



annual
report
2014/2015

Wellingborough Homes will work successfully with its customers and communities to provide great services and high-quality living environments.

Our year in numbers





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Welcome

Welcome and thank you for your interest in Wellingborough Homes.

As a Board, our focus this year has been about putting Wellingborough Homes in the best position possible to support the delivery of new affordable homes and to enable us to adjust to the quick-changing Government agenda.

With strengthened governance, a new Executive Team and a new mission statement, we are prepared and financially fit for the future. For the affordable housing sector as a whole, that future is likely to look very different, but we remain committed to building new affordable homes, supporting our customers while protecting our business, investing in our properties and delivering core landlord services.

It is inevitable that due to the financial challenges we face that we will not be able to deliver all we would wish to,

however the services we continue to provide will be influenced by customers and provide Value for Money.

I am proud of the achievements throughout this document, in particular the strong development activity and high levels of customer satisfaction.

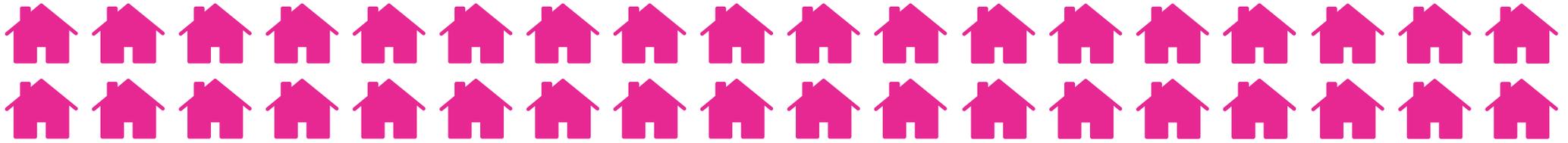
We hope you enjoy this reflective look back and that the 'Looking forward' sections give a strong steer on our future focus.

Thank you to all those who have supported our work this year.



Tim Davy
Chair of Wellingborough Homes





It has been a year of evolution for Wellingborough Homes as we continued our work to ensure our organisation is truly in a place to provide great services and environments.

Working with our partners, including you – our customers – we have built more than 60 new homes, including 11 for low cost home ownership, launched a new corporate plan, refreshed the way we involve customers, improved our efficiency, invested significantly in our existing homes and strengthened our board with the adoption of a new code of governance.

All this work, and the many other successful projects you'll read about in this annual report, will ensure Wellingborough Homes is fit for the future and is able to build on its strong financial position, track record and solid reputation.

Change is the only constant in life, and it's clear that we are not for standing still. It has been a time of change for our organisation, operating in a sector that is continuing to evolve, but our aim is to continue to develop new homes.

Our Board and Executive team are already responding to the new challenges and opportunities presented by the new Government, as we seek to strengthen our core responsibility to meet housing need.

Changes to our ability to set our own rents and new right to buy will put money in the pockets of some customers, but will also require us to make some tough decisions in the coming weeks, months and years to manage our reduced finances but still provide the number of homes needed in our region. As a result, we expect the Wellingborough Homes of 2016 to look very different to the organisation of old, but with the same commitment to development and providing people with opportunity.

We produce this report, with customer input, to show how we spend our money, to explain more about our work and services you might want to access and to demonstrate our governance and financial position. We hope you find it useful. As part of our commitment to delivering value for money, this year's report hasn't been printed and sent to all customers, but instead a summary will be included in the next Well Informed magazine. If you've any feedback, please contact our Customer Services team as we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you to all our customers, communities and partners for your contribution to a very successful year for Wellingborough Homes.

We look forward to working with you to build on our success into the future.

Jo Savage

Wellingborough Homes Chief Executive



New homes



This year has been our busiest yet for building new homes.

In 2014 we handed over more than 60 homes to customers moving into newly built properties.

With house prices rising far more quickly than local wages, we recognise the role we can play in ensuring a new supply of affordable homes of a mix of tenures.

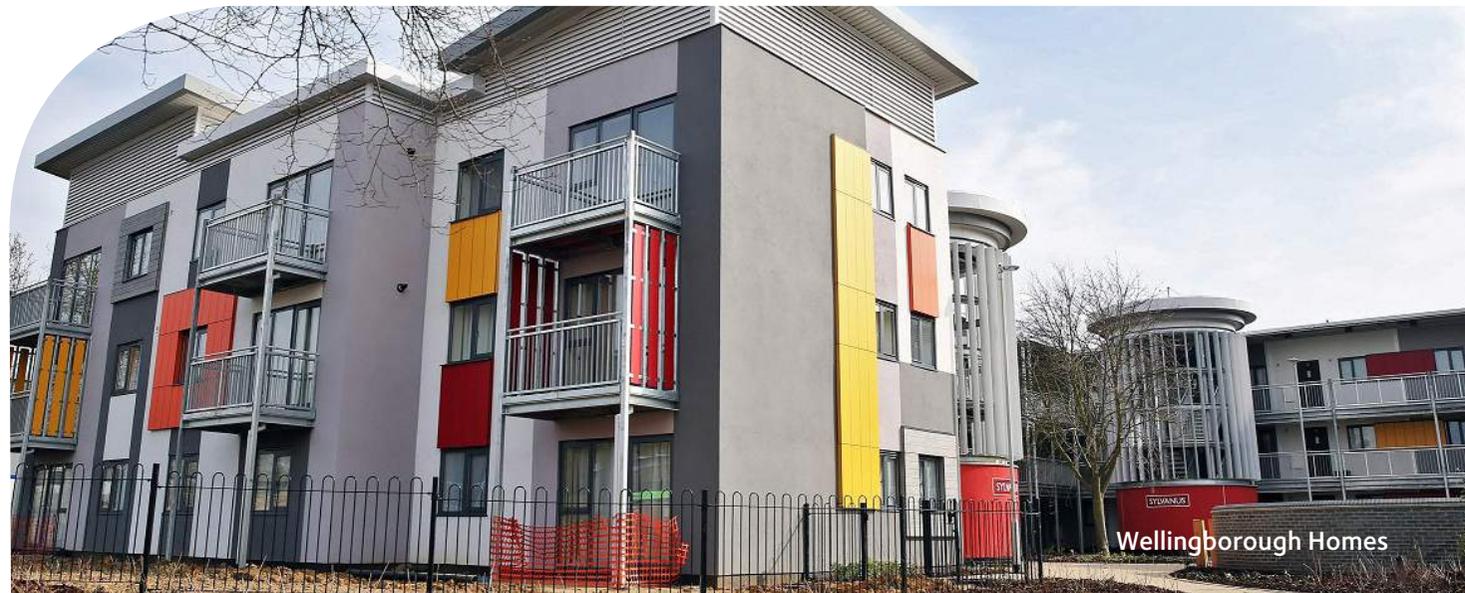
We have worked hard this year to identify the type of homes needed, where and when, including the need for homes for shared ownership. This forms part of our ambitious development programme over the next five years.

We are looking at new and creative ways to ensure we can continue to build 500 homes over the next five years as set out in our ambitious corporate plan. A great example of this is the new homes at Masefield and Wordsworth Close which were built on former garage sites.

Other successful schemes include:

- The completion of the £6.4m remodelling of Diana and Sylvanus House which has seen 70 energy efficient apartments let to local residents.
- The handover of six two-bedroom flats and 20 one-bedroom flats on the site of the Old Dun Cow pub in Gold Street. Work on this £2.5m scheme, which received a cash boost of £530,000 by way of a grant from the Homes and Communities Agency, was completed by Westleigh.

- The conclusion of a redevelopment project in Little Harrowden which has seen 16 new homes built, with a mix of two and three bedroom houses, bungalows and flats, on the site of a former hard to let sheltered housing scheme. The new homes were built by Watson & Cox, a Wellingborough-based company.
- The purchase of 20 properties in Northampton from Redrow Homes, of which six were for shared ownership and the rest for social rent.
- The start on site of a 48 unit scheme at Mitchell Court. This development, on the old Railway Club site off Broad Green, should be completed at the end of 2016. It has also received a grant allocation from the Homes and Communities Agency.



Improving homes

Home is where the heart is, so we committed more than £3.8m this year to ensure our homes meet the Home Standard. This not only gives you a better place to call home, it also ensures we manage our assets in the best way possible, maximising value for money and accurately prioritising the work needed.

Repairs

This year 94% of all reactive repairs were completed within target timescales agreed in consultation with customers and we have improved the level of satisfaction with our repairs service from 78% in 2013 to 87% in 2015. We completed 96.18% of all emergency repairs on time.

Improvement programme

We have continued with our replacement window programme, with 60 properties benefiting between April 2014 and April 2015. During this period we also provided new roofs to 60 homes and installed external wall insulation on 14 properties, helping to reduce fuel bills for families who live in these homes.

The skyline of the town, and individual customers, have benefited from the third phase of our flat enveloping scheme. This programme has seen 138 flats fitted with new external rendering to the block which has enhanced their appearance as well as ensuring the fabric of the building is in a good state of repair. We have also painted the communal areas and replaced internal stair handrails with steel and glass to bring them up to date and improve the environment where people live.

Aids and adaptations

We've also made significant investment in our homes to ensure they meet the changing needs of our customers, for example older people who may need a walk-in shower or customers with reduced mobility.

Letting our properties

We have looked at our voids process to increase the speed in which we handover homes between one customer moving out and the new customer moving in. We've worked as a joint team to look at every stage and drawn up new process maps and timescales.

To ensure we maximise the supply of affordable homes and make best use of our assets, we've also brought four empty homes back into use.

Looking forward

We will make a significant contribution to providing affordable homes in Wellingborough, through our plans to build around 500 homes over the next five years. We will also invest to improve our existing homes, including completing window replacements in 79 properties and launching, in Autumn, phase four of our flat enveloping work.

We will work with customers to review the standard of our properties when they are let to new customers. The aim will be to achieve a standard which is fair to new and existing customers at a level of investment that is affordable and offers value for money for Wellingborough Homes and our customers.

Neighbourhoods



We are proud of the role we play to ensure our communities are places where people enjoy living and working. Here's some of the ways we're creating high quality living environments.

Welfare reform

We continued to educate our customers about changes to welfare benefits as well as seeking ways to mitigate against the financial impact for both our customers and our business.

Our reinvigorated welfare reform working group developed a comprehensive action plan to identify the work required in order to achieve this objective. We have supported customers in claiming Discretionary Housing Payments, accessing support

and advice and securing appropriate property suited to need. We have delivered a thorough communications plan tailored to both our customers and our staff and have ensured that our staff have received appropriate training so that they are skilled up to provide the best advice to our customers.

We reviewed the ways in which our customers are able to pay their rent and have introduced new technologies to enable customers to pay us.

Income management

We have worked hard to contain the impact of Welfare Reform, specifically the impact of the Under Occupancy Charge. Between April 2013 and April 2015 we helped 50 households move to smaller accommodation, removing or reducing their Under Occupation deduction liability.

Management of empty properties

Although we have consistently maintained high satisfaction in terms of our lettings process over the year, our performance in terms of how quickly we let empty properties has not been where we would like it to be. We have carried out a review of our processes, making a number of improvements such as better recording and monitoring as well as communication with our contractors. We have worked with the local authority to strengthen our partnership and have improved the speed in which we are able to turnaround empty properties.



Future generations

This is the seventh year we have taken a lead role in delivering the Young Citizens initiative to year six pupils in primary schools across Wellingborough. Since it started, the scheme has reached more than 2,000 young people to help them understand what makes a great place to live and how they can influence changes to improve their community. The fun workshops have been so successful schools have asked if they can be extended to year five students. Thank you to our partners, including the Environmental Wardens (Wellingborough NORSE) and the local Police, for their support.

To encourage the next generation to respect their community, we have also organised a litter pick at Croyland Park with 50 local school children. The children aged between nine and 10 filled 25 bags of rubbish during two sessions - covering about a quarter of the 40-plus acre park.

Tracking Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

This year we dealt with almost 200 cases of ASB and launched a number of schemes to reduce nuisance behaviour. One such scheme has seen the team work with Wellingborough Police to stop motorcycle misuse, for example people riding on open park land. By encouraging residents to collect evidence on their mobile phones, the partnership has secured several prosecutions, resulting in fines and/or a custodial sentence for the perpetrators.

Training also took place to get staff from across Wellingborough Homes up to speed on the new tools available to tackle serious ASB following the introduction of the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

To further improve our ability to reduce ASB, we've also been able to join an online sharing network this year. This system allows us to add and retrieve data shared by partners more quickly. By sharing information, we can work with the police to put a stop to ASB even more quickly.



Garages

Our new garage strategy ensures we make best use of all our assets. Where garages aren't used, we've demolished these either to build new homes or replace them with block paving to reduce our maintenance costs and parking issues. For example, in one block we had 24 garages, but 17 were unused. We knocked down 12 unwanted garages and replaced these with parking bays. The remaining 12 garages are now all let.

The environmental works have improved areas which looked untidy and opened up previously hidden areas.

We've also tackled the misuse of some garages. Acting on information from the community, we worked with the police to recover stolen motorcycles.

Estate management

This year we've taken more estate maintenance work in-house so we can improve the service to customers and keep costs down. We've cut grass which would cover the equivalent of 319 tennis courts each month, trimmed three miles of hedges (twice a year) and removed 520 tonnes of waste. The Estate Services team has also helped a local charity project for retired and unemployed people, by donating around 30 unwanted and abandoned bikes which they can use their skills to put back to good use.

Some staff have undertaken a Level 2 City & Guilds in Local Environmental Services, meaning they can complete even more services at the high quality standard expected more cost effectively.

Neighbourhood walkabouts

Our customers told us that we didn't visit our neighbourhoods often enough and on occasion they did not see improvement to their areas.

In response to this we carried out a review and realised the importance of bringing back Neighbourhood Walkabouts as a way of capturing issues and working with our customers to improve living environments. We completely overhauled our previous approach and started a new programme of Neighbourhood Walkabouts across all of our areas. These walkabouts include our Neighbourhood Teams, customers and our key partners such as the local authority and the Police.

Our customers have told us that these are an excellent way for us to actively engage with the community leading to visible improvement.



Looking forward

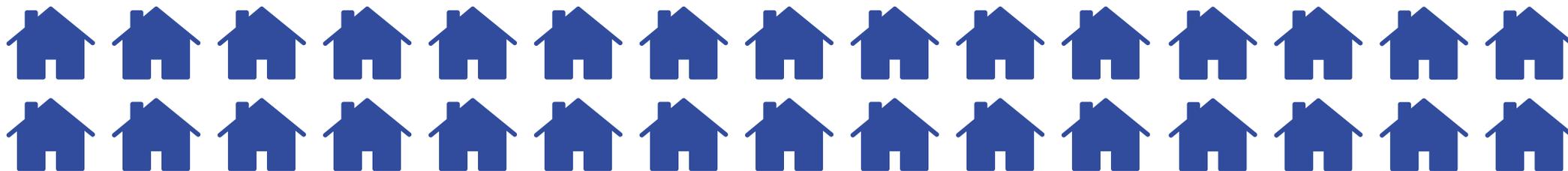
A key focus next year will be reducing the impact on our business and customers of welfare reform. Over the next year we will increase the methods of payment including more direct debit dates. We are building upon our partnership with Northampton Credit Union to improve access to appropriate and ethical financial products which will also help in the preparation for Universal Credit. Over the next year with our new structure in place, we intend to spend more time with our customers helping to maximise incomes and prepare for forthcoming changes.

To improve our rent arrears performance we have completed a restructure and now have specialist income officers. These officers will work closely with our customers to support them to make rent payments and drive up our performance in this area.

We have recently carried out a restructure and now have a specialist voids and lettings co-ordinator who is already working hard to improve how quickly we turnaround empty properties.

We look forward to being able to report much improved figures next year in both areas.

Thanks to the great feedback from customers on our Neighbourhood Walkabouts, we will continue this initiative and have already planned out dates for next year.



Getting involved



Your input into what we do ensures we can build strong and resilient communities. We don't have unlimited pots of money, so it ensures you influence the decisions we make about how we spend our resources.

Looking back

This year has been one of change as we've taken a long look at the way we involve customers and the impact the time you give has on how we work. But that hasn't stopped things from happening, as some of our key successes in the last year show.

Tenant Advisory Panel (TAP)

The Tenant Advisory Panel, a core group of around six committed residents, continued to shape our work in 2014/2015. They provided valuable input to the risk register and feedback on the Customer and Community Investment Strategy and also supported our consultation exercise in the Queensway area.

As part of the changes to our involvement work, TAP has been disbanded. We would like to thank all the members for the time, skills and passion they have given to us.

Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel completed excellent work this year, including a scrutiny report on rent arrears and our response to Welfare Reform. For this project the group interviewed Wellingborough Homes' staff to gain an understanding of processes around collecting rents from customers, and surveyed customers to

gather their views. The work has helped support rental income collection.

50 Plus Group

The main focus for the 50 Plus Group was health and wellbeing, including interactive discussions, exercise for all abilities and learning from other housing associations. Guest speakers gave talks on subjects including winter fuel savings and recycling.

The group has helped build confidence, aid mental alertness, make new friendships and new skills. It has helped Wellingborough Homes work with other providers.

Customer Art Group

The Customer Art Group is a customer-led initiative. Artist and customer Clifford Knight has kindly given his time to support other residents share skills and build confidence. We have provided a small grant to fund the materials.

Diversity Day

The Diversity Day, held in May, saw residents enjoy music, art and dance, food-tasting, clothing displays and story-telling from around the world as part of our work to increase community cohesion. The Wellingborough Homes youth group, Community Stars, showcased youth culture and we worked with local schools on an artwork display.

Expect Respect

Expect Respect is a programme designed for young people who may be experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse. We teamed-up with Women's Aid to run the sessions with Year 8

secondary school students at Sir Christopher Hatton School, to reduce the impact such violence can have on pupils' ability to participate fully in school life and achieve academically.

Community Heroes

A Wild West themed celebration event was held for the nominators and their nominees of the Community Heroes awards. The Community Heroes awards celebrate anyone who has a positive impact in the communities where our customers live or work.

Community Stars Youth Group

The Community Stars Youth Group held thought-provoking sessions including looking at how to stand up to your mates and the different ways that a person defines their identity. The group helped us prepare for the Diversity Day, Christmas event and Healthwatch conference.

Planning Committee

A group of residents from Kilway and Minerva Way helped plan, promote and host a community event for the residents of the area to welcome the new residents of Diana and Sylvanus House to the neighbourhood.

Environmental Group

A new group was set up to ensure our estates are blooming marvellous. A wildflower meadow and estate makeovers are just two ideas the environmental group are helping to become a reality in Hemmingwell. A flower patch on Nest Farm Crescent has been well received by residents and has given the Environmental Group an excellent starting point.

Looking forward

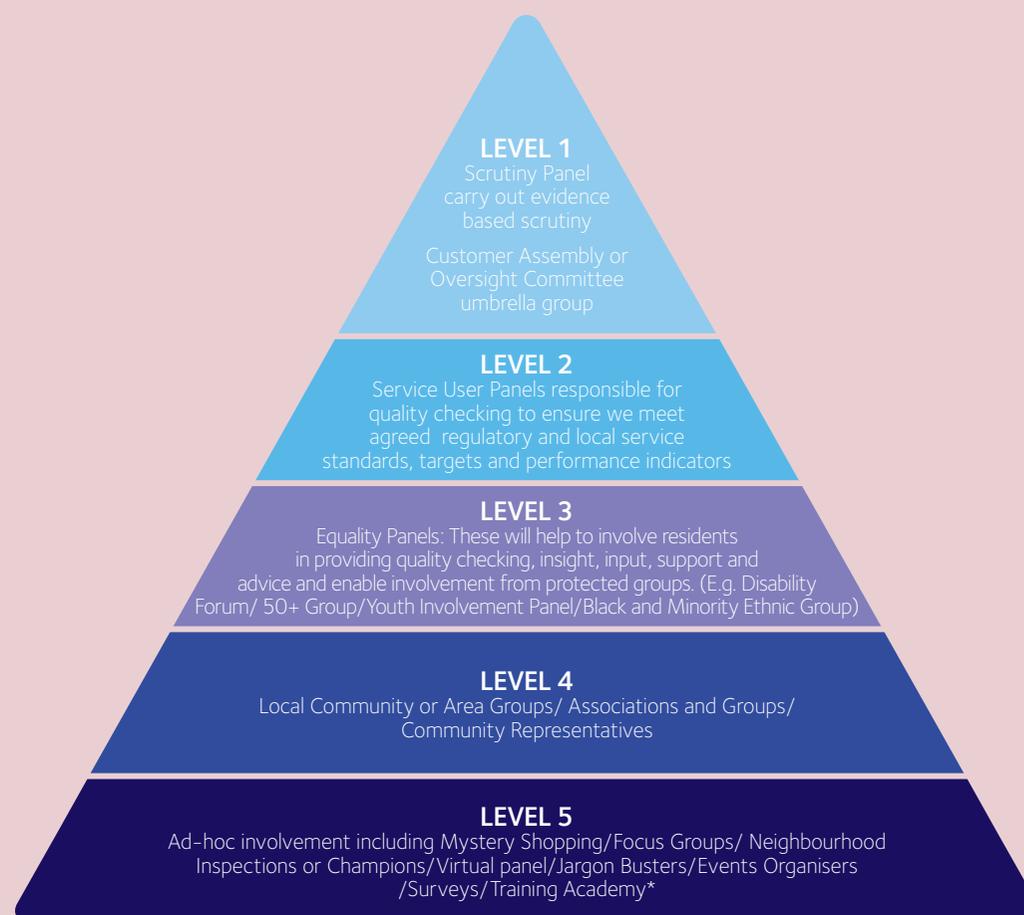
Changes to our funding mean that we may not be able to continue to do all the things we have in the past. We have a new Customer and Community Investment Strategy which sets out how we will work with our customers. The objectives are to ensure we concentrate on initiatives which deliver the most benefit to our customers and the business. We are introducing new panels and developing formal partnerships to ensure our customers are supported in shaping and scrutinising our services and performance.

Key areas we'll invest in next year include:

- Financial inclusion services, to help customers manage their money and understand the coming benefit changes
- Employment, skills and training, to help customers get ready for and find work
- Digital inclusion, to help customers become confident using IT so they can benefit from increased job opportunities, online only offers on such things as insurance and energy and online only Government services.

We will be clear about the expected outcomes of all community investment activity and ensure it aligns with our purpose. This work will benefit customers but also support the business.

We pledge to offer a wide range of involvement options through a new customer involvement structure. This diagram shows how this will work:



Rewarding aspiration and developing independence

A new job to support your family, a return to training perhaps after illness or the chance to own your own home with a shared ownership option. We invest in services which impact positively on our customers' lives, offer value for money and support our partners' own ambitions for a successful Wellingborough.

FISH (Free Impartial Support and Help)

More than 17,900 people were helped by FISH, which offers free and impartial advice on such things as benefits, debt, housing and health. Thanks to the team, 982 people received career advice and more than 280 have been helped into training or work. Around 46% of those were our customers.

The Community Law Service continues to be the most accessed service with 68% share of the customers.

To ensure the service delivers Value for Money we survey those who have used FISH. The results showed that people felt significantly more confident and able to cope after visiting FISH. They felt they had a better understanding of the situation they were in and were therefore able to make better, more informed decisions based on clear explanations and advice given to them.

Training Academy

Our Training Academy offers free, or means tested, courses to help people boost their employability, skills and confidence. More than 12 courses ran this year, attended by more than 259 people. Of those who undertook a course, 72% were very satisfied. Overall the attendees found the courses well organised, professional and enjoyable.

Along with the recognition from customers last year, Wellingborough Homes reached the final of a national housing award. The shortlisting in the 24 housing Awards Best Training category praised our combined satellite and central Resource Centre approach.

Last year people used the Customer Resource Centre or one of our satellite services for training courses, from maths to sign language, or used one of the computers in the IT Suite more than 3,400 times - more than treble the target set at the start of the year.



A new start

Without a fixed address, finding employment and overcoming the issues that may have led to someone being homeless can be hard.

The Intensive Management Accommodation project sees us offer 42 existing homes to homeless people who would have previously been housed in short-term, emergency accommodation. This scheme supports people to sustain their tenancy and use it as a springboard for better health, employment prospects and access to other support. It is an opportunity for people to show respect towards their tenancy and if they are not able to sustain it then that tenancy is ceased. We have housed 19 people, with two already moving on to securing an assured tenancy with Wellingborough Homes.

Connecting Communities Lottery-Funded Programme

Our Lottery Funded programme for Good Neighbours has recruited 25 volunteers helping more than 40 vulnerable residents improve their wellbeing by connecting them to services, reducing loneliness and social isolation. Good neighbours are creating support networks in our communities.

Our Affordable Warmth programme has helped vulnerable residents to save an average of £200 per household on their gas and electric bills. We have provided energy advice to more than 300 people.

Supporting independence

Our new three tier flexible support package is there for those who need a helping hand to live independently. Residents in our supported living schemes now choose the level of support they want, such as daily or weekly visits, following on-going changes in Government funding. We are proud that we have been able to negotiate with Northamptonshire County Council and are still able to continue with offering support to our customers.

Looking forward

We will take a closer look at the number of our customers who use our services, so we can check that you are getting maximum benefit. For example, we are reviewing the activity of the training academy to focus its energy and activities on projects which make the most difference to customers' ability to influence our work and hold us to account, support customers into employment or reduce digital and financial exclusion among our customers.

We already have plans for training our new panel members, covering such things as running effective meetings and equality and diversity.

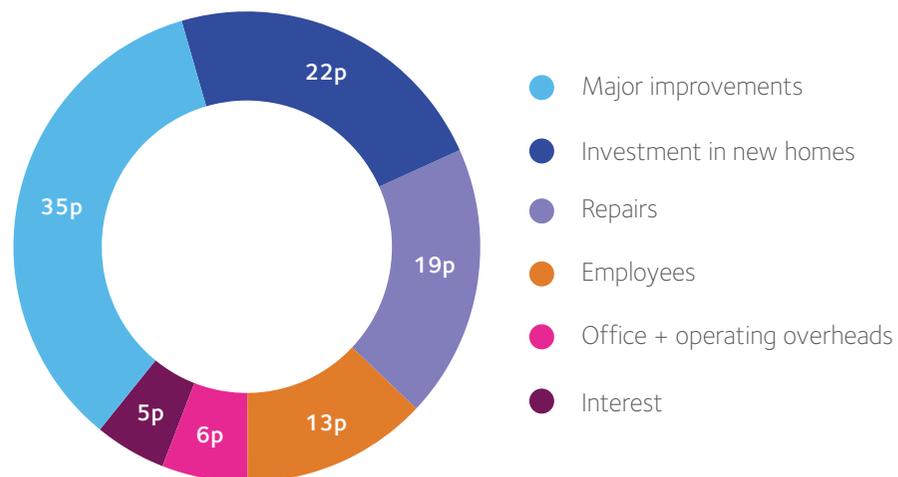
Our performance



Income and expenditure

During 2014/15 our turnover was £22m with our income from rents totalling £20.4m. We spent £27.9m including expenses, repairs, routine maintenance and capital expenditure.

Spending each £1



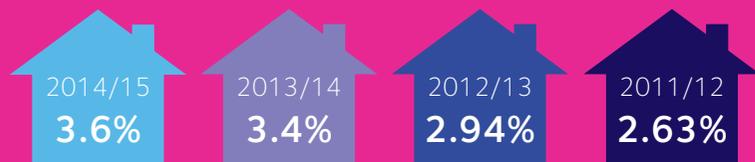
Rent collection

Target set: We said we would collect 100% of the rent due to us. This was slightly down, but we are working hard to minimise the impact of welfare reform changes on our business.



Current customer rent arrears

In this year the number of customers in arrears rose slightly to 3.6%. There is considerable change to benefits customers receive, so we are working hard at supporting you through this.



Letting properties

Target set: We said it would take an average of 32.9 days to re-let properties. We missed this target and have already started a voids review to improve our performance.



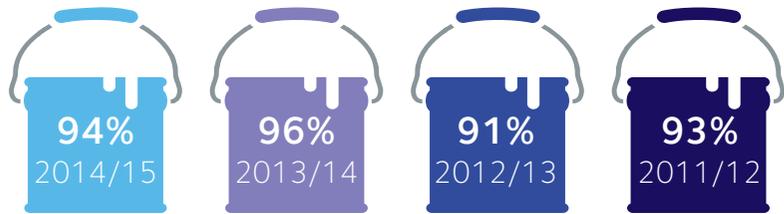
Emergency repairs

Target set: We said we would complete 96% of emergency repairs on time.



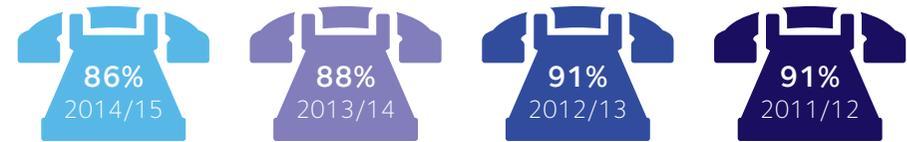
Routine repairs

Target set: We said we would complete 95.5% of routine repairs on time. We slightly missed this, completing 94% on time.



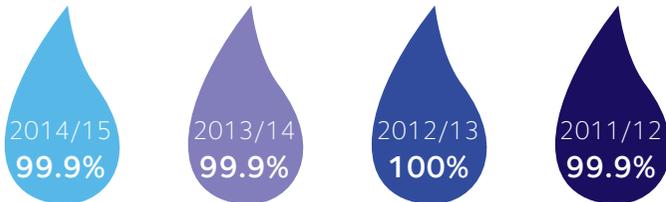
Customer service

Target set: We said that 90% of all calls would be answered within our target timescale of three rings.



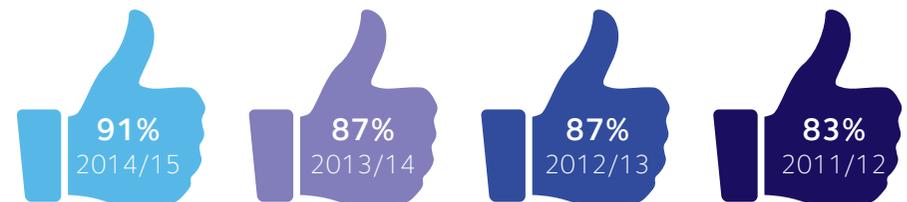
Gas certificate

Target set: We said that 100% of properties would have a valid gas certificate. Three properties failed to allow access so we are taking legal action to ensure we can complete this vital annual check.



Customer satisfaction with overall service provided by Wellingborough Homes

We have improved how satisfied our customers are with the overall service they receive from Wellingborough Homes. Our performance has improved to 91% in 2014/2015.







Thank you to all our customers, communities, supporters and partners especially the Borough Council of Wellingborough who we have worked closely with on several initiatives.

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housing.org.uk

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Latvian

Ja Jūs vēlaties saņemt šo publikāciju tulkojumā, lūdzu, sazinieties ar Klientu apkalpošanas centru pa tālruni 01933 234450 vai zvaniet uz mājokļu asociācijas birojiem. Kopijas ir pieejamas arī lielā drukā, Braila rakstā vai uz audio CD diska pēc pieprasījuma.

Lithuanian

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Polish

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Russian

“Если вы желаете получить перевод данной публикации, пожалуйста, позвоните в Центр обслуживания клиентов по телефону 01933 234450 или обратитесь в офис жилищно-строительной ассоциации. По запросу можно заказать копии, напечатанные крупным шрифтом, а также шрифтом Брайля, или же данную информацию, записанную на компакт-диске.”

Turkish

“Eğer bu yayının tercüme edilmesini istiyorsanız, lütfen 01933 234450 numaradan Müşteri Hizmetleri Merkeziyle iletişime geçin veya konutlandırma dernek ofislerini arayınız. Talep üzerine büyük baskı şeklinde, görme engelliler için kabartmalı yazı olarak veya ses CD'si şeklinde kopyalar da yapılabilir.”