

Annual Report 2010

One team, one vision: delivering what our customers want



Ability
HOUSING ASSOCIATION





“The Ability Board has given a very high priority to improving the quality of our housing stock. I am delighted to be able to confirm that all our housing now meets or exceeds the Decent Homes Standard. We are also committed to providing all our tenants with self-contained homes that they can afford to live in and take a pride in. For too long disabled people have been accustomed to accepting lower standards of housing than other sectors of society. Ability is firmly committed to putting that right. We have been asking our tenants what standards they want for the future so that we can make investment decisions that match their aspirations.”

John Daley, Chairman



Improving our homes

Achieved:
500
decent and
self-contained
homes

“A lovely place to live” - Pound House, Dorking

This was one of our most challenging projects. The improvement of Pound House required a complete demolition and rebuild to turn 10 small bedrooms in a shared house into 12 stunning self-contained flats. All the tenants were re-housed in suitable temporary accommodation while the project was completed. The new building incorporates assistive technologies and accessible features to ensure it will be a great place to live for a very long time to come. It was opened by Councillor John Northcott in June and the happy tenants released dozens of balloons to celebrate their return.

Six into Twelve in New Milton

Like Pound House, Spencer Lodge in New Milton was acquired by Ability's predecessor organisation, the Cheshire Foundation Housing Association in the 1980s. The 6-bed shared house no longer met the high expectations of Ability or our customers. Having decided to replace the outmoded property, we found a new site and built 12 high quality, spacious, self-contained flats.

The “Ability Standard”

We asked our customers what improvements they would most like to see to their homes. They gave us a resounding and unambiguous response: security and safety are the issues that matter most to them. We have responded by developing a new “Ability Standard” and will commit to bringing all our homes up to this new standard by 2020. We've already made a start with security improvement projects at two locations where the tenants have expressed concern about anti-social behaviour.





“At Ability we are putting customers at the heart of everything we do. This year we explored new ways to engage with our customers and we are

beginning to see the benefits of improving our understanding of their aspirations and concerns. We know our customers value safety and security, having a home they can call their own and the opportunity to participate more fully in their communities. They enjoy taking more control over their living environment and their support services. By actively listening and seeking feedback we have gained a better understanding of the things we do well and the areas we need to improve to make sure we are providing the services our customers want.”

David Williams, Chief Executive



Delivering the services that our customers want

Achieved:
92%
of our tenants
are satisfied with
their homes

“Castle” dream becomes reality in St Albans

The “Castle Project” in St Albans was so named because one of its members had a dream to live in a castle one day. A group of young disabled people formed the group to find a way to realise their wish to live more independently. Ability has helped them achieve their vision. With the help of St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire County Council, we have worked with the Castle Project group to build nine new high quality adapted homes that incorporate assistive technologies and accessible features. Naturally enough, we’ve agreed to call the new estate “Castle Mews”.

Day Service gets personal

Users of the Sunrise Club in Slough - a day service for people with mental health issues - fought hard to keep their centre open when it was threatened with closure. Ability was awarded the contract by Slough Borough Council to operate the service from April 2010. Our proposal was to make the service more personalised to better meet the wishes of its users. We are now working with Slough Council and the Sunrise Club members to deliver this initiative and make the Sunrise Club fit for the future.

“J” makes the difference in Windsor & Maidenhead

When the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead tendered their mental health floating support service, we knew we could do a great job of running the service. We were already running a highly successful service in neighbouring Slough. The question was, who would be best placed to explain how our service was so successful - a customer of that service, of course! So it was that “J” was invited to make a presentation about the Ability service and how it works for him. Ability won the tender and was awarded the contract; another victory for giving our customers a real voice.



“Partnership working is central and essential to our aspirations to grow and improve. At Ability we work proactively with our partners to seek great outcomes for our customers. This year has been littered with fine examples of working together to achieve outcomes that may not have been possible by either party working alone. We have delivered 80 high quality new homes, improved standards of our existing homes and also secured a further programme of growth for the years ahead ”

Steve Hurrell
Partnerships & Development Director



Achieving more through our partnerships

Achieved:
80
new homes
completed in
2009/10

Sovereign helps Ability past 500 home landmark

At the beginning of the year, we took ownership of 24 homes at East Wichel in Swindon thanks to our partnership with Sovereign Housing Group. The homes form part of a large mixed tenure community, where Ability's involvement has ensured the community is balanced. It includes people with physical and sensory impairments, learning disabilities and mental health needs, as well as young and previously homeless people moving on from hostels. These new homes took Ability past the 500 homes milestone.



sovereign

Partnership with Radian reaps rewards in Southampton

Our partnership with Radian Housing Group yielded its first major results with the completion of 8 homes for Ability at Winchester Road in Southampton. The development of over 60 affordable homes, includes 4 for wheelchair users and 4 for people with learning disabilities. Once again, Ability's involvement has helped to secure a more balanced community.



From hospital to community in partnership with Raven

Ability has joined forces with Raven Housing Trust to provide new supported living opportunities in the community for former residents of the Orchards Hill hospital campus in London. During the year we completed a further 8 homes in the London Borough of Sutton and commenced work to provide an additional 25 homes in Hastings, East Sussex.



Raven Housing Trust

Mayor welcomes new move-on homes in Farnham

Our latest development in Farnham was opened by the Mayor of Waverley Borough Council, Cllr Pat Frost. The scheme provides a wheelchair standard flat and two flats for people with learning disabilities who have moved-on from our supported living service in Farnham to live more independently. Cllr Keith Webster, Waverley's portfolio holder for housing, said: "The success of this development is thanks to working with the Homes and Communities Agency and Ability, who have worked incredibly hard to make these homes a reality."





“We are committed to engaging all our colleagues to help make Ability a great place to work as well as a great service provider. We’ve achieved fantastic

plaudits already from Investors in People and the “Best Companies” survey now allows us to benchmark ourselves with the very best so that we can aim even higher. This year we celebrated our tenth year operating as Ability and rewarded our dedicated staff with a champagne flight on the London Eye.”

Richard Strudwick
Corporate Services Director



Optimising the contribution of our workforce



Time to celebrate

We marked our 10th anniversary by inviting the whole workforce to a special celebration event in London which included a 'champagne flight' on the London Eye. At the event, Chief Executive David Williams thanked staff for their hard work and dedication which he said had helped the organisation reach its 10 year milestone in such good health.

Towards our goal of being a top 100 company to work for

For the first time we participated in the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies to Work For survey and were delighted to be awarded "One to Watch" status. We aim now to improve our rating each year and have set out an ambitious action plan for improvement.

Investing in our People

Our Investors in People (IIP) accreditation was re-confirmed following a full review in March 2010. The Assessor commented:

“Providing high quality services that offer choice, personalisation, flexibility and responsiveness is a key aim of Ability Housing Association and it was very clear from this Review that this philosophy is embedded across the organisation both in terms of process and in the way staff approach their work.”

We launched a new leadership development programme "The Edge". Fifteen managers have embarked on the programme, which will support them with their personal development and provide Ability with a rich pool of talent for years to come.

New premises in Reading

Following the transfer of engagements from REAP in 2009, Ability has brought our teams in Reading together into new high quality premises in South Street. We are now able to offer more accessible premises to our customers and a much improved work environment for our staff.



“Despite a difficult operating environment for all housing related support providers, Ability has managed to increase its turnover and operating surplus. We have continued to grow both our housing stock and our support services, while investing in long term sustainable improvements and implementing rigorous efficiency measures. We have secured funding at competitive rates to continue our growth programme.”

Donna Marshall
Finance Director

Balance Sheet at 30th September 2010

	Note	2010 £	2009 £
Tangible fixed assets			
Housing properties	12	40,663,349	32,650,126
Social housing grant	12	(23,446,990)	(20,983,370)
Other grants	12	(4,184,538)	(2,882,345)
		13,031,821	8,784,411
Other tangible fixed assets	13	1,100,591	481,958
		14,132,412	9,266,369
Current assets			
Debtors	13	891,856	505,901
Cash at bank and in hand		1,011,220	741,079
		1,903,076	1,246,980
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	18	(1,080,707)	(850,778)
Net current assets		822,369	396,202
Total assets less current liabilities		14,954,781	9,662,571
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year			
	19	6,605,945	2,491,239
Capital and reserves			
Major repairs reserve	25	944,154	833,027
Designated reserve	25	262,528	300,000
Revenue reserve	25	7,142,154	6,038,305
Company's funds	25	8,348,836	7,171,332
		14,954,781	9,662,571

Ensuring our financial viability

Achieved:
turnover
increased by
£1.3million
to over
£8.6 million

£5 million loan to support further growth

During the year we agreed a £5 million loan from Barclays to support our housing development programme. We added 80 new homes in 2009/10 and expect to complete a further 80 new homes by the end of 2011.

Revenue contracts under pressure

We have seen some of our Supporting People contracts reduce in value during the year and expect further reductions in the years ahead. Nonetheless, we have achieved net growth by winning new contracts through competitive tenders.

Efficiency plan

The board has approved an efficiency plan that will see both overheads and service delivery costs reduce progressively over the next 3 years.

Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 30th September 2010

	Note	2010 £	2009 £
Turnover: continuing activities	3	8,661,214	7,361,714
Operating costs	3	(7,321,864)	(6,469,180)
Operating surplus: continuing activities	3	1,339,350	892,534
Interest receivable and other income	7	3,465	4,950
Interest payable and similar charges	8	(120,490)	(103,403)
(Loss) on sale of fixed assets	9	(7,348)	
Surplus on ordinary activities before taxation		1,214,977	794,081
Surplus for the financial year	25	1,214,977	794,081



Board and Staff

at 30th September 2010

Board

John Daley (*Chair*)
Yvonne Akinmodun
(resigned November 2009)
David Brown
Jane Coleman
Wendy Crichlow
Keith Hailstone
Michael Hoad
Rosemary Houseman
Vince Mewett
(co-opted May 2010)
Nabina Mitra
Adrian Polisano

Executive Directors

David Williams *Chief Executive*
Donna Marshall *Finance Director and Company Secretary*
Richard Strudwick *Corporate Services Director*
Steven Hurrell *Partnerships and Development Director*

Registered Office:

The Coach House, Gresham Road, Staines, Middlesex TW18 2AE

Company Number: 1261380

Charity Number: 271547

Registered with the Tenant Services Authority: Number LH 2174

Auditors: Grant Thornton UK LLP

Solicitors: Devonshires

Bankers: Lloyds TSB Bank plc

*'all nice, I love
my big bath'*



*'I'm happy in
my new flat'*



*'very big flat
I like it'*

