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Autumn 2010 issue seven

News and views from Ability Housing Association

Ability's first annual customer report.



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ABILITY'S CUSTOMER REPORT



David Williams

This year new standards were introduced for housing providers like Ability. We must tell you how we are doing against these standards and each year we will produce, with your help, a short report so you can see how we are doing.

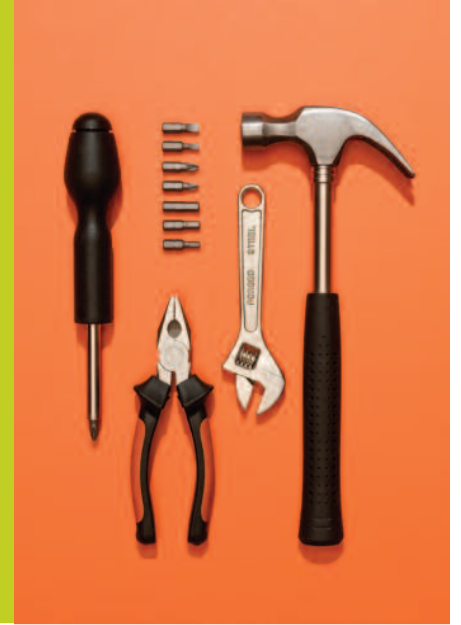
This is our first annual report to our customers that some of you have helped to produce. We hope that more of you will get involved in future years.

I hope this gives you a clear picture of how we are doing now – not just how we think we are doing, but more importantly, how you have told us we are doing. It also tells you what we think we need to do to improve our services to you.

We would like to know what you think of this report, so if there is anything you like or dislike about it, please let us know. We also want more of you to get involved in helping us to set out our future service offers.

David Williams
Chief Executive

This standard is about the quality of your home and how we deal with repairs and maintenance.



HOME STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?

100%

of our homes meet the Decent Home Standard set by Government.

- * We have replaced some of our shared homes with new self-contained homes.
- * We have been consulting tenants to see what you want our new “Ability Standard” to include.
- * We carry out gas servicing every year to all our homes where there is a gas supply.
- * **96%** of our homes currently have an up to date gas certificate and we are arranging new appointments for the other **4%**.



WHAT YOU TOLD US

92% of you are satisfied with your homes.

91% of you are satisfied with the attitude of our contractors.

80% of you are satisfied with the quality of work done.

But only **50%** of you are satisfied with how quickly the work was done.

Only **46%** said you were satisfied about when a worker would call.

- * Your biggest concern about your homes is security.
- * Your other main concerns are health & safety, your neighbourhood, cost of heating and adaptations.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER

- * We want to carry out more of your repairs more quickly and within our target times and we want to improve the way we make appointments for repairs.
- * We want to do as many repairs as possible at the first visit.
- * We will make more money available to improve security.
- * We will carry out some security improvement projects next year in those areas where we know you are having a lot of problems. We want to involve you in these projects from the start.

This standard is about how we let homes and set your rent.



TENANCY STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?

We have let **106** homes this year; **59** of these were in supported housing.

- * This year **56** of the **106** homes we let were new homes and next year we will have a further **82** new homes for letting.
- * We currently own and manage **575** homes.
- * We always let our homes on the most secure tenancy available.
- * The average time that our homes were empty before letting was **26** days.
- * Rent arrears at end of the financial year = **£95,400** which is **3.2%** of the rent due.
- * Our average weekly rent for a 1-bed home is **£86.24**. Our average weekly rent for a 2 bed home is **£93.83**.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

62% of you said you are satisfied that the rent you pay is good value for money.

92% of you have said that you are satisfied with the standard of your home.



WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER



- * We want to understand why just over a third of you who commented believe your rent is not good value for money.
- * We want to continue to reduce the time taken to re-let homes when someone leaves.
- * We want to find out if our new tenants are happy with the standard of their new home when they move in.

This standard is about ensuring where you live is clean and safe.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY STANDARD



HOW ARE WE DOING?

- * This year we received **57** complaints of anti-social behaviour or nuisance - most of these were resolved.

- * We have served **6** notices of our intention to go to court for possession if anti- social behaviour continues.

- * We had one County Court hearing about anti-social behaviour and two further cases currently being sent to the County Court.

- * We always offer support to our tenants involved in complaints about anti-social behaviour.

- * We have worked with other housing providers and agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour on some of the estates where our tenants live.

- * We pay contractors to keep communal areas clean and well looked after for which you pay a service charge.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

85% of you said you are satisfied with the area in which you live.

- * You told us that you wanted us to spend more on improving security.

- * In some areas you have told us that you feel that the cleaning and gardening services are not good value for money.



WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER



- * We will spend more money on improving security.
- * We will carry out some security improvement projects next year in those areas where we know you are having a lot of problems.
- * We want to make sure that estate services are being provided to an agreed standard and are value for money.
- * We want you to get more involved in this locally.

This standard is about the support we provide which helps our service users to live more independently.



SUPPORT STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?

750 people currently use our support services.

- * Of these **345** are Ability tenants.
- * Our aim is to enable our customers to look after and stay in their homes - this year **98%** of our customers achieved this.
- * **87%** of our Supporting People services that were reviewed were awarded 'A' or 'B' ratings.
- * Our **2** residential care homes were rated by Care Quality Commission as '**Good**' and '**Excellent**'.
- * Our Supporting People services in Hampshire were awarded the Service User Seal of Excellence.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

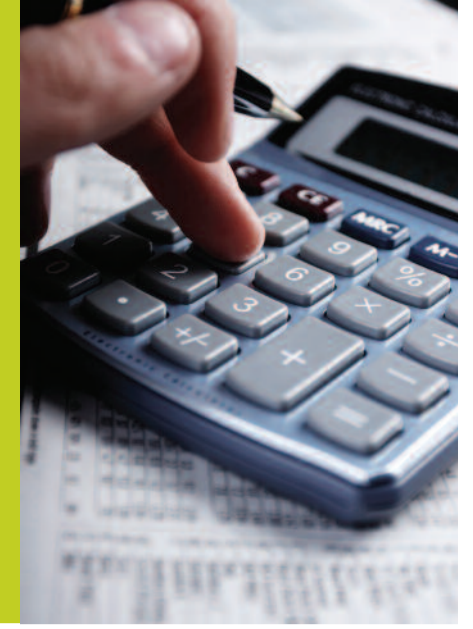
- * You have told us that it is important to you to have a named key worker that you are happy with.
- * You have told us that you want to get involved in how your service is run.
- * We know that involvement in social activities is important to many of our customers.



WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER

- * We want to make sure that the information we give you is easy for you to understand.
- * We will try to ensure that your key worker regularly spends quality time with you.
- * We will try to make more opportunities for social activities.
- * We will offer you a range of different ways to get involved.

This standard is about ensuring we achieve the right balance between cost and service.



VALUE FOR MONEY STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?

- * On average this year we spent **£1177** maintaining or repairing each of our homes; this is **£340 (40%)** more than the year before.
- * About half of this was spent on work we planned to do and half was in response to your repair requests.
- * We reduced the cost of managing each home by **5%** on average.
- * Last year we reduced by **20%** the amount we spend overall on services for which you pay service charges.
- * We reduced the cost of delivering each hour of support by **1%** on average.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

75% of you said you are satisfied with the overall service provided by Ability.

62% of you said you are satisfied that the rent you pay is good value for money.

- * Some of you have told us that you do not think your estate services are good enough.



WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER

- * We want to spend more of the money available on planned repairs.
- * We want to carry out day to day repair calls more efficiently.
- * We want to make sure that the estate services you receive give you value for money.
- * We want to understand why only 62% of you said your rent is good value for money.

This standard is about how we run the business and stay financially strong.

GOVERNANCE & FINANCIAL VIABILITY STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?



John Daley

Hi, my name is John Daley and I am the Chairman of the Board.

The Ability Board is unpaid; we are all volunteers with a strong commitment to the vision and values of Ability. We have a broad range of skills and knowledge.

We are responsible for deciding strategy for the organisation and making sure it remains financially strong. We set the business plan and ensure our staff keep to it.

We have two Board members who have also had experience as customers of Ability.

The Board welcomes the new national standards and we are committed to working with you to shape our future service offers.

This year we have thought a lot about the challenge of the economic situation and have asked our staff to find ways to deliver services more efficiently.

I know that our staff share our commitment to you our customers and we all want to find the best ways for you to work with us to shape our future.



MONEY FACTS

- * Ability's income increased from **£7.4** million in 2008/9 to **£8.4** million in 2009/10.
- * Our costs increased from **£6.4** million in 2008/9 to **£7** million in 2009/10.
- * We have arranged a loan of **£5** million to help us build more new homes.
- * Ability is financially very strong for an organisation of our size.
- * Our regulator is satisfied with our financial viability.

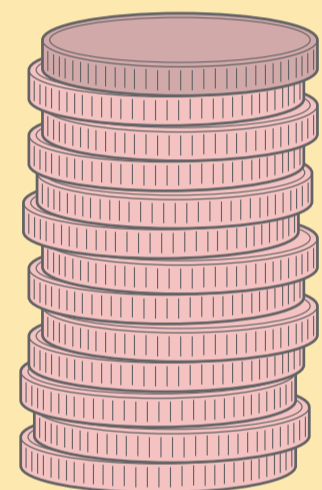


£8.4 million



INCOME

£7 million



EXPENDITURE

WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER

- * We are looking at the way the Board is organised at the moment.
- * We want to find more ways of involving you in the way Ability provides services.
- * We want to become more efficient to offer better value.
- * We want to increase the amount of money we set aside each year for the long term maintenance of our homes.



This standard is about involving and consulting you about the services we provide. It also covers the way we deal with your enquiries and how we treat you as individuals.



TENANCY INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT STANDARD

HOW ARE WE DOING?

40

new complaints were received this year.

65%

of them were dealt with within our target timescale.

70%

of complaints were about our support services and

30%

about housing services.

85%

of complaints were dealt with locally.

* Only one complaint reached stage 3 which was dealt with by Ability's Board.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

77%

of you said you are satisfied with your opportunities to take part in decision making.

68%

of you who complained were happy with how your complaint was handled and

63%

were happy with the result.

79%

said their complaint was dealt with quickly.

* A lot of you told us that you prefer to get involved when a social activity is provided.

* You told us that you like the "Window" newsletters but you want more pictures and stories about customers.

WHAT WE WANT TO DO BETTER



We want to make sure we listen to and record your views. We want to show you how we have used them to make changes to the services we provide.



We want more of you to get involved in giving us feedback about our services.



We want to deal with complaints more quickly.

OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING OUR SERVICE OFFERS

By April next year we will have worked with you on the standards set out in this report to develop them into what we call “**service offers**”. Service offers are our promises to you about the services we provide. They will cover the things that you tell us matter most to you and can be tailored to suit different groups of customers who might have different needs or priorities.

To help develop our service offers we have set up a Customer Panel. The Customer Panel, which includes the two customer representatives from Ability’s Board, will be working with staff during 2011 to help us understand what matters most to our customers and to develop the service offers.

We have appointed a Customer Engagement Co-ordinator, **Lizzie Gardiner**, to support the Panel and to work with our customers to get

their views on what the service offers should contain.

The Ability board will give final approval to the service offers at its meeting at the end of February. We will then

publish the new service offers to all of our customers by the end of March 2011.

You will be able to suggest ways of improving the service offers so that over time they should match your expectations more closely. Every December we will send you a customer report to tell you how we have performed during the year and you will be able to see how we are doing against the service offers.



Lizzie Gardiner

If you want to get involved in any way or simply want to have your say, you can contact Lizzie through one of the following ways or through your support worker if you have one:



PHONE:

07968 823956



EMAIL:

lizzieg@ability-housing.co.uk



IN WRITING:

at the Coach House

Finally...

We would like to thank our Customer Panel for their help in putting this report together. The Customer Panel is made up of Ability customers who have expressed an interest in helping improve the services offered by Ability and provide regular feedback to us.

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

You can contact us by:



E-mail

window@ability-housing.co.uk



Telephone

01784 490910



Letter

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