears represent 3.8% of rent due compared to 5% for northern registered social landlords. We provide a range of payment options including telephone (24/7 through OneCALL), Direct Debit, swipe card, cash kiosks, the Internet and Payzone. WDH worked in partnership with Wakefield Council and Arches Housing to deliver procurement efficiencies in awarding the Payzone Contract.

We reduced transaction cost from 47 pence to 44 pence between 2005 and 2007. The number of transactions continues to reduce as we encourage take up of Direct Debit. Former Tenant arrears valuing £3m were purchased from Wakefield Council on transfer for £148k, with £467k collected to date.

83% of our tenants' annual income is less than £10,399 per year. This influenced our approach in our Debt Management Strategy, Rent Arrears Policy and Procedures where eviction is seen as the last resort.

Structure and Process

Rents and Service Charges are set annually in accordance with Housing Corporation guidelines and WDH is on track to achieve target rents by 2011/2012. In addition to the annual rent notification letter, WDH tenants receive a rent information card which includes a breakdown of the services received and how much they pay for each, as well as regular rent statements. Tenants are required to pay one week's rent in advance at sign up and we recommend the use of Direct Debit to encourage a positive behaviour from the outset.

We send out rent statements on a quarterly basis in a format that our tenants helped us to design and have told us is easy to understand. Statements are based on individual circumstances. We send rent information to tenants living in sheltered accommodation in large font. With the recent introduction of the 'vulnerability flag' on the IBS system, it can now be used to drive further improvements in the way we respond and communicate with our tenants. Statements are also available online on demand. We provide a wide range of information about how to pay rent and service charges through the Customer Charter, leaflets ('Paying your Rent') and the routine rent information letters, which clearly explain the importance of paying rent.

The launch of the website www.askted.org.uk will help to coordinate the financial inclusion efforts. We provide help for tenants in obtaining basic bank accounts and overcoming financial exclusion. We encourage all tenants to pay their rent regularly and through Direct Debit. We also have initiatives such as our Christmas Prize Draw that encourage rent payments in times when we know that tenants may not pay their rent.

Where tenants fall into arrears, we have a variety of support mechanisms to get them back on track. These include 'Rent Arrears, Do You Need Help?' and 'What should I do if I miss a payment?' leaflets and information held on our website. Support is also offered through the White Rose Credit Union, the Council's Open Door Project and the Springs Advice Centre. Our arrears letters all contain information and signpost tenants to other sources of help. We explore the full range of cost effective legal remedies to recovery debt including Attachment of Earnings Orders and routinely serve Monetary Judgements through the small claims court, but have decided against Garnishee orders as these are costly to administer and relatively ineffective for the debts we are pursuing.

We chair interagency partnering surgeries, which include Springs Advice Service, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Housing Benefits, Wakefield Council's Open Door Project and Shelter, to ensure that our policies and procedures are strategically aligned. We are regularly involved in benefit take up campaigns with Housing Benefits and more recently the Department for Work and Pensions. Wakefield Council and WDH have a Housing Benefit Verification Contract to assist in reviewing the administration of Housing Benefit paid directly to WDH and tenants.

OneCALL undertake outward calling and text messaging to tenants in rent arrears. In March 2007 they made 345 payment agreements and encouraged 61 tenants onto Direct Debit. They also sent 325 texts, 59 of which were successful in securing a payment against arrears. We are looking at the feasibility of an optional questionnaire at the end of the call with OneCALL to enable us to record satisfaction with this method of communication.

During the sign up process, rent payment and dealing with arrears is explained. Payment details and options are also detailed in the new tenant's Rent Agreement Form. We have clear procedures for collecting other debts, including recoverable repairs and Leaseholders' charges. We also work with the Wakefield Council Benefit's Section to ensure tenants receive the correct entitlements quickly and do not suffer short term hardship.

Through a recent review, a central Debt Team has been created to tackle high and complex arrears cases. This also ensures that quality controls are maintained and are effective within the debt service.

Our Flexible Arrears ICT module identifies arrears and recommends actions at the earliest possible stage to prevent debt escalating and becoming unmanageable. WDH chairs the Technical Group for IBS users nationally.

Arrears recovery targets are set on an annual basis and each Estate Officer is given an individual target. The arrears information is monitored on a weekly basis and used at area and individual Estate Officer level to increase rent collection. Rent arrears targets are reviewed at Performance Challenge and Estate Officer performance is reviewed as part of the appraisal process. Income management forms part of the Board and Local Management Committee performance management information.

A constant dialogue is maintained in all arrears cases, which includes home visits, letters, telephone calls in and out of hours including Saturdays, text messaging and office interviews. The effectiveness of post tenancy visits on rehoused arrears cases was included in the review of the sign up procedure following the introduction of Choice Based Lettings. We are expanding the use of tracing agencies, for example Equifax, and have started working with an external debt collection service that has taken an initial 200 cases to pilot the process.

Outcomes

- The number of tenants paying their rent by Direct Debit has increased by 2,659 in 2006/2007 and we have set a target to increase the number to 10,000 by 2009.
- 77 tenants evicted in 2006/2007 as a result of rent arrears.
- WDH continues to recover Former Tenant Debt, accrued pre transfer. A debt of £3m was purchased under the transfer agreement for £149k. £467k has been collected and the debt currently stands at £2.533m.

Challenges

- Reduce debt levels through the introduction of a Central Debt Management Team in 2007/2008.
- Reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation, with debts to WDH, in partnership with Wakefield Council.
- Increase awareness of Financial Exclusion through the use of our micro website, www.askted.org.uk (Tackling Exclusion and Debt).
- Increase payment methods, including SMS text messaging, online payments and Digital TV.
- Implement a range of incentives to increase cash flow.

KLOE 6 – Tenancy and Estate Management

Context

WDH has made dealing with anti social behaviour one of the central elements of our organisation. In order to promote a whole organisation approach to dealing with this issue we launched our Community Safety Strategy 2006-2010. This Strategy sets out four main aims. These are to tackle anti social behaviour, help victims and vulnerable people, help reduce acquisitive crime and improve neighbourhoods.

We recognise that these issues cannot be tackled by us in isolation and are working as a key stakeholder in the Wakefield District Community Safety Partnership to bring a coordinated approach to the issues affecting our communities.

WDH have adopted the Respect Agenda and have produced a self assessment of what we need to do to fully comply with it. As part of this we have introduced satisfaction monitoring of anti social behaviour cases.

In 2006/2007 WDH received 2,629 complaints of nuisance and anti social behaviour, with 547 of these being resolved in one month. Since March 2005, WDH have issued 203 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and obtained 23 Anti Social Behaviour Orders, six injunctions, eight 'Crack House' closures and secured 18 evictions.

Structure and Process

Tackling Anti Social Behaviour

Tackling anti social behaviour is embedded throughout our organisation. This is demonstrated by our Vice Chair being the Board Champion for anti social behaviour with Local Champions from Local Management Committees. The Director of Operations is a member of the Wakefield District Community Safety Partnership and WDH employees are represented on anti social behaviour working groups throughout the district.

We have an integrated approach to dealing with anti social behaviour, which starts before a tenancy commences. All applicants to the Homesearch system are vetted for criminal prosecutions through our close links with West Yorkshire Police. An independent Allocation's Eligibility Panel enabling direct input on allocations for applicants with criminal records assesses applicants' suitability for housing. Our Tenancy Agreements include the rights and responsibilities of tenants and this is fully explained in our extensive sign up procedure. All new tenants are assessed for the risk of tenancy failure at the sign up stage and support meetings are programmed dependent upon need.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies (Starter Tenancies) are used for all our new tenants. These were developed in consultation with representative tenant groups and the Wakefield Tenants' and Residents' Federation. This activity has resulted in the fact that last year, out of the 2,470 new tenancies we awarded, only 4% failed through breaches of Tenancy Agreement.

There are two main ways anti social behaviour is reported; through the OneCALL service or our 12 Service Access Points. The Service Access Points are all designated Hate Incident Reporting Centres and OneCALL offers a 24/7 Anti Social Behaviour Response Service. More details can be found in KLOE 30.

We believe it is important that tenants are seen as people not a series of problems, for example anti social behaviour, rent arrears, untidy gardens. Therefore, our Estate Officers have a generic role to deal with all the issues individual customers have. All reports of nuisance behaviour are recorded on the new IT system, taken either by OneCALL or at the Service Access Points and actioned by Estate Officers on a systematic basis. The system now has a vulnerability indicator that will allow us to tailor our response to each customer to keep them informed.

Support is provided by the Community Safety Team who provide a full range of options for tackling anti social behaviour including Anti Social Behaviour Orders, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Injunctions, demoted tenancies and evictions. This team is comprised of Community Safety Officers who provide the link between WDH and Wakefield Council's Anti Social Behaviour Team, the in house Legal Team who provide litigation support and the Tenancy Support Team. The Tenancy Support Team are five Police Officers who are jointly funded by WDH and West Yorkshire Police to deal exclusively with WDH issues. This was a direct response to our tenants' concerns about the reporting of anti social behaviour for fear of reprisals by acting as a professional witness. We are about to expand this team to include seven Police Community Support Officers to increase the uniformed presence within our communities.

The Tenancy Support Team strengthens our links with the Wakefield Neighbourhood Policing programme and helps facilitate WDH's presence and influence within the Neighbourhood Tasking process. Through fortnightly meetings all agencies coordinate their resources at local 'hotspot' areas, known individuals responsible for nuisance behaviour and where enforcement action has been taken.

Help Victims, Vulnerable People and Reduce Acquisitive Crime

Our policies of Racial Harassment and Harassment have been formulated in consultation with our Diversity Service Review Group. Other policies include Anti Social Behaviour Policy and Neighbourhood Management Policy and the Anti Social Behaviour Procedures are due to be revised this year in consultation with the Anti Social Behaviour Review Group. The Anti Social Behaviour Review Group will also be reviewing the learning points gathered from the recently developed satisfaction survey of closed nuisance and anti social behaviour cases.

WDH leads on the issue of hate crime across the district and ensured that case conferencing for victims of hate crime was introduced into the district. We have supported the Safe@Home scheme for victims of domestic abuse.

We have also taken responsibility for the Target Hardening Team who provide support to victims of break ins, sneak in and distraction burglaries. This service is available to everyone throughout the district on referral from the Police with non WDH tenants being funded through the Local Area Agreement. 94% of victims assisted by the service have experienced no repeat crimes.

To try to ensure that young people do not become involved in crime we are funding a Senior Youth Inclusion Support Programme on the Lupset Estate. This has seen 13 young people with a history of problems provided with diversionary activities.

One of the issues we have to deal with is families that find it impossible to cope and cause widespread problems in the area where they live. To have the best chance of dealing with the underlying problems we are developing schemes, which will allow intervention at a level appropriate to the needs of each family. For those families who need low level help and encouragement we have funded Home Start, a local charity, to provide group based support. For those families, which are showing signs of problems, through the Neighbourhood Management Pilot we are developing a gateway role where WDH employees will be the link between the family and all agencies dealing with them. Where a family's behaviour has become chaotic, we have jointly developed and funded with Wakefield Council, the Families First Intervention Project that is being provided by the National Children's Home.

All our improvements to properties and estates are Secure By Design. We have also funded high profile Police activities in known hotspots and introduced joint tasking between ourselves, the Police and Wakefield Council's Anti Social Behaviour Teams. This has seen a dramatic reduction in domestic burglary across the district.

Improve Neighbourhoods

The development of our Local Visions has shown that a clean and tidy environment is important to our tenants. To encourage people to keep gardens tidy we run an annual Garden Competition and Community Awards. We also carry out Estate Walks and bus tours with local residents and Local Management Committee members, organise local clean ups with local groups and provide a quick response to issues through our Estate Impact Team. We work with Groundwork Wakefield to develop Blueprints for estates. This leads to community capacity being developed and contributes to our Regeneration Model. It also provides an opportunity to design out crime during environmental improvements by such things as removal of entrapment hot spots and improving the sight lines for long distances.

Since transfer grounds maintenance and the appearance of estates have been issues of concern. We have had extensive discussions with Wakefield Council, who have provided a short term action plan. We are currently working on the preparation of a tender for a combined Liveability Service and Grounds Maintenance to increase Value for Money and satisfaction.

Wakefield district has a specific problem with under age drinking relating to anti social behaviour that this causes. After discussions with the Primary Care Trust we agreed to fund a Community Development Worker to work with young people to tackle alcohol related issues. We are also bringing health awareness into our Community Leadership Programme.

We are working with Year Seven pupils in local schools to build awareness of the consequences of anti social behaviour, and have produced a leaflet outlining these consequences.

In order to ensure that we tackle the underlying causes of problems rather than just the symptoms we are working as the lead agency in the Airedale and Ferry Fryston Neighbourhood Management Pilot to develop new ways of working across all tenures and agencies. As part of this initiative we will be working with EnCAMS to produce an environmental baseline, train resident inspectors and agree an Estate Charter.

In many cases neighbour disputes can escalate to a level that causes severe quality of life issues whilst not being at a level that would require a legal solution. We have introduced an independent mediation service jointly funded by the Wakefield District Community Safety Partnership to provide specialist mediation for neighbour disputes regardless of tenure.

Customer Engagement

We have created an Anti Social Behaviour Service Review Group, which has victims of anti social behaviour as members, six of whom are residents who received national awards under the Respect Agenda – Taking a Stand. WDH is signed up to the Respect Agenda, which recognises that to make a positive impact on crime and anti social behaviour, we need to work in partnership. The group identified that we need to increase the number of cases that are brought to a speedy resolution.

We communicate with tenants about community safety through our Tenants Newsletter, Challenge Days and presentations to community groups. WDH's website includes a link direct to the West Yorkshire Police site. This link enables people making a complaint about anti social behaviour to WDH to also access neighbourhood policing information and activity updates for their own locality. We also monitor satisfaction with individual complaints.

At the Tenant Challenge Day in March 2007, tenants told us how they would like our performance to be reported in areas like anti social behaviour. We will use this feedback to publish the outcomes of our first round of Tenant Led Inspections. The Tenant Conference in June 2007 supported our approach to delivering the 'Respect Standard for Housing Management' and the way we tackled anti social behaviour. Feedback from the event highlighted the continued need to working in partnership and supported the use of Good Neighbour Agreements in appropriate local areas.

Value for Money

As members of HouseMark we have introduced a range of activity measures to assess performance and help improve services, benchmark our services against other housing organisations and learn from others. Currently, it is difficult to compare services to establish whether Value for Money is being delivered. We will carry out this exercise as the benchmarking information is developed.

We jointly lead with Chevin Housing Association, the Synergy Respect Partnership of regional registered social landlords, to develop benchmarking of services and promote joint learning.

We evaluate the effectiveness of individual initiatives and recently considered the introduction of a Tenants' Incentive Scheme. Currently, such a scheme does not deliver the desirable VFM benefits so, as a consequence, consideration is being given to a number of smaller incentive packages that will target particular parts of the service.

Outcomes

- 80% satisfaction with the local neighbourhood as a place to live. This compares well to the Local Area Agreement's Safer and Stronger Communities Block 2007 target of 75% and 2006/2007 actual outturn of 65%.
- An 11% reduction in criminal damage offences between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. Wakefield has the lowest criminal damage rate in the county.
- Support to tenants in reducing break ins and sneak distraction burglaries through Secure By Design improvements, Care Link, Community Safety Alarms and the Target Hardening Teams. 94% of victims supported by the team have no repeat crimes.
- 78% said neighbours were not a problem compared with 69% in 2003.
- 112 young people supported through the Youth Inclusion Support Programme with 13 young people being supported through the new WDH funded Senior Youth Inclusion Support Programme on the Lupset Estate.
- 51 victims of domestic violence provided with help and support.
- 15 cases referred to the new Wakefield Mediation Service.

Challenges

- Improve performance measures to assess the impact of liveability in WDH communities through dedicated estate charters.
- Improve services offered to victims and witnesses of nuisance and anti social behaviour to reduce the time between original complaint and case closure.
- Provide Value for Money against the full range of WDH actions to address anti social behaviour, environmental quality, especially ground maintenance.

KLOE 13 – Regeneration

Context

Our aim is to give people the opportunity to be economically active, healthier and spend less money maintaining their homes. In order to deliver our Regeneration Model we need to develop a range of skills to deliver the changes we expect. We need to work with a range of partners to ensure our employees, Board and Local Management Committee members have the necessary knowledge and skills to influence and shape the future of housing services. Our Recruitment and Retention Strategy develops the competences we need to deliver the Vision to 2020.

Our unique position within the Wakefield District Partnership ensures we are integral to the delivery of the wider regeneration agenda detailed in the Community Strategy, 'developing knowledge communities'. The aim of WDH's Community Regeneration Model is to help regenerate communities that have suffered from economic, social and environmental decline by building on the Audit Commission's definition of regeneration 'increasing employment, encouraging business growth and investment and tackling economic disadvantage'.

We learn from international, national, regional as well as local levels. Our current mentoring of an Israeli project and being on the Board of the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership and Local Strategic Partnership helps us challenge our thinking in relation to our local circumstances. Our Asset Management Strategy uses a 'traffic lights' approach to targeting where investment will be more sustainable. It also links in to the four major master planning areas we are engaged in with Wakefield Council and other regeneration plans we are assisting with.

WDH always believed that people capital is essential to achieving sustained physical regeneration considering the district challenges of being ranked 54 out of 354 on the Indices of Deprivation. This means the district has low school staying on rates, low levels of educational attainment, high incidents of domestic violence, lower than average reading age, business start ups being lower than the national average and households experiencing fuel poverty. Our local housing market research indicates that house prices have risen 143% since 2000, house completions of over 1,200 per year are required to meet affordable housing needs and the price to earnings ratio is 3.93.

A consistent outcome of our Tenant Surveys is the emphasis that residents placed on improving the opportunities and prospects for young people in the Wakefield district. Therefore, our person centred initiatives including, Homebuilder, Junior Homebuilder, the Community Leadership Programme and specific projects such as Motiv8 are aimed at changing lives and providing role models for the future and developing social enterprise, through training and educational qualifications. We also work with Wakefield Theatre and Foundation to communicate health and lifestyle messages.

Structure and Process

Our Community Regeneration Model consists of six stages:

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| 1 | Developing capacity | Through our Resident Involvement Strategy (KLOE 30) our Engagement Team actively works with our tenants, residents and leaseholders at every level ensuring they have a direct say in the type and level of services they receive. |
| 2 | Producing Local Visions | Five Local Visions have been written following Local Challenge Days. The priorities identified by residents, have been used to set the path for improvements aimed at helping us meet our first milestone, 'to create neighbourhoods where people want to live by 2010'. |
| 3 | Drilling down to estates priorities | WDH is working in partnership with Groundwork to develop 21 Estate Environmental Blueprints for our estates, which will be completed by 2009. The process involves working with schools and young people to suggest improvements to communal areas, developing play and leisure areas. The intention is to provide places of which local people can take ownership. |
| 4 | Physical Improvements | WDH is developing local physical improvement programmes. |
| 5 | Changing the place | We are engaging local people to maintain cohesion and sustainability through improved neighbourhoods and by managing the Castleford Neighbourhood Management Pilot and Estate Charter work with EnCAMS. |
| 6 | Developing Role Models | We are developing future role models through our Community Leadership Programme, improving health and education. All the districts 18 secondary schools have signed up for the programme which is coordinated through a multi disciplinary Steering Group. |

Our six stage Regeneration Model implements our Vision to 2020 through the three levels of investment: people, property and places. Our Local Visions, based on our five management areas, use our Local Area Profiles, to implement our Sustainability Matrix. This targets our resources to dealing with issues on individual estates, which need improving such as crime, employment, educational attainment levels and demand for housing. Our 'pick and mix' approach identifies local solutions for local issues, interplaying social and financial inclusion initiatives with physical improvements, creating places where people want to live.

Our regeneration activity is underpinned by tenancy support, engagement activities, financial inclusion measures, as well as promoting social enterprise. To develop social enterprise and more people employed we have secured Access to Employment and Deprived Area Funding of £910k. We recognise that we need to build on our working in partnership with Wakefield Council to maximise investment in the district's priority areas. The impact of our Regeneration Model is detailed as an attachment, identifying what activities we have undertaken and what we have achieved.

Our Social Return on Investment Pilot will try to measure the impact of our regeneration activities by looking at the value added benefits that people centred initiatives generate. For every £1 WDH spends we attract £2 of additional investment, with £6 of potential outcomes in areas such as education, health and anti social behaviour. This links to our commissioned research with Sheffield University to assess the impact of our activities on a specific estate, Portobello.

We are a regeneration vehicle and therefore all the work that we do contributes to the Regeneration Model. The details of our activity are included in the relevant KLOEs. For example, how we deal with our tenants' concerns relating to the fear of crime, especially in relation to having their homes broken into and vandalism on our estates, is set out in KLOE 6. Having invested in communities we ensure their connectivity and sustainability through the continuing support of our management structure, which is set out in our Exit Strategy.

We are using this information to develop our ten year New Build Investment Programme, working in partnership with the Regional Housing Board, the Green Corridor initiative and English Partnerships. Our aim is to build over 4,000 properties in the next ten years using Housing Corporation Grants to create new affordable housing where appropriate.

The ten year New Build Investment Strategy will be based on master planning our less sustainable estates resulting in transformational change to over 1,500 properties. This will assist in the provision of affordable, fuel efficient homes, of various house types, following lifetime homes principles, to meet the needs of our existing and future residents. We are developing packages for people to staircase to the tenure of choice whilst being proud to remain on estates we manage.

Our £10m New Build Programme is managed using PRINCE2 methodology to ensure the financial appraisal highlights all potential costs and development issues. All major redevelopments are managed in accordance with our risk procedures and Performance Management Framework. This enables the Board to make fully informed decisions.

We are working in partnership with Wakefield Council to reduce the level of fuel poverty throughout the district, which currently stands at 18.5%, 24,000 households. We are responding to this through our Improvement Programme leveraging in over £3m to reduce fuel poverty through a number of initiatives to improve insulation and the heating systems, including the use of thermostatic radiator valves, working with Wakefield Council to greatly impact upon their Local Area Agreement stretch targets.

Energy efficiency awareness sessions for tenants have provided advice on reducing the cost of fuel bills and will be repeated as part of our Summer Road Show across the district. Over 4,400 energy saving light bulbs and 600 flush savers have been given to tenants and this work will continue throughout the lifetime of the Improvement Programme.

Through bringing our homes up to the Wakefield Standard, 80% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhoods. We are improving the health of our tenants and making their homes safer places to live. For example, we install thermostatic controlled mixer taps to reduce the high incidences of scalding identified in our homes, installing condensing boilers and showers as standard.

Our equity release/loan scheme enables owner occupiers on our estates to buy into the Strategic Partnership supply chain, gaining 20% savings on components, with quality work being undertaken by proven contractors, including our own Technical Services. For Leaseholders we have negotiated 0% interest rate loans from the White Rose Credit Union.

We have a range of climate change initiatives including our 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' activities which is evidenced through our work to ensure our 23 offices run as efficiently and as environmentally sound as possible. Our 1,200 employees are encouraged to use the recycling facilities available, including specialised skips for various materials including glass and timber. We are introducing micro regeneration to our existing stock by installing three air source heat pumps and in our new build by installing 12 ground source heat pumps.

Outcomes

- Developed Local Visions to meet local needs.
- Provided 98 new affordable homes.
- Awarded the Neighbourhood Management Pilot, Airedale and Ferrybridge.
- Launched our Homebuilder Project with 85 young and long term unemployed people in permanent work, additional 100 people undertaking NVQ qualifications, 25 people being trained as NVQ construction related skill assessors.
- 180 young people took part in our accredited Community Leadership Programme.
- Complete 13 estate Blueprints to underpin our Regeneration Model.

Challenges

- Develop our relationship with Wakefield Council to take full advantage of regeneration opportunities available through our partnership working with regards to Masterplanning, Neighbourhood Management and housing need.
- Develop Value for Money internal capacity to deliver our ten year New Build Investment Strategy.
- Learn from our Portobello Evaluation Project, a four year research programme, looking at the impact of our improvement work.
- Demonstrate, through our Social Return on Investment Pilot, that our regeneration activities are building confident communities. Using our baseline data, the regeneration activity and subsequent impact, attributed to our intervention.
- Undertake a Fuel Poverty Study with Wakefield Council to inform our future regeneration activity.
- Implement our Climate Change Policy.

KLOE 30 – Access and Customer Care

Context

Through our Annual Tenant's Survey, Tenant Challenge Days, Service Review Groups, Meet the Chief Executive, Fun and Feedback, Mystery Shopping, Tenant Led Inspections, Virtual Forum and learning from complaints, our tenants tell us how they prefer to access our services. Our 2006 Tenant Census information challenges the way we provide services to meet differing needs and aspirations of our tenants and has demonstrated that we do not provide a one size fits all approach. All of these views have been taken on board in our revised Access to Services Strategy 2007-2010. The accompanying Action Plan outlines how we will use the learning gained to deliver excellent services to customers in whichever way they choose. It sets out our ambition to improve customers' access to services and outlines our plans for improving future access, by offering choice, variety, consistency and Value for Money.

Feedback has informed us that the majority of our customers prefer to contact us by telephone, which directly led to the development of our OneCALL, 24 hour, 7 days a week service, whose aim is 'OneCALL, one solution' for all customer enquiries and advice including payment of rent, property allocations, reporting repairs and anti social behaviour. We responded by increasing the capacity of the service, investing a further £43k in it. In 2006/2007 we answered 228,000 calls.

An integral part of the OneCALL service is the Care Link Telecare Service, which provides reassurance and support to elderly and vulnerable tenants and residents throughout the Wakefield district. This enables them to live independently, safely and securely in their own homes. There are currently 11,600 properties connected to Care Link, serving 14,500 customers including WDH sheltered housing schemes. A more recent development of OneCALL is the 'Homesearch' Choice Based Lettings service launched in February 2007.

We have 12 modern Service Access Points, across the district where services can be accessed in person, to obtain face to face help and advice on all enquiries from our friendly employees. We also have a website, although at present only 20% of our tenants have their own computer, of which 10% have access to the Internet and over 70% of tenants still want us to contact them by post.

Structure and Process

We have always ensured that customers are at the heart of our services. This was put into practice through our revised Customer Charter, launched in June 2007, which sets out the standards of service that our customers can expect from us. It was developed with our tenants, Board, Local Management Committees and employees. District wide and local performance is reported to and challenged by Board and Local Management Committees respectively. Our Annual Report to tenants publicises year end performance.

Our Resident Involvement Strategy and Statement and Tenant Compact – Pathways to Involvement set out the aims and standards for resident involvement at all levels and in ways that best suit our customers. Our engagement activities and strategies form part of the Wakefield District Partnership Resident Engagement Framework, of which we are a key partner.

Our Board and Local Management Committee Engagement Champions help provide challenges both locally and district wide. We ensure that our well attended engagement activities and events are inclusive and meet diverse needs, by offering specific support such as providing electric wheelchairs, disabled access, interpretation service, signing service, information in Braille, induction loops and special dietary requirements.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service Quality Standard for Resident Involvement recognised that WDH has in place a full range of options for residents to be involved at a level they chose across all areas of the service. The assessment did, however, highlight some areas for improvement, which we have actioned. Our last Tenant Challenge Day ‘Our Survey Says...’ in March 2007 looked at the ways in which tenants prefer to have performance information presented to them, which will feature in our next Tenant Newsletter. We have also introduced our ‘menu approach’ Learning and Development Opportunities for Residents.

In February 2007, following extensive consultation to ensure that our allocations service would meet our customers’ needs, provide a simpler and a more transparent service, offer more choice and help create sustainable communities, WDH introduced ‘Homesearch’. This advertises all available homes on a dedicated website, www.wdhomeSearch.co.uk, and in the local press. The scheme can be accessed in a variety of ways, including Internet, Service Access Points, automated telephone dialling system (Integrated Voice Response, SMS text messaging, Digital TV) and by telephone using OneCALL.

Each of our Service Access Points is accessible and Disability Discrimination Act compliant, equipped with Language Line and induction loops and offers interpreting services on request. We also advertise and provide the opportunity for private interviews, offer a freephone service for customers to contact other parts of WDH or request services from Wakefield Council and all Service Access Points are Hate Incident Reporting Centres for victims or witnesses to hate incidents. Each Service Access Point displays a notice board containing community information, including Local Management Committee and engagement information. Customers can also obtain copies of our leaflets and other helpful information. We involve customers in ensuring that our information and communications are fit for purpose, through Challenge Days and a residents’ Editorial Panel. We have Tenant and Leaseholder Handbooks that provide a summary of services offered to tenants and leaseholders respectively and also set out our legislative and statutory requirements. Through a programme of quality audits and from tenant feedback, we constantly review our Service Access Points to ensure that they offer a positive experience to our customers.

Following the outcome of Mystery Shopping, where tenants told us that some of our Service Access Points are hard to find, we decided to move some of them to high streets with a ‘shop front’ design. Our mock inspection also identified a need to review signage to ensure that all Service Access Points are easily identified. We are also monitoring the take up of the Saturday morning opening pilot at some Service Access Points, and will evaluate the success and added value of the service.

We are piloting touch screen interactive information kiosks, providing access to online information and services in areas of high customer turnover. As an efficiency saving on design, printing and storage costs, we are converting most of our printed leaflets into easily updated in house produced fact sheets that can be used with the kiosks, accessed through the Internet and requested instantly at our Service Access Points.

For those of our tenants who are unable to visit us or who need advice that can only be given in their own property, we offer home visits, which can be arranged within 24 hours if required. Portable induction loops can be provided in the customer's home. All of our employees wear an identity badge whether in the office or on a home visit. All leaflets and other information are also available on our website, which is regularly reviewed and updated. A number of these have been awarded Crystal Mark for Plain English.

We have introduced Digital TV, texting and provided personal computers to recognised tenants groups. As well as OneCALL dealing with incoming calls, we have introduced a proactive approach through outbound calling, including early rent arrears chase up, making appointments, inviting people to focus groups and events and chasing up survey forms and returns. In addition, OneCALL uses SMS texts to tenants in arrears that, having seen worthwhile returns, resulted in further extension.

We have an Internet Focus Group comprising residents and employees, that regularly review the content, accessibility and look of the website, leading to the development of a new site in June 2007. New online services have been introduced to enable customers to self serve if preferred, including on line rent accounts and payments, repair ordering and appointments and online applications and surveys. Other improvements include introduction of Payzone providing customers with access to make payments, OneCALL Dashboard, development of the Contact Management module within the IBS system and the provision of multiple language options. These developments go hand in hand with the introduction of modern methods of working, such as handheld technology and mobile and home working for our employees.

We have a three stage Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure that is easy to access and understand, confidential, thorough and responsive. Our Stage 3 Complaints Panel involving tenants is focussed on learning from complaints. We have a Complaints Service Review Group that led a review of the complaints process and the action plan is currently being implemented. Our tenants were also involved in innovative feedback methods such as our 'Carry on Complaining' Challenge Day and resulting training DVD.

Our Complaints Service Review identified a need for devolving complaints compensation to a local level. In addition, the low response rate for the Complaints Satisfaction Survey, resulting in a lack of reliable management information, identified a need to review the satisfaction form and methods of obtaining opinion.

Knowledge we have from the Tenant Census, will help us towards supplying tenants with a bespoke service, become more proactive, such as automatically sending out information and other newsletters in the tenant's preferred format, language and text size. Our ICT systems, will enable our employees to have access to records on the computer that flag up special requirements of customers, so that they can make adjustments to tailor the service accordingly.

Our intention is to make access to our services easy and convenient for the customer with increasing satisfaction levels with the services they receive, by putting the customer first and getting things right first time at their first point of contact. If mistakes are made we will acknowledge these, apologise, put them right quickly and learn from the experience to improve our services further and ensure their non reoccurrence.

Outcomes

- In the 2006 Tenant STATUS Survey; 83% of tenants were satisfied with WDH as a landlord, 85% satisfied with their accommodation, 84% satisfied with the repairs service we offer and 86% found us helpful.
- OneCALL performance, on calls handled, has increased from 53% (March 2006) to 87% (March 2007).
- In the 2006 STATUS Survey, 72% of tenants were satisfied with opportunities for participation in management, an increase of 17% since the 2003 STATUS Survey.
- 80% of complaints are resolved at the initial stage of the process. Those few considered by the Housing Ombudsman Service, have all been judged as 'no maladministration'.
- In December 2006 we achieved the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Quality Standard for Resident Involvement.
- WDH as a whole has been awarded Charter Mark for quality customer services, which now incorporates the previous award to Care Link.

Challenges

- Know more about our tenants to extend and tailor engagement activities to hard to contact groups, to identify the best ways to obtain all views.
- Review the use and efficiency of Service Access Points and other methods of customer access to maximise the benefits to the community.
- Develop new technological initiatives, to improve the level and quality of services, tailored to meet all needs.

KLOE 31 – Diversity

Context

Data from Census 2001 showed that 3.3% of the population within the Wakefield district was of Black and Minority Ethnic origin. The majority (99%) of WDH's tenants are White British, with only 1% from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The average age of our occupants is 51, higher than the national average age of 39. In terms of gender, 51% of our tenants are female and 49% male. Disability amongst our tenants is a major issue, 33% of tenants have a member of their household that suffers from a long standing illness, disability or infirmity, higher than the average for the district. Christian beliefs among our tenants are 13% higher than the national average. The number of tenants with Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist beliefs are significantly less than national averages. We also recognise that over 27% of the district's population have difficulty with reading, reducing access to services and education. WDH is working to address basic skills needs within its workforce through Wakefield Skills for Life Group. Data on sexual orientation will be collected in future surveys and through our allocations process.

With an ever increasing older population, many people require support to obtain and maintain their home. We provide support to vulnerable tenants living on our estates. Our Special Needs and Disabilities Unit incorporates five Occupational Therapists who offer specialist advice for all aspects of disability and frailty, especially on the Improvement and New Build Programmes. In addition, we provide sheltered and extra care facilities for 2,187 older and vulnerable households and, through our accredited Care Link service, offer visiting services and further reassurance to over 13,000 older and vulnerable residents.

WDH has Supporting People Accreditation and has contracts for delivering Sheltered Housing and Community Alarms. We are working with Wakefield Council and the Supporting People Commissioning Body to implement the district wide Strategic Review of Housing Related Services for Older People. The intention of the proposed changes is to move the support and assistance provided by WDH away from a property based service to one that is available to all members of the community.

As part of our work around Social Cohesion all our Service Access Points are designated Hate Incident Reporting Centres as part of a wider West Yorkshire initiative. Last year 22 alleged hate crimes were reported to WDH. We assist Wakefield Council's Open Door Project under shared management and flexible lease arrangements. This provides in excess of 250 properties in order that they can carry out their statutory duties in relation to Homelessness, Asylum Seekers (National Asylum Support Service Contracts) and assist other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including facilitated discharge, drug and alcohol rehabilitation projects, and ex offenders.

Structure and Process

Overview

There is a strong lead on Equality and Diversity from senior management and a Board Champion is in place. Champions have also been appointed at Local Management Committee and Director level and across all service areas. Although Equality and Diversity is everyone's responsibility, our Equality and Diversity Manager joined the organisation nearly two years ago with the remit to advise the organisation on future legislation, monitor delivery of our Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and keep diversity at the forefront of the organisation's priorities.

In consultation with local partners, and in particular Sadeh Lok, we have developed a wide ranging five year Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan. These consider external factors, for example, the MacPherson and Cattle reports and cover issues beyond those required by the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code of Good Practice Notes GPN4 and GPN8, KLOE 31, and the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice for Housing.

WDH has chosen to bring together all of its current and future Equality and Diversity Strategies into one consolidated document which includes our Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy and Disability Equality Scheme. In accordance with normal practice, our Disability Equality Scheme is being developed by our Disability Service Review Group, including tenants and other relevant bodies, for example, Scope. Wider consultation will take place through the Tenants' Newsletter and Virtual Forum. In line with new legislation future impending additions will include the Community Cohesion Statement and the Gender Equality Strategy. We are currently undertaking a programme of Equality Impact Assessments across all service areas.

Learning and sharing information with others within our sector, for example, Synergy and the Housing Diversity Network, enables us to incorporate best practice. In addition, an external Equality and Diversity Group has been established, comprising external stakeholders that will act as a critical friend.

Customers

To identify our customer requirements we undertook a full Tenant Census at the end of 2006. 44% of tenants responded and we are currently undertaking a telephone exercise to capture more results. This information will be used to inform Corporate Priorities and assist in tailoring the provision of services, which more accurately meet the individual needs of customers through a flagging facility, to record specific needs. In July 2007 we are undertaking a door knocking exercise with all our known Black and Minority Ethnic tenants to address any specific issues they may have.

Our Improvement Programme takes account of specific cultural and personal needs. Specialist advice has been sought in this area and Choices Events are always planned according to the needs of particular residents. A process has also been established to monitor that Contractors achieve equal levels of customer satisfaction from various groups.

Disability and vulnerability are particularly catered for within WDH services. Our Service Access Points are Disability Discrimination Act compliant and a specific Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan exists to ensure that relevant WDH properties are brought up to Disability Discrimination Act standards as soon as is practicable. Specific initiatives such as the Vulnerable Persons Decoration Service, Home Relocator Service, Repair With Care and the Gardening Service provide additional individualised services to our vulnerable tenants. WDH works with other community organisations, through the WDH Forum, in order to collaborate in the delivery of services to older and vulnerable people, for example, Disability Information and Advice Line will be promoting these services.

We recently launched our Care Link Telecare Services Strategy, which outlines how we will develop the service to meet individual customers needs. The first expansion of Care Link was the launch of our responsive service funded through a £150K Preventative Technology Grant through Wakefield Council.

In addition, WDH is also active in the wider district, working with other agencies towards eliminating discrimination in areas including racial harassment (Wakefield Racial Harassment Group and the Respect Agenda). The Community Safety Team works towards raising levels of anti social behaviour awareness through initiatives such as school visits and a specific mediation service. Our Harassment and Racial Harassment Policies have been formulated in consultation with our Diversity Service Review Group.

Resident involvement is central to ensuring our services are tailored to meet specific needs and also key to the development of new services. WDH adapts its involvement according to the needs of differing communities, for example, working with a local Polish delicatessen to reach newer groups and Black and Minority Ethnic surgeries, targeted at Asian communities, which were advertised in an established local Asian magazine, Mango. Recent resident involvement activities have reached some non traditional involved groups, such as single parents and young people. These events always consider venues appropriate for the relevant target group, and innovative activities, such as text messaging or Virtual Forums, that will appeal to certain groups.

In order to support our activities and communications, all of our publications, including our website, are available on request in a wide range of formats and languages (KLOE 30 details this).

Employees and Partners

To support our Recruitment and Retention Strategy and to attract candidates from hard to reach groups we have a wide range of interventions, for example, a Recruitment Advice Road Show was staged in January 2007, targeted at the Black and Minority Ethnic community, and advertised in Mango. The response has already resulted in job applications and one appointment. WDH also supports projects which address employment challenges within the organisation and the wider district, and currently has a programme with Remploy (to aid disabled people back into employment). WDH holds the Disability Symbol, which we renew annually with Job Centre Plus. In partnership with Groundwork, WDH delivers a training and development package, Homebuilder, to assist unemployed people in acquiring the skills required to enable them to access full time permanent employment within WDH and other partnership companies.

Our Equality and Diversity Group develop our Equality and Diversity Training Plan and, in response to the mock Inspection exercise in late 2005, an Awareness and Embedding Group was also established to underpin an awareness raising programme. New employees receive training on Equality and Diversity issues as part of their formal induction. Additional ongoing training provides updates in legislation and policy, and provides an opportunity to endorse best practices. WDH managers, using tailored course materials, are active in the delivery of this awareness and for cascading key messages down throughout the organisation.

An external specialist trainer regularly delivers a popular and successful two day cultural awareness programme, which includes sessions addressing issues encountered with minority groups, specifically asylum seekers, gypsies and travellers, ethnic minorities and the homosexual community.

The Briefing Note regularly includes a selection of Equality Good News Stories, which assists in broadening employee understanding. Employees who have actively practised their ability to deliver equality are celebrated in this way.

Our Equality in Contracts booklet ensures that our Strategic Partners are fully conversant with our Equality and Diversity requirements and their employee targets are closely monitored. We include a 'statement of respecting people's differences' in our contractors' '30 Point' Customer Care Standard. In early 2007 an assessment of contractor employee understanding of diversity issues, using the Investors in People standards, was undertaken, from which an Action Plan was drawn. Future activities will include an Equality and Diversity Contractors Event on 21 August 2007, and our annual Diversity Day in the autumn.

Outcomes

- Employees are aware of their responsibilities within Equality and Diversity. Our May 2007 Employee Survey highlights that 83% of employees say they have a good understanding of equal opportunities (up 6% on last year's survey).
- Employee targets have been exceeded for 2006/2007: Black and Minority Ethnic 1.54%; Disabled 1.54%; 32.56% of employees earning over £35,000 are female.
- We have exceeded our Black and Minority Ethnic Resident Involvement target for 2006/2007 to 3.5%.
- 140 people using the Care Link Response Service increasing to 2,000, by March 2008.

Challenges

- Use increased knowledge about our customers to provide individualised services.
- Continue to develop innovative ways of reaching under represented groups, for example, establishing an older persons forum and a gay and lesbian forum, to discuss issues affecting their particular communities.
- Ensure membership of Homesearch enables all communities to access our properties in order to meet their individual housing needs.
- Continue to review annually the composition of the Board, Local Management Committees and Tenants' Groups and actively seek to improve representation of the various communities we serve within these groups.

KLOE 32 – Value for Money

Context

WDH's approach to Value for Money is set out in the Value for Money Strategy. The objectives of the Value for Money Strategy directly relate to WDH's Strategic Objectives. The Medium Term Finance Plan demonstrates how the planning process links the Short, Medium and Long Term financial plans to the Strategic Objectives.

This is further evidenced by the Annual Budget, approved by the Board in March each year, which provides an analysis of proposed expenditure against each of the Strategic Objectives. Monthly meetings are held with all budget holders that cover financial monitoring, risk and performance. Any significant issues raised are challenged at the quarterly performance challenge events with actions and outcomes being a required product of the meetings.

Efficient management of resources continues to be one of the organisation's highest priorities to facilitate reinvestment into front line services. This is reflected in the desired outcome to achieve 5% efficiencies annually (6.4% in 2005/2006) from our Strategic Objective 'to be a well managed business'. The Annual Efficiency Statement, regarded by the Housing Corporation as being particularly comprehensive, sets out how we will achieve these efficiencies and our projections for the next year.

WDH has a combination of low rents, high customer satisfaction and low operating costs:

- WDH rents are amongst the lowest in the region, with two bedroomed houses being the cheapest.
- Operating costs are £5.9m less than predicted by the Housing Corporation's Operating Cost Index.
- 79% of tenants believe that their rent provides Value for Money, an increase of 7% over the 2005 Survey.

We have a 'Bright Ideas' scheme to embed efficiency through employee suggestions on how we can offer Value For Money. To date, a number of ideas have been introduced.

Structure and Process

A cross functional Value for Money Group has been established that coordinates all WDH's Value for Money. Its Terms of Reference include a five year programme of service reviews, starting with poorly performing services first, which are included in our Strategic Staircase. Value for Money achievements are routinely updated to the Board, together with gains included within the Management Accounts.

A toolkit has been developed that allows managers within WDH to undertake reviews, systematically and consistently.

The toolkit includes:

- Easy to use template for data / evidence gathering.
- Step by step guide to the process.
- Action plan templates for the recommendations coming out of the review.

Our review of Gas Servicing recommended changes to the systems that led to improved outcomes. We have established a Performance and Service Review Group, which includes customers, who assist in setting our Service Review Programme.

Our Procurement Strategy reinforces our commitment to continuous improvement. WDH has used a range of procurement techniques aimed at delivering Value for Money, including Partnering and Framework Contracts for improvement works. Details of supply chain savings achieved are included in KLOE3, Asset Management section of the Self Assessment. We have achieved savings of £3.3m in respect of boilers, windows, external doors, kitchens, tiling and flooring. We have changed our paint supplier and saved £195k. We also changed the way we fitted boilers, which resulted in further savings of £993k. All these have been achieved whilst maintaining quality and, where possible, extending customer choice.

WDH continuously benchmarks efficiency and performance at a number of different levels from the strategic to the transactional. Our benchmarking activities help to inform our Service Review Programme and to feed into the continuous improvement of the organisation.

We have introduced a Systems Thinking Programme, with Vanguard, starting with repairs and maintenance. This will be examining the relationship between efficiency, cost, service delivery and effectiveness. This method of review is extremely detailed and may result in substantial changes to how services are configured. The focus of this programme is to improve the system from the customer perspective.

We recognise the importance of partnership working in improving the joint outcomes and maximising the investment for our customers. We have secured £3m in energy efficiency grants as we work to reduce fuel poverty in the district, including £1.2m from Scottish Power, to carry out cavity wall insulation work. Our Community Leadership Programme has benefited from financial support from many of our partners including Royal Bank of Scotland who have donated £100k towards the scheme. This will increase our ability to build the capacity within our communities.

Outcomes

- 79% of tenants believe that their rent provides Value For Money, an increase of 7% over the 2005 Survey.
- In response to tenants' wishes, our Decent Homes extension has redirected £25m, which has contributed towards accelerating the Wakefield Standard improvement works by three years.
- We have market tested the Technical Services Team and this demonstrated Value for Money was being achieved. In the last two years we increased the volume of work by £2m without increasing resources.
- The Technical Services Team achieved a 19% saving on the agreed maximum price for the first completed improvement scheme.
- Introduced Dulux decoration vouchers giving tenants 30% to 40% extra spending power on decorating products (when compared with retail prices) at no extra cost to WDH.
- In a KPMG benchmarking exercise we achieved the second highest efficiencies per unit in 2005/2006 and our planned efficiencies for 2006/2007 were the highest.
- Implemented 14 bright ideas generating £97,583 efficiencies, such as introducing revised postal procedures and streamlining the flexible working scheme.

Challenges

- Apply the use of Systems Thinking aimed at reducing wasted resources.
- Deliver continual improvement and learning from the programme of service reviews.
- Market test Technical Services in 2010.
- Explore joint working with other Synergy members to assess whether joint procurement could result in further savings and increased service improvement.

Section 3: What are the Prospects for Improvement

Track Record in Delivering Improvements

WDH was created with a clear objective of creating confident communities and improving lives by delivering our promises. Our Tenant Offer Document for transfer made 64 promises of improvements to our tenants. Currently 51 of these have been met and the remainder are being delivered, demonstrating our commitment to delivering on the promises we make.

Since transfer we have:

- Brought 8,407 properties beyond the Decent Homes Standard.
- Launched Homesearch, our Choice Based Lettings Service.
- Transformed our OneCALL Service.
- Achieved Investors in People, Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Charter Mark accreditations.
- Launched Homebuilder and created 387 new jobs.

- Introduced Repair With Care and Vulnerable Painting and Decorating Service.
- Opened two new Service Access Points with a further two planned.
- Launched our Community Leadership Programme.
- Increased satisfaction across the board.

We have developed a rigorous Corporate Planning Framework, that sets out our Corporate Priorities and drives improvement, helping us in achieving our Strategic Objectives, underpinning our Vision to 2020. The Corporate Priorities and Strategic Objectives are translated into short, medium and long term actions through Project Plans and Team Plans. This clearly demonstrates links between Corporate Priorities and individual objectives and employees know what is expected of them.

WDH has in place an extensive Service Review Programme ensuring all services will be examined within five years. Involving tenants in this process has been key to substantial improvements, for example our Gas Service Review and Action Plan. Other impacts of reviews are reported each year to our Board. Further examples of resident involvement learning can be found through a comprehensive programme of 300 mystery shops undertaken by the Wakefield Tenants' and Residents' Federation. These led to a number of improvements including the opening of three town centre Service Access Points and developing our Tenant Led Inspections.

Our recent Charter Mark assessment for the whole organisation recognised OneCALL, Community Safety and Occupational Therapy as areas of national best practice. These examples show that, when we identify problems, we target actions and deliver results. These are evidenced in the following actions to improve people, properties and places.

PEOPLE

Residents

WDH believes the key to successful regeneration, is to increase the capacity of people living within our communities to be able to take responsibility for determining their sense of place. WDH's aim is to promote the natural sustainability of local communities rather than increase dependence upon external funding.

We are driving forward a new initiative, Active Learning for Residents with the Chartered Institute of Housing, to help our tenants and residents gain proper recognition for their work in our community, by gaining a Level 2 Certificate in Community Action. This new qualification recognises the abilities of individuals and will assist those people seeking employment either within WDH or the wider community. Our first intake of 12 will complete their qualification during 2007.

A consistent outcome of our Tenant Surveys was the emphasis that residents placed on improving the opportunities and prospects for young people in the Wakefield district.

To meet this challenge, WDH established the Homebuilder and Junior Homebuilder schemes, which have taken 85 young or long term unemployed people and given them the necessary skills and capacity to enter the construction industry. These schemes increase the capacity of the individuals to break the cycle of deprivation and exclusion and increase their social mobility.

Our flagship Community Leadership Programme offers over 1,000 young people the opportunity to undertake activities that seek to broaden their horizons and increase their capacity to take on new challenges. All of the district's 18 secondary schools are involved with us. We are developing an evidence workbook to enable participants to complete ASDAN's Adventure and Challenge short course award and various challenges in ASDAN's Certificate of Personal Effectiveness award, to further address the 'Knowledge Economy' strategy. This is in addition to our other investments in developing local skills and facilities.

Organisational Development: Board and Employees

We have placed great emphasis on providing visible leadership within our communities and the organisation. We have invested resources in developing the skills and confidence of the leaders and future leaders within our governance and management structures, to ensure that we take the communities we work in, and all our employees, on our journey.

Great emphasis is placed through our appraisal process and Team Plans. Our Annual Learning and Development Plan identifies the skills and abilities required to deliver results. WDH is a learning organisation and we analyse our own successes and failures, using a project management framework based on PRINCE2. We regularly monitor and learn from complaints, and have an employee initiative 'Bright Ideas' where employees can suggest improvement initiatives, including additional enhancements to our employee benefits. The capacity of our organisation benefits from an extremely low turnover of 7.63%, however absenteeism through sickness at 11.32 days remains above the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development average, of 9.5 days, for registered social landlords. One of our main issues is long term sickness, but 500 employees have taken no sick leave over the last 12 months. We have implemented a number of initiatives to reduce these losses and track and report this monthly to the Executive Management Team and the Board, however, it remains a challenge for the organisation to maximise capacity. Changes are being implemented to improve this area.

A rigorous Board and Local Management Committee Development Plan and appraisal process has provided the Board and Local Management Committee members with the requisite knowledge to challenge and guide the organisation forward in their scrutiny and strategic roles.

Our Corporate Learning Statement demonstrates the organisation's approach to developing our people at all levels. Our development programme exposes the teams to new ways of thinking and challenges any preconceived ideas of what it is possible for us to achieve. Where we have identified capacity gaps in the organisation, through efficiency and redirection, and through working with a range of organisations, we have brought changes to service delivery and increased satisfaction and performance. Examples include:

- Community Leadership Programme.
- OneCALL.
- Adaptations Service.
- ICT Services.
- Homesearch.
- Debt Team.

PROPERTY

The successful launch of Homesearch, our Choice Based Lettings scheme, has transformed the perception and attraction for rented property. Its success has led to a lack of affordable housing within the Wakefield district being accelerated to the forefront of our planning. Therefore, we are focussing our efforts on increasing the capacity of the social housing sector in the district, in a number of ways.

To achieve our ambitious New Build Programme we have secured financial capacity through our Medium Term Financial Plan, land assets secured at the time of transfer plus a £2m land bank facility and development capacity through our partnership with Synergy. The capacity we have secured in all these areas combine to ensure we will achieve our aim of 500 additional new build units over the next five years. Some of this will be achieved in partnership with our preferred partner, with Wakefield Council and the potential development of a joint venture building company with Chevin and Trans Pennine Housing Groups.

PLACES

The launch of the Local Visions and our partnership work with Groundwork creates the opportunity for developing sustainable communities through involving the whole community on each estate by identifying existing and future tenant aspirations.

The Blueprint Planning process allows local people to develop a vision for improving the environment in which they live. Involving local people, particularly school children, in planning and designing these changes also encourages them to respect the area in which they live.

Our successful bid to develop the Neighbourhood Management Pilot initiative in Airedale and Ferry Fryston, Castleford, will enable WDH to be at the forefront in deciding how services will be delivered to communities in the future. Through this pilot we intend to modernise the Grounds Maintenance service, develop the EnCAMS Model, bring together the work of community groups and build on the work of current partnerships. The lessons learned from this pilot will be rolled out across the district.

Through work we did with our Local Management Committees in prioritising our estates, we are able to complement the Regeneration Strategy of Wakefield Council and put each of our estates into one of their three levels of typology. This, along with information from our Sustainability Matrix and Asset Management Strategy, will form the basis of our five year New Build Investment Strategy. Working in partnership with Wakefield Council we are master planning four areas and are involved in a further six areas, to deliver transformational change to provide more mixed communities.

How We Manage Performance

WDH's strong performance management culture is set out in our Performance Management Framework. Our internal auditors, KPMG commented '**this was the most developed challenge mechanism within the sector**'.

All our 13 Housing Corporation indicators are compliant, providing assurance on the reliability of our performance process, and regularly assessed in our Performance Challenge process. WDH performance compares well with other service providers and indicators show sustained improvement over time. This has resulted in significant increases in customer satisfaction. All 40 satisfaction indicators within the 2006 STATUS Survey have improved since 2003. We continue to make effective use of resources and outcomes, representing Value for Money. Surpluses through improving efficiency are moved to a central efficiency fund to reinvest in services in areas of need. More work, however, is required on collection of unit costing information and process benchmarking. We are currently working with our internal auditor KPMG to establish a process benchmarking club from peer a group of registered social landlords. WDH also routinely moves resources away from areas that are not priorities or where the cost/benefits are not substantiated, illustrated by the Tenants Incentive Scheme and Rechargeable Repairs.

Our comprehensive Risk Management and Business Continuity Plan, which complement a comprehensive Internal Audit Plan, have been recognised as a national leader in this field. WDH actively reviews frequency of performance monitoring based on risk. For example, arrears information is available to Estate Officers on a daily individual level but reported weekly to all employees, monthly to Executive Management Team and quarterly to the Board, allowing for reasons in variation to be easily understood.

WDH has a systematic and comprehensive Audit Plan and Audit reports are presented to the Finance and Audit Committees with any identified actions fed into the relevant action plans and strategies.

Capacity for Change

Since transfer we have strived to deliver on our efficiency agenda. Our Technical Services Team has been the major factor in reducing costs and increasing quality, through improved performance. We have produced a Technical Services Business Plan that sets an ambitious target of reducing the costs of delivering repairs and maintenance by £2m by 2010. We are ahead of target in achieving this, with the additional financial capacity over and above our base Business Plan assumptions, giving us the ability to increase the level of investment in our communities.

The effective use of ICT to deliver service objectives and improvements is set out in our ICT Strategy and exemplified by our innovative development of Homesearch, our Choice Based Lettings initiative. In addition, the launch of a new Internet site in June 2007 has introduced online repairs reporting and rent account viewing, facilitating more convenient access. Additional access solutions are planned through implementation of information kiosks. We intend to use ICT to achieve further efficiencies in operations, illustrated through our approach to the introduction of Electronic Document Records Management.

Section 4 – Action Plans

WDH have always placed our customers at the heart of everything we do.

We were created following a massive endorsement of our future plans by those who voted for stock transfer. Tenants are at the heart of our governance structure and, as we move forward, they develop our Strategic Objectives and Corporate Priorities.

Our customers are involved, through Service Review Groups and Tenant Challenge Days, in setting our future targets and standards and, through Mystery Shopping, Tenant Led Inspections and Estate Monitors, ensure that we achieve them.

By involving our customers, we have demonstrated that we know how to identify areas of underperformance and tackle them and that performance management is not just a process or a procedure, but an embedded culture.

We will continue to build capacity to ensure the long term sustainability of our communities, backing these with resources and innovation in the areas that matter, such as building more modern homes, providing information kiosks, producing clear Estate Charters and offering improved services.

To enable us to achieve this our Improvement Plans have been developed, using our Corporate Planning Framework. To support our Vision to 2020, we plan our work towards achieving our milestones through our Strategic Staircase. This is an annual list of actions that build upon each other, each year, towards our first milestone in 2010.

Our Performance Management Framework measures our progress against achieving our Strategic Objectives' outcomes, along with other statutory performance requirements. Our service standards are detailed in our Customer Charter.

The Corporate Planning Framework has been designed so that we can learn from our past, be informed from our customers and incrementally improve towards achieving our Vision.

Priorities are reviewed annually as part of the planning process. This is an inclusive process that aligns Finance, Planning and Performance and is informed by analysis and learning from:

- Customer Satisfaction Surveys.
- Progress against current improvement plans.
- Business Performance.
- Market conditions and demands.
- Benchmarking.

A strategic Balanced Scorecard style performance management mechanism is in place, aligned to the Strategic Objectives to measure progress against the organisation's Corporate Priorities throughout the year.

Through the appraisal process, WDH has a Personal Development Programme in place to ensure skills' gaps and learning are identified. It also ensures that the appropriate training is available to ensure all employees are fully equipped to deliver the organisation's Corporate Priorities.

The structure of the planning process is explained below. Hyperlinks provide detailed information:

Planning Tool	Contents	Development and Monitoring Mechanism
Strategic Staircase	Five year incremental plan highlighting actions required to achieve Vision milestones.	Informed from customer intelligence and developed by the Board/Local Management Committees.
Corporate Priorities	Annual objectives from the strategic staircase to deliver outcomes.	Progress is reported through the Performance Challenge Event and to the Board.
Improvement Plan	Detailed planning framework including sub tasks required to deliver Corporate Priorities. Supported by project plans that identify resources and link to the risk register.	Progress monitored by each service area and reported by exception to the Performance Challenge Event.
Team Plans	Detailed Directorate and Team Plans coordinating all improvement plan actions for delivery by teams.	Progress monitored by each service area and reported by exception to the Performance Challenge Event.
Individual Appraisals	Individual contributions towards Team Plan.	Appraisal bi annual and monthly Management Support Meetings to track delivery.

This Self Assessment has been informed through consultation with our employees, our customers and agreed by our Board and LMC and other stakeholders. They endorsed the Self Assessment as an objective picture of WDH's strengths and challenges. The main challenges they want us to tackle are to:

- Develop learning from the Neighbourhood Management Pilot and Research Project to roll out lessons learnt through the organisation and the broader district.
- Devise Impact Assessment Models to inform our planning process.
- Get to know more about our customers, users and stakeholders expectations.
- Implement further actions designed to improve attendance management, in particular sickness levels.
- Support the development of skills needed to encourage social enterprise.
- Improve unit costing information presented to Board, including implementation of the process benchmarking club to reduce costs.
- Develop further ICT solutions, such as integrated mobile working, Electronic Document Records Management and remote information kiosks
- Review the Performance Management Framework to inform continued improvements.

Our strong Performance Management and Corporate Planning Frameworks and our Improvement Plans demonstrate our process and appetite for continual improvement. For ease of reference, we have extracted those challenges included in our Improvement Plan that relate specifically to our Self Assessment challenges.

WDH delivers promises and improves lives and will create confident communities.



Vision

to create confident communities

Mission

to inspire, transform and promote excellence

Values

to be creative, inclusive and work with integrity

delivering promises, improving lives