

Our 4th Annual Report
to our customers



Engagement and teamwork
delivering results



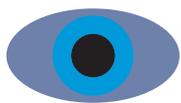


David Williams
Chief Executive

National Awards and International Influence

This has been another exciting year for Ability. Concorde House in Wimbledon won *'best small development'* at the National Housing Awards and I was lucky enough to travel to Brazil to help launch a new partner organisation and promote the Ability model of independent living over there.

But this was the year in which Ability customers really took centre stage. Our Customer Panel has started to exert real influence by undertaking quality audits, getting involved in staff recruitment and influencing spending decisions like our *'Improvement Fund'* and the Ability Standard.



Some highlights of the year...

Concorde House opens and wins **'best small development'**

Ability's new development in Wimbledon proved to be a great hit, not only with the new tenants and their families but by winning an award. Concorde House has 8 self-contained flats for supported living for people with learning disabilities.



The **Q-Team** arrive

We set up our own Q-Team of fully-trained customers who visit our services to get your feedback and help us to identify any areas for improvement. To date the Q-Team have completed 2 very successful visits and are looking forward to doing more in the coming year.

Read the Q-Team report on page 4

yourAbility

Our new flexible support service for people with personal budgets is proving to be very popular. Terry, a **yourAbility** customer in Surrey said,

“My support is very good. It is left up to me what I do, when I am visited, and how I use my allocated hours.”

Read more about it on page 10

Meanwhile, our new **yourAbility** service has started to grow as more and more people who want to live more independently are taking control over their care & support and choosing Ability as their support provider.

I am very proud of all the customers and colleagues who have helped make these achievements possible and I look forward very much to more of the same in 2014.

Best wishes



Cedars Avenue official opening

In August we held a celebration barbecue in Mitcham to mark the opening of these 24 purpose-built self-contained spacious flats. Everyone seems to have settled well into their new homes. One of the customers commented, *"I feel very privileged to live here"*.



10 new flats in Hastings

Bennett Court opened - a development of new, self-contained flats for people with mental health issues.



Tenants of Yew Tree Lodge **celebrate** 5 years

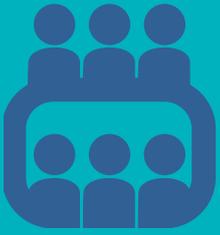
Customers, families, guests and staff gathered for an afternoon of food, fun and celebration in Hillingdon to mark the 5 year anniversary of the service.

See page 10 for full story



Best Companies

For the third year running Ability was recognised as one of the Sunday Times 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For. See page 14 for full story



CUSTOMER PANEL UPDATE BY THE PANEL MEMBERS

A year in the life of
the Customer Panel by
Liam Toner, Customer
Panel member



This year has been about setting things up. We started the Q-Team, split the Customer Panel into two groups, one to focus on housing and one to concentrate on care & support topics. We seem to have done quite a lot - we looked at policies and procedures, gave feedback on **yourAbility**, started writing guidance on running customer meetings and reviewed customers' suggestions on ways to use the improvement fund.

My favourite thing of the year has been meeting more customers and getting to know Ability better. I am excited to see how the Q-Team progresses and to have the opportunity to meet even more staff and customers to see how we can drive improvement. I think the Customer Panel now has a strong foundation and next year is when real change will happen.

Your InvolvementCustomer Engagement

Q-Team – customers asking questions, checking quality

The Q-Team is a group of customers who are trained to go into our services and talk to other customers to find out how well the services are performing. They use the Q-Kit which is a set of questions written by people with learning disabilities. After a visit the Q-Team do a report for the service and the Team Leader writes an action plan to implement any identified improvements. The action plan is shared with the Customer Panel and the Q-Team and progress monitored over the next year.

Report on a service audit –
Carron Cleversley



I love being on the Q-Team, I think you get hands on experience and great training. I like meeting other members of the Team and I loved visiting another service, meeting the staff and customers and finding how Ability works. I also like that my Support Worker is with me. I don't think I could do this without her support. I never had much confidence before but because of the Q-Team my confidence is growing.

I think the Q-Team is good because customers can give more information to us. Meeting at the pub made everyone feel relaxed, it felt like I was not asking questions but that we were just having a general chat.

The Q-Team visits definitely help Ability improve their service because I am talking to other customers and they are telling me things that they might not be able to tell staff and this will improve the overall performance of Ability and the support they provide.

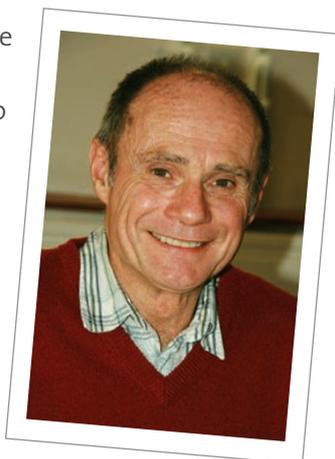
Report from a customer at a service that was audited – **Mark Lumsden**

The Q-Team visited my service which was really good. Then we all went to the pub for a more relaxed chat. It was really interesting and I enjoyed meeting customers from other services. We spoke about lots of different things like our dreams and experiences. I told them I want to go to Dubai and go skydiving. It was easy to talk to people who are in the same position as me and understand what it is like to be in supported living. I would like to join the Q-Team so I can go to other services and talk to customers about what is important to them.

Void visit and report by **Stuart Rees** – Customer Panel member

I was interested in taking part in one of these visits which are done when a tenant moves out of an Ability property. Checks are done to make sure everything is working and to see if any repairs are needed before the next tenant moves in.

I visited a 2 bedroom semi-detached bungalow in Hampshire built for a wheelchair user so all the doorways are wider, rooms are bigger and the bathroom has full wet room facilities.



The previous tenant had lived there for some years and the property was generally in good condition but showed obvious signs of having been well lived in.

It was decided to repaint the bungalow and carry out extensive work in the kitchen, bathroom and garden. The work took about 4 weeks to complete and I was impressed with the quality.

In the kitchen, care was taken to fit worktops that could be lowered; high wall cupboards had baskets that could hinge downwards to make the contents easy to reach and a good quality hob and oven were fitted.

The whole impression was of a light, spacious and airy dwelling. I happened to be there when the new tenant arrived with her mother and daughter to view the property and their obvious delight at their new home was wonderful to witness. The tenant was almost speechless and the daughter ran around from room to room and into the garden so excited to be moving somewhere so pleasant. I found the whole experience very interesting and was especially pleased to see the amount of consideration given to the potential needs of the new tenant and quality of the workmanship.



Customer Panel Training – by **Nigel Stevens**

As a former tenant, the training gave me an invaluable insight into how Ability works. All 3 sessions were set out simply for everyone to understand and the friendly atmosphere made for a relaxed and enjoyable session. I enjoyed **Introduction to Ability** the most as it set out each different piece of the company. The Recruitment session was very useful as I was invited to attend an interview panel and was able to ask questions to the applicant myself. This is the type of role that I would like to help Ability with. The training has also given me more confidence.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- We deal with complaints clearly, quickly and fairly
- We offer a range of ways for you to get involved in improving services
- We treat all our customers with respect
- We are committed to making our services accessible to all.

Your Home & Your Tenancy

You have told us that the responsiveness of the repairs service is very important to you. We've been working with our contractor, Richardson, to try to improve our response times. The graphs below show how we performed throughout the year:



Emergency orders show a consistent performance of 100% on target. The only failure was one job (out of 37) during the bank holiday weekend in April.

Overall 99.8% of emergency orders were completed within 24 hours against a target of 98%.

OUR PERFORMANCE OVER 2012/13

Emergency Orders



At the beginning of the year performance was inconsistent. We introduced new systems to improve this and started to see a gradual improvement from July onwards. Overall 96.3% of urgent orders were completed within 7 days against a target of 96%.

OUR PERFORMANCE OVER 2012/13

Urgent Orders



OUR PERFORMANCE OVER 2012/13

Routine Orders



Performance was mostly above target achieving 95% to 97% of completed within 28 days.

Overall 96.5% of routine orders were completed within 28 days against a target was 94%.

We've also been investing more money in improving your homes towards the 'Ability Standard' and through a new Improvement Fund

Ability Standard



The Ability Home Standard is a higher standard we have set for all of our homes. We have committed **£850,000** to improving the standards of security, safety and energy efficiency of our homes by 2015.

This year we undertook Ability Standard works to a total of **47** homes to make tenants feel safer. We fitted better window and door locks to **18** homes and improved security lighting at **4** homes. We installed new high-security doors at **5** homes in Reading. We also completed works to improve energy efficiency in **39** homes.



Improvement Fund

This year, in addition to funding for the Ability Standard, the Ability Board made available £25,000 for estate improvement projects suggested by tenants. Applications for the improvement fund were invited in Window magazine and were prioritised by the Customer Panel. Projects that were approved included: removal of an unused bin-store to provide an extra disabled parking space, new furniture for a communal garden and a new sensory garden.



Richardson's visit

Dionne - It was good, very interesting finding out about the new system and how it works. I liked learning about how they book in appointments online and know at the beginning of the day what they are doing. I thought the guys would have lots of time to do the repairs but actually they are busy and fit in lots of things. The Richardson staff were nice.

Keith - I enjoyed the visit, nice crew, liked the presentation. I found a slight flaw - they said they send a letter to let you know when they are coming so you can tell them if you're unavailable -that's fine unless you get a letter the day before as I did! It never bothered me as I'm at home, but many might not be. Apart from that I think it's good, best crew I have dealt with in 20 years.

Angela - We learnt how the Response Team operates and how repairs are actioned depending on the degree of urgency and how jobs are allocated to the most suitable team member. We had lunch which was excellent (the chips were amazing!) at the Village Hotel and afterwards were given the opportunity to ask questions. We left feeling it had been very productive and well worth the effort as some of us had made long journeys to be there.

Your Tenancy

NEW TENANTS SURVEY

92% of our new tenants rate the process overall as excellent or good.

The Housing Services Officers have been asking our new tenants about their experience before and during their move into their new home.

The table below shows the results for the second half of the year. Tenants have been asked to rate five parts of the letting process giving a score of excellent, good, satisfactory or poor. Our aim is to achieve scores of either excellent or good for each question.

The Results:

92% rate the overall service process as excellent or good and an overwhelming 96% think they will be happy in their new home!

Our aim is to make this into 100% in the future.

	Excellent/ Good	Satisfactory	Poor
How did you feel about the assessment process?	97%	3%	0
Were you satisfied with the viewing arrangements to see your home?	93%	7%	0
Were you happy with the condition of your home when you moved in?	89%	7%	4%
How useful was your tenant information pack?	82%	4%	14%
Do you think you will be happy in your new home?	96%	4%	0
Totals overall %	92%	5%	3%

We aim to let our homes within 28 days but last year we took 49 days on average. We are working to improve this while keeping the process right for you.

Last year

- we let 74 homes
- we arranged 6 home-swaps.

Changes to housing benefit meant that more of you had to make a payment towards your overall rent. Despite this we met our target for rent arrears (3.5% of the total amount of rents charged) and had sufficient rental income to fund housing management and maintenance services.

Neighbourhood and Community

The Ability ethos welcomed in Rio

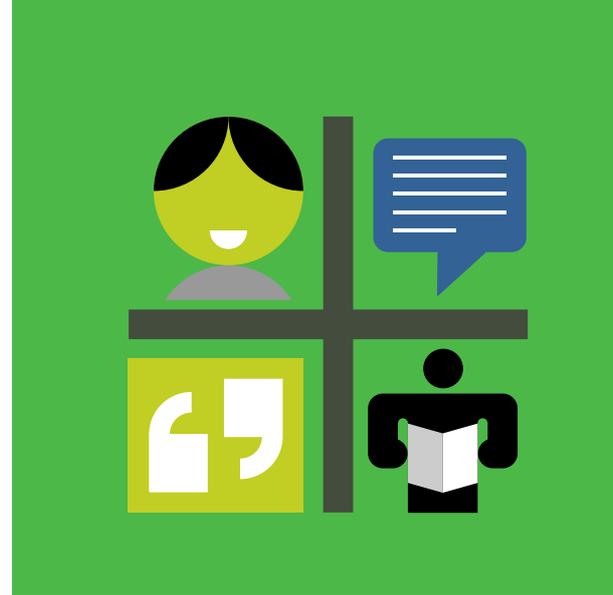
Chief Executive, David Williams was invited to speak at an **International Forum on Inclusion** for people with autism and multiple disabilities in Rio de Janeiro.

David spoke about **“Supported living as a route to social inclusion for people with learning disabilities”** and showed examples of Ability’s services and how we support people to live more independent lives. He said,

“I’ve been talking for many years about how supported living in self-contained homes promotes social inclusion. This in turn stimulates the development of independent living skills”.

David’s invite to speak followed a study visit to the UK by a party from Brazil in 2010. During the trip they visited several Ability managed supported living schemes and proclaimed themselves ‘astonished’ to see people with profound and multiple disabilities living relatively independently in their own homes.

The new JNG Institute aims to develop social inclusion projects for young people with learning disabilities in Rio and is working in partnership with Ability to help them achieve this.





Your Support

Ability Care & Support has had a very positive year. We've massively improved our customer engagement and received lots of positive feedback from our Local Authority partners. The **yourAbility** Service is now really taking off and we've had landmark events like the 5 year anniversary of Yew Tree Lodge in Hillingdon and the official opening of Layton Court in Mitcham. Our aim is to continue to improve in the next 12 months and we have refreshed our service standard to achieve this.

Service reviews

Several of Ability's care and support services have been reviewed this year either by the Local Authority or the Care Quality Commission (CQC). I am pleased to say that all our services were found to be fully compliant.

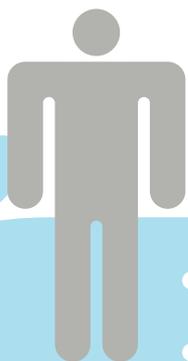
5 year celebration in Hillingdon

A great afternoon of food, fun and celebration was enjoyed by customers, their families, guests and staff at our afternoon barbecue in September. This is our 24 hour support service for people with learning disabilities who moved here from residential care in 2009 into their own self-contained flats where they now enjoy more independent living.

yourAbility

This is our service designed to meet the needs of customers with personal budgets. It was developed in response to customer feedback that showed a demand for a support service that puts the customer in control and is tailored to their preferences. With **yourAbility** the customer decides how, when and by whom their support is delivered. **yourAbility** is now operating in 7 boroughs, providing services for 70 people.

Feedback from customers receiving and colleagues delivering **yourAbility** services has been extremely positive and we have set ourselves some challenging targets to make the service available to more customers in the coming year.



Terry's story

My name is Terry and I am a **yourAbility** customer in Surrey. I first got ill in 1987 when I was 34. I was in a terrible state; sometimes I was homeless, sometimes in a squat, sometimes in hospital, I kept hearing voices. Ability are good. I came to their 24 hours service in Surrey in 2011 after I had been in hospital. They helped me get back on track.



I was at the service for 2 years. When I felt I was ready I spoke to my support worker and they helped me get my own flat. I went out and looked at furniture with my support worker and chose what I wanted; everything here is my own which I like. I now have 12 hours support a week from the same people who were supporting me when I was in the 24 hour service. I do things when I'm ready, I love the independence. When I get my support I get really quality time because it's my own flat – there are no distractions, I'm in control and it's what I want to do. The very best thing is having a key, it is my own key to my own front door and I can come and go as I please – it's a miracle.

Barry's story

My name is Barry; I came to Ability's service in Surrey in 2012 after spending some time in hospital as my mental health was not good. Before I became unwell I had been working as an IT Consultant and was excited to be in an environment where I could have support with returning to work and eventually living independently. The main support I needed was to take my medication regularly and put prescriptions in on time so I was never behind.



After I had been there 3 months I felt ready to make steps towards my goal of returning to work. With some hard work I completed a 6 month Accounting Technicians Diploma from Pitman. This enabled me to get voluntary work as a computer trainer with Oak Leaf - a charity devoted to helping individuals with Mental Health get back into work.

I am now applying for full time work in IT consulting. I have had 2 interviews so far and have just completed a 12 week course to refresh my French speaking skills to further improve my opportunities for returning to work.

Ability staff supported me to move on and I am now living in my own flat which I really enjoy. I like Ability as they supported me in the areas I needed and it is a warm, sociable and friendly environment.

OUR SERVICE STANDARD

- We will always be polite and helpful and listen to your views
- When we write your support plan with you we will listen to what your needs are and what you want to achieve. We will agree individual goals with you and work with you to achieve them
- We only talk about you to other people when you tell us we can, unless you are in danger
- We aim always to achieve good or excellent results when our services are inspected.

In addition over the next year we will:

- Involve our customers in all recruitment
- We will carry out an extensive customer survey in 2014 and tell you all about the results.



Value for Money

This year we:

- ✓ achieved real cost reductions in the delivery of support services and limited other cost increases to below the rate of inflation
- ✓ developed a new value for money strategy in consultation with the Board and Customer Panel
- ✓ invested more in planned and preventative maintenance. This should mean we need to carry out fewer repairs in the future
- ✓ set up a Service Improvement Group focussed on delivering better customer service by proactively engaging with customers, getting their feedback and then reporting back to them. A key improvement has been to the complaints procedure which we have totally redesigned to make it simpler for customers to complain and easier for staff to resolve locally. We have also retrained frontline staff and members of the Customer Panel who will be involved in reviewing complaints to ensure they are being successfully resolved and that we are following agreed procedures.

Facts & Figures

In 2012 we spent the equivalent of

£1,782

per home on planned maintenance and improvements



In 2013 we increased this to

£1,946

per home



We deliver

259,000
hours

of care and support every year

Next year we will:

- ▶ update the value for money strategy
- ▶ assess the impact of the value for money strategy
- ▶ continue our efforts to reduce costs.

We will also use our Customer Engagement Co-ordinator, Maddy Cox, to seek your views and feedback on the value for money of our services.

Governance and Finance

This year

Our Customer Engagement Co-ordinator worked with the Customer Panel and established feedback mechanisms throughout our services. Members of the Customer Panel were trained in recruitment and took part in the interview process for new support staff at three of our services. The Q-Team was set up and trained and carried out two visits to gather customer feedback – **see page 4 for the full report.**

The Board received reports from the Customer Panel and reviewed progress of the customer engagement activities to ensure we are working to achieve better outcomes for customers.

Financial Results:

We achieved our financial targets for 2013 and set a budget for 2014 which keeps to our long term plans. This means we are sure that we have the money we need to build more new homes and to make all the improvements to homes and services that we have told you about.

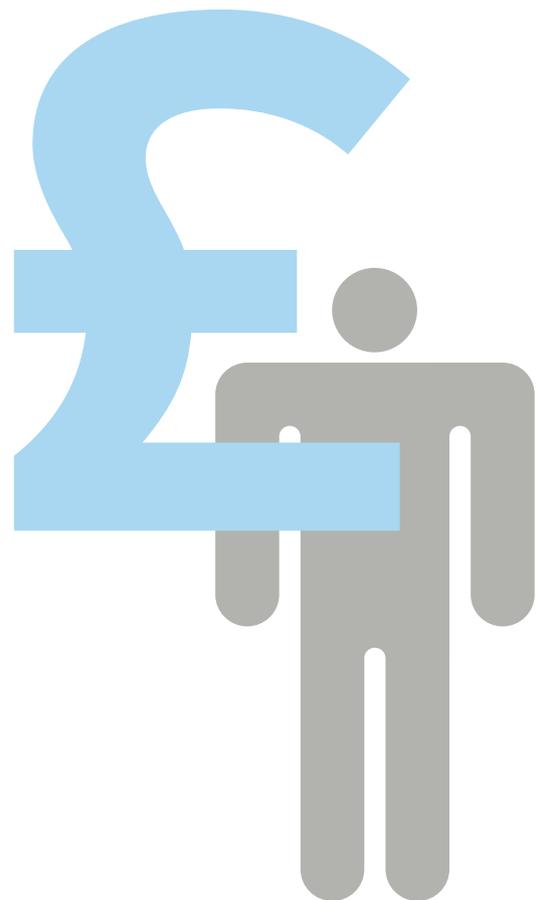
Next year

Through the Customer Engagement Co-ordinator we will work more closely with the Customer Panel and develop its role and involvement to ensure we focus on providing good outcomes for customers.

This will include involving Customer Panel members more in holding the Ability Board to account and in resolving the most difficult complaints. Our internal auditors will seek ways to involve customers in their work.

We will continue to champion excellent customer service amongst our staff and Board members to foster the “can do” attitudes which are so important to delivering a customer centred approach.

The Customer Services Committee was set up by the Ability Board to ensure customers are at the centre of the work we do.





Best Companies



For the 3rd year running Ability was recognised as one of the Sunday Times 100 Best Not-For-Profit Organisations to Work For. We were 74th in the list. This is the 4th year that we have taken part in the Best Companies survey which uses feedback from Ability staff to measure how they rate their managers, their team, training, pay etc.

What is really important is that our staff are telling us what we need to do to improve to make Ability a better place to work. This, in turn, helps our people to provide better services to all of our customers...which is the reason why we are all here!



What's happening in 2014?

Here are some of our planned activities:

- we will complete 7 new flats in Croydon for people with physical disabilities and learning disabilities
- we will complete 9 flats in Reading for wheelchair users and people with mental health issues
- 83 electrical upgrades will take place as part of our planned maintenance
- installation of 14 new boilers plus central heating systems upgrade
- we will replace kitchens in Hampshire and review kitchens for upgrade in Poole
- 16 bathrooms will be replaced and 11 heating upgrades will be completed in Poole
- a brand new website with a new look and more useful customer information and access
- the Customer Panel are doing presentations about this year's activities to the Ability Board at the Annual General Meeting in February.
- we will implement and report on the improvement projects including the new sensory garden in Surbiton, herb garden in Poole and new security lighting in Bournemouth.
- a recruitment drive to get more Customer Panel members
- 6 Q-Team visits will take place including visits to services in Woking, Merton and Croydon
- with some of our customers we will take part in the Oska Bright film festival for people with learning difficulties and hopefully make an Ability film for the festival!
- we will provide a guidance plan to all Team Leaders on how to run a customer meeting – written by the Customer Panel
- more training for the Customer Panel and Q-team including sessions on safeguarding and confidentiality
- we will have our own Ability stand at the Learning Disability Today exhibition.



This is your publication and we'd like to hear from you.

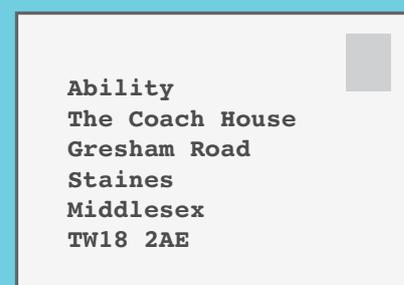


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