

Residents annual report 2011



“We would like to welcome you to the 2011 edition of our residents annual report. There is also a handy summary of the report, which you may prefer. All residents are receiving a copy of the summary in the post.

The past year has seen a lot of changes in the social housing sector and at DCH. Some staff have changed jobs meaning that they have had to adjust to new roles and locations whilst still giving us a high quality service.

Supporting people funding cuts have meant a change of support provision for some residents and a new way of working for the Independent Futures team.

However, we are optimistic that these changes are for the better in the long run with the ultimate aim of providing a financially viable, well managed, and customer-focussed housing association that caters for the needs of the residents.

So, without further delay, we would like you have a look at how DCH has met the Tenant Services Authority's (TSA) standards over the last year and set out how they aim to improve for the future where necessary.”

If you would like to make any comments about this report please email the communications team on news@dchgroup.com, or write or phone using the contact information on the back page.

► Contents

- About this report
- Achieving national and local standards
- Involving customers in how we work and making choices
- Repairs, maintenance and improvements
- Living in your home
- Allocating homes
- Paying your rent
- Estate and neighbourhood services
- Value for money
- How we have checked our performance
- How we have involved residents in producing this annual report



Les Mazurek and Carol Bosworth,
resident members of the DCH board

➔ About this report

This is our second annual report to residents, and it comes at a time of change and continued improvement.

Our aim is that the report should be a clear reflection of how we meet national and local standards. We want to be positive about our achievements, honest about the gaps, and challenging in our action plans moving forward.

➔ Changes this year

During the year, Devon & Cornwall Housing Association (DCHA) amalgamated with Devon & Cornwall Housing Trust (DCHT), forming the new Devon & Cornwall Housing group (DCH).

Following extensive consultation, overwhelmingly supported by residents, most housing services are now delivered through our subsidiaries Penwith Housing Association (PHA) in Cornwall and Tor Homes in Devon. In this report, when we mention “group”, we mean DCH, PHA and Tor Homes working together.

We are currently consulting all residents on further strengthening the group by all assets being held by DCH, while still delivering services locally through PHA and Tor Homes. We have had great results from our resident consultation, with significant response rates across the group. And, with over 91% of residents responding in favour, we have strong support endorsing our proposed changes.

➔ National and local standards - delivering what we promise

This report tells you how PHA and Tor Homes have met national Tenant Services Authority standards, how we have met our own local standards, and what our plans are for improving Devon & Cornwall Housing group services in future.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the national government agency that regulates how housing associations work. The TSA has set minimum standards for us to achieve, and asks us to produce this report to residents each year, saying:

- ➔ **how well we meet the national standards**
- ➔ **where we don't meet the standards, and how we are going to improve our service to meet them**
- ➔ **what our plans are for agreeing service quality with residents (our local service standards)**
- ➔ **how we have checked our performance with residents, and how we have compared ourselves against other housing associations**
- ➔ **how residents have been involved in producing this report.**

This year for the first time we have developed group-wide local service standards. They are attached to this report, and they were developed in close consultation with residents.

There is also a TSA standard on “governance and financial viability”, focused on our internal processes. Because of that the TSA doesn't ask us to report to you on it. If you would like to know how we perform on the governance and financial viability standard, please let us know and we will send more detailed information.

While we have achieved much this year, there are some areas where our action plans from last year have not been completed. We are carrying these forward to be met in the coming 12 months, as set out in the report.

To help achieve our plans, major changes are underway to improve services to residents by restructuring our staffing, building on what has worked successfully in the past and improving value for money. The benefit of these changes will start to be seen in 2012, with improvements in all areas of service delivery.

➔ How we have rated our performance

For each section of our standards, we have used an efficiency rating image to show how we have assessed our work. This assessment has been supported by residents who helped us produce the report.

For the TSA standards, we have used three categories to say how well we meet each standard:

- ➔ we meet all of the standard
- ➔ we meet most of the standard
- ➔ we meet some of the standard.

Where we have quoted performance figures, these are the most recently available rather than sticking rigidly to figures from the end of the financial year.

A	Excellent
B	Very good
C	Good
D	OK
E	Poor

➔ How we have improved this report

We listened carefully to feedback on our first report last year. We asked residents what they thought, and we also asked some industry experts to compare our approach with other housing providers.

Overall, the report was very popular, with people welcoming the friendly tone, the plain English, and the comprehensive information.

But, people also said they would like:

- ➔ more performance figures
- ➔ more information on how we have met our standards
- ➔ more information on value for money.

We have taken all this into account, and we hope you will like the improvements we have made.

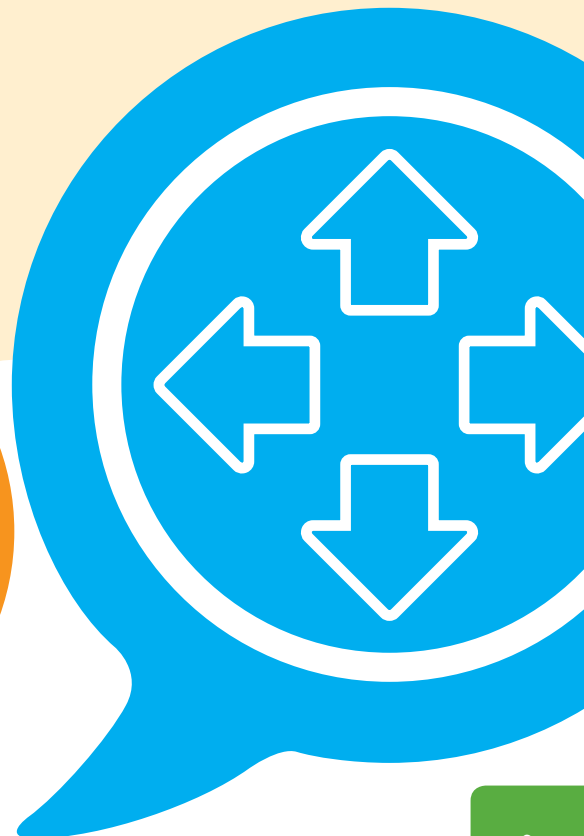
We have also listened to the view that the report was too long. So, we have produced this full report for those people who want to know the details, but we will be sending all residents a much shorter summary of our achievements and our plans.

This full report has been published on our website, and posted to those residents most actively involved in our governance. Copies of the full report are also available by post on request.

The summary report will be sent with our Tor Homes and PHA Open Door magazines in mid-October, saving over £8,500 on design and postage costs.

Does the report tell you everything you need?

Please let us know if you have any suggestions for future reports. There are contact details on the back cover, and we welcome all your comments and suggestions.



➔ Achieving national and local standards

Customer services

This section includes the national Tenant Services Authority (TSA) standards on:

- ➔ **customer service, choice and complaints**
- ➔ **understanding and responding to tenants' needs**

What are our standards for delivering customer services?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- ➔ **provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of our residents in the delivery of all standards**
- ➔ **have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible, and that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly**
- ➔ **treat all tenants with fairness and respect**
- ➔ **show that we understand the needs of our residents, including in relation to the seven equality strands* and residents with additional support needs.**

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page two of our Service Standards leaflet.

* the TSA requires us to address seven strands of diversity: age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, transgender identity, and sexual orientation. We also address marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

Information and communication

We provide a wide range of information in many different forms, and our customer panels continue to tell us that they find this accessible and useful (although there are always improvements to be made). Examples include:

- ➔ **our Open Door resident magazines for Tor Homes and PHA, led by customer editorial panels**
- ➔ **leaflets about all key areas of services**
- ➔ **websites with information on all our work, and access to online forms and services**
- ➔ **easy telephone and email access to all staff, and good availability of staff to visit you at home.**

A major achievement this year has been publishing our new group-wide service standards (also called our "local offer"). This has followed extensive consultation with residents across PHA and Tor Homes. The service standards are included as an attachment to this report.

This year we have greatly improved our Open Door magazines by bringing them into a new style across DCH, which has improved the quality and saved money at the same time. Residents were actively involved in the decision-making and design process. We have had over 400 responses to the survey we included in the first edition of the new-style magazines, with the results being overwhelmingly in favour of the new approach.

Each edition of our newsletters includes performance information and/or "you said, we did" features.

Residents were also actively involved in the design of new group-wide customer services leaflets, improving quality and value-for-money by sharing information across PHA and Tor Homes.

Our website provides a wide range of information on our services and performance, as well as offering access to services such as reporting repairs, paying rent and contacting us. We will always provide easily-available information about our customer services policies, how to contact us and how our complaints procedure works. We know that not everyone has access to websites, and we are always happy to post leaflets or explain information in person.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- ➔ **introducing a new single telephone number for tenants across Devon to contact us, in the same way as already happens in Cornwall. This will also include improving our response to telephone calls**
- ➔ **looking at whether we can cost-effectively improve our repairs appointment systems, and enabling residents to check progress of their repairs using our websites**
- ➔ **updating our resident handbooks and websites**
- ➔ **sending all residents a summary of this report, rather than the full version. We think that the summary will be read by more people, and will keep residents better informed of how we are doing and what our improvement plans are.**

Customer care

PHA and Tor Homes each have strong and effective customer care policies in place. All staff receive training on customer care. We survey customers to find out satisfaction levels in key service areas, and we back this up with external independent surveys.

We think we could improve the ways we check whether we are keeping to our service standards. Not all of our service standards are continually monitored, because there is a balance to be drawn on effectiveness and value for money. For example, we have a commitment that all customers will see a receptionist within five minutes of arriving at an office. This is best assessed through random "mystery shopper" visits rather than by continuous reporting.

Even though not all standards are continuously monitored, we know that customer experience of those areas of services is still captured through our surveys of overall satisfaction.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- ➔ **more structured mystery shopping by customer volunteers, to test our performance against a number of our local offer standards**
- ➔ **implementing new software to monitor performance on responding to letters, emails and texts within our agreed standards. This will also help us monitor our commitment to notify people at least 24 hours beforehand if we cannot attend an appointment**
- ➔ **ensuring that all staff wear name badges consistently**
- ➔ **further reviewing and improving our local service standards in consultation with tenants, to ensure we meet and exceed the TSA's national standards.**

Tailoring services to customer needs

As well as measuring satisfaction with our existing services, we also asked residents about their priorities for future investment and improvement. Top priorities are maintaining homes to a good standard, and improving homes by making them greener, warmer and cheaper to live in. Further priorities are supporting vulnerable people and building new affordable homes, and all of these are being incorporated in our business planning process.

We have continued to collect customer information such as ages, ethnic backgrounds and disabilities (we call this profiling). We have improved the process by ensuring that PHA and Tor Homes each collect the same information and keep it up-to-date. But, we still don't think that we have made enough use of the information. We think we need to do more about using the information to tailor services to people's needs.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **analysing customer information to see how our services might affect people differently**
- **offering tailored services to particular groups, such as offering security passwords for vulnerable customers, or female maintenance workers for repairs if requested, and seeing what enhanced services we might be able to offer to older tenants or those with disabilities**
- **more fully implementing our promise to provide help for older or disabled people by doing additional repairs or repairs more quickly or helping with decorating**
- **review and improve our adaptations services for people with disabilities**
- **publicising our services on adapting properties for people with disabilities, targeting information to people who may need it most**
- **more training for staff on equality and diversity, and more sharing of expertise across the DCH group**
- **using new technology to help people use our services in new ways, like texting, and more internet services. We do know that lots of people don't have computers and we will make sure we also keep our more traditional methods.**

Responding to complaints effectively

PHA and Tor Homes each have well-publicised policies that make it clear how to complain, and what we will do about it. We report on our performance each year, and show how learning from complaints is used to improve services.

In the last year we agreed an improved group-wide complaints policy. This includes making sure that we learn from complaints, to minimise the risk of repeating the same mistake twice.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **improving how we monitor and report on our complaints performance, including more customer involvement in this.**

Equality and diversity

PHA and Tor Homes each play a key role in our overall group equality and diversity strategy. We have profiling data in place for the vast majority of our residents and we are working to increase this. As mentioned earlier, we are analysing the information to see how our services might affect people differently. All our publications are available in a range of formats, and we make this clear using a selection

of languages. Our websites all meet accessibility standards, and include translation and speech-to-audio tools.

We have continued to assess how our policies may affect people with different equality and diversity needs, and we've acted on the results.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **working to meet the requirements of the new Equalities Act**
- **improving the way we analyse satisfaction surveys to take customer profile information into account**
- **developing performance measures on how we can better assess compliance with this standard**
- **offering tailored services to particular groups, such as security passwords for vulnerable customers, or female maintenance workers for repairs if requested, and seeing what enhanced services we might be able to offer to older tenants or those with disabilities**
- **more training for staff on equality and diversity, and more sharing of expertise across the group.**

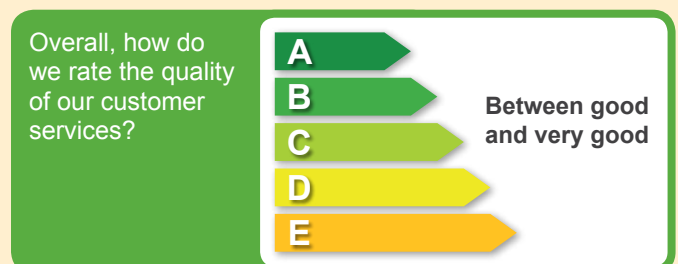
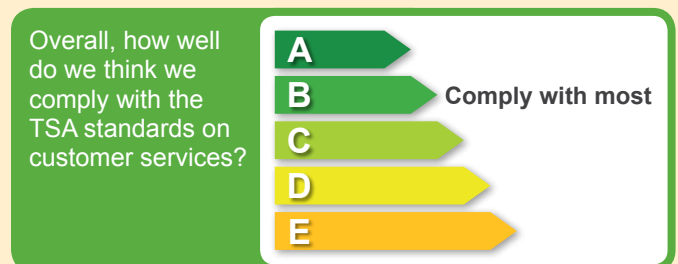
How have we performed against our customer services targets?

Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
Satisfaction with overall service	86.9%	86.3%	86.7%	Slight improvement
Percentage of calls answered on time*	85.2%	93.7%	90.2%	* this information comes from non-standardised internal surveys, and there is currently no trend or national comparison available

Overall group resident satisfaction has increased slightly from 86.1% last year to 86.7% this year.

A housing association performing at the national average would have satisfaction of 83.2%. Our performance of 86.7% is very close to our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations (87.4%), which is encouraging.

How do we rate our work on customer services?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents what they thought, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? If not, please let us know.

⇒ Involving customers in how we work and making choices

This standard includes the national TSA standard on tenant involvement and empowerment.

What are our standards for our services on involving customers and making choices?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- **offer all residents a range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services**
- **consult with our residents and act reasonably in providing you with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery**
- **provide residents with a range of opportunities to influence how we meet all the TSA's standards and to scrutinise our performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report**
- **provide support to residents to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.**

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page three of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

PHA and Tor Homes each have comprehensive networks for resident involvement at all levels of our work. This includes mystery shoppers, focus groups, service improvement panels, and resident board & committee membership.

These networks ensure resident involvement in local neighbourhood activities, specifying our wider customer services, and influencing strategic decisions such as our maintenance programmes, appointing contractors, and over particular design features for say new bathroom and kitchen fittings. PHA and Tor Homes each offer training and support to help in this.

As mentioned in the customer services section above, we have again carried out our regular large-scale independent survey of resident views (the Status survey), this year asking additional questions on resident priorities for future services. We are using this information to shape our strategic direction, and help us decide which areas of work should have greater resources.

We have also been consulting widely with residents on our company governance changes. DCHA residents were overwhelming in favour of the amalgamation with DCHT. The next stage of the process is further strengthening the structure by holding all assets in the group parent (DCH), with local services being delivered by PHA and Tor Homes. Interim results from consultation with residents across the group on this are very supportive.

PHA and Tor Homes each have arrangements in place to encourage and support opportunities for residents to influence services. See earlier in this report for more information. There was extensive resident consultation on developing our group-wide service standards. As happened last year, we asked a group of active residents for advice on how this annual report should be set out, and we involved them in reviewing drafts of it during production.

Implementing resident scrutiny through "ServiceWatch"

We currently have local scrutiny processes in place through the Tor Homes scrutiny forum, and the PHA Doing Things Better group. Both of these bodies are to be re-formed as part of work on the new scrutiny process, set out below.

Over the summer we have been consulting with resident panels on the final stages of putting customer scrutiny arrangements in place, with new methods of residents keeping watch on how well we are performing on key issues, including how we set our standards, and how well we achieve them.

We have agreed with residents to call the new framework "ServiceWatch", which emphasises the watchdog role in looking at our services.

Resident ServiceWatch activities will include:

- **examining performance at all levels, and recommending change**
- **comprehensive reviews across our work, challenging our existing practices**
- **ensuring that we properly examine the effect that implementing our decisions has actually had on customer services**
- **scrutinising decisions that have been taken by the boards**
- **reviewing our group-wide service standards and ensuring that we properly assess how well we have done**
- **reporting directly to the boards on what ServiceWatch has achieved.**

ServiceWatch will have real power and "bite", and the emphasis will be on getting results:

- **residents will be actively requesting information and evidence to hold our boards to account**
- **ServiceWatch will be able to refer issues to our regulator or the independent housing ombudsman, within an agreed framework**
- **the boards will have a responsibility to report back to ServiceWatch effectively**
- **the roles of ServiceWatch will be designed from a resident point of view, rather than built around staff structures**
- **there will be six members from PHA and six members from Tor Homes, creating a group-wide panel of 12 members**

- we will make sure that ServiceWatch doesn't overlap with existing resident involvement structures (the former DCHA regional committees and Grid have already agreed that they will end their work, as part of establishing ServiceWatch)
- the Tor Homes scrutiny forum and the PHA Doing Things Better group will be reconstituted to each be made up of the six Tor Homes / PHA members of the group-wide ServiceWatch.

ServiceWatch will be able to ask for reviews to be carried out by staff or external consultants, depending on skills and resourcing. ServiceWatch will set the remit for the reviews, consider their findings, make recommendations as appropriate and consider the board and staff responses.

ServiceWatch will commission reviews on the basis of a number of factors, including risk, customer satisfaction, operational performance and value-for-money opportunities.

We will be advertising for ServiceWatch members in the summary annual report to residents, which is being sent out with the Open Door magazines in mid-October.

The recruitment process will be based on skills, experience and approach, making sure that the residents in charge ServiceWatch are really going to make a difference. Members will be unpaid, but with expenses refunded. There will be an independent consultant working with us on this, making sure that the process is fair and effective.

We think it's really important that ServiceWatch has effective support. As part of this, there will be:

- independent support from outside consultants. When setting up ServiceWatch, the consultants are being appointed by a design group including a resident from PHA and a resident from Tor Homes. After the first year, the panel will itself choose which consultants it uses in future
- a full training programme for the members
- a high level of administrative support, making sure that meetings are well-organised and everything gets done.

To make the panel fully effective right from the start, the external consultant will facilitate ServiceWatch for the first year. After the first year, ServiceWatch will agree whether to appoint a resident or independent chair/facilitator.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- implementing ServiceWatch, the group-wide customer scrutiny panel as described above
- developing a group-wide resident involvement strategy supporting our customer services
- building an accurate database of active residents, their areas of interest and preferred methods of participation. This will facilitate a menu of involvement that offers greater opportunities for effective customer consultation across the group.

We will specifically consult with you at least every three years on the best way of involving residents in the governance and scrutiny of housing management services. We are expecting this to take place in 2012.

How have we performed against our targets on involving customers?

Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
Satisfaction with views taken into account	61.9%	63.6%	62.8%	No significant change
Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed	83.8%	87.4%	83.5%	No significant change

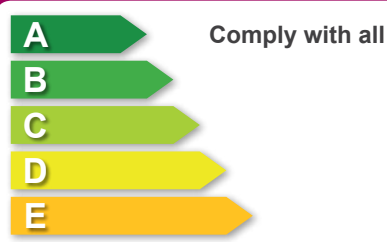
Resident satisfaction with views taken into account has not changed, with satisfaction remaining at 62.8%. Performance varies across the group, with some areas having improved during the year. Overall, this is disappointing, and we will be keeping performance under careful review during the year. The new group scrutiny panel is also likely to be looking closely at this area of work.

A housing association performing at the national average would have satisfaction with views taken into account of 64.1%. To achieve our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations, we would need to achieve performance of 70%.

Satisfaction with keeping tenants informed has remained unchanged at 83.5%. There are no national comparisons available for this figure.

How do we rate our work on involving customers in how we work and making choices?

Overall, how well do we think we comply with the TSA standards on involving customers in how we work and making choices?



Overall, how do we rate the quality on involving customers in how we work and making choices?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations.

We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment. The residents we asked mainly rated our services, as good, very good or excellent. But, this was a small sample of people who are very involved in our work already, and we must give much more weight to the fact that we are below the national average on resident satisfaction with this area.

Taking all this into account, we have rated ourselves as "ok", and we are confident that our improvement plans for this year will lift us to "good" by the time we report to you again.

➔ Repairs, maintenance and improvements

This includes the national TSA standards on quality of accommodation, and repairs & maintenance.

What are our standards for repairs, maintenance and improvement services?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- ➔ ensure that residents' homes meet the standard set out in the government's Decent Homes guidance by 31 December 2010 and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard after this date
- ➔ meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes standard
- ➔ ensure that our local offer is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to the government's Decent Homes guidance
- ➔ provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, residents, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- ➔ meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of residents in their homes.

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page four of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

PHA and Tor Homes have both achieved the Decent Homes standard for all properties. Our financial planning and future maintenance programmes ensure we have funding and capacity to continuing achieving at least this standard. As well as achieving this, we are also meeting any higher standards of design and quality that applied when homes were built.

PHA and Tor Homes each have cost-effective repairs and maintenance services that respond to needs and offer choices. Group-wide initiatives include:

- ➔ all our services being based around a right-first-time approach
- ➔ individual choices being offered to residents for major works such as kitchen and bathroom replacements, heating and external painting
- ➔ resident involvement in selecting components, supplier agreements and contractor selection
- ➔ achieving good-practice standards of the balance between planned and responsive maintenance.

During the year we have joined a number of smaller maintenance contracts together to form larger ones. This has improved value-for-money by creating economies of scale, and we have been able to use this to fund further improvements.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- ➔ in partnership with residents, developing our own DCH group local standard that exceeds Decent Homes requirements
- ➔ enhancing our information on the condition of our homes, both through more property surveys and better use of the data
- ➔ ensuring our resident handbooks are useful and up-to-date
- ➔ agreeing a plan for expanding the Tor Homes direct maintenance team across our area of work
- ➔ developing a group-wide strategy for maintaining and improving our properties
- ➔ in line with our agreed service standards, extending appointment times to better suit customer circumstances.

We have a programme in place for ensuring compliance with all health and safety requirements, both statutory and good practice. This includes work to ensure we properly address:

- ➔ asbestos
- ➔ lift safety
- ➔ fire detection
- ➔ hot water systems
- ➔ electrical safety
- ➔ legionella bacteria
- ➔ carbon monoxide and gas
- ➔ safety in communal areas
- ➔ radon
- ➔ flooding.

We have a DCH-wide group of senior staff leading on this work, and work in progress includes development of a comprehensive group-wide local home safety standard and an action plan for achieving it.

How have we performed against our targets on repairs, maintenance and improvements?

Repair response times

Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
The percentage of emergency repairs carried out on time	97.8%	97.7%	97.7%	Improving
The percentage of other repairs carried out on time	89.0%	97.5%	94.5%	No significant change

Our performance on carrying out emergency repairs on time has improved by 3% since last year, reaching 97.7%.

A housing association performing at the national average for emergency repairs would be achieving 98.3%. To achieve our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations, we would need to achieve performance of 99.4%.

Our performance on carrying out repairs that aren't emergencies has stayed the same, at 94.5%.

A housing association performing at the national average for repairs that aren't emergencies would be achieving 97.1%. To achieve our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations, we would need to achieve performance of 98.4%.

Satisfaction with repairs

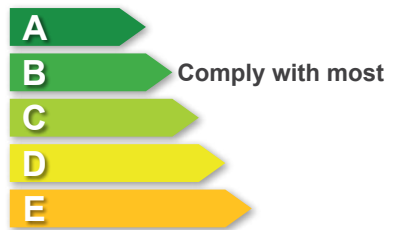
Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
The percentage of residents satisfied with our repairs service	83.2%	82.2%	82.5%	Slight improvement

Our performance on resident satisfaction with repairs has improved slightly, from 82.1% to 82.5%.

A housing association performing at the national average for resident satisfaction with repairs would be achieving 78.4%. Our performance of 82.5% is very close to our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations (83.4%), which is encouraging.

How do we rate our work on repairs, maintenance and improvements?

Overall, how well do we think we comply with the TSA standards on repairs, maintenance and improvements?



Overall, how do we rate the quality of our work on repairs, maintenance and improvements?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? *If not, please let us know.*

➔ Living in your home

This includes the national TSA standard on anti-social behaviour.

What are our standards for delivering services dealing with anti-social behaviour and living in your home?

The TSA nationally say that we should work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we own homes.

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on pages five and six of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

PHA and Tor Homes each have significant examples of local cooperation and joint action to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) at a neighbourhood level. PHA and Tor Homes have each previously signed up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management and are delivering services to achieve its core commitments, including published statements on tackling anti-social behaviour. We are now working towards achieving the requirements of the replacement standard, the "Respect ASB Charter for Housing".

Examples of partnership working include:

- ➔ police exchange of information protocols

- ➔ police domestic violence protocols
- ➔ ensuring that we have a strong focus on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families, as part of developing our group-wide local offer.
- ➔ formal and informal arrangements with local council anti-social behaviour teams. Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:
- ➔ defining more clearly the role that we can play working in partnership with other agencies in the areas where we have properties, and publishing a statement on this
- ➔ implementing our anti-social behaviour service review action plan, and publicising changes.

During the year we have learned more about the actual frequency of anti-social behaviour, by consulting with residents through the Status survey. We are using this information to focus resources and improve our services.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- ➔ following the changes in our governance structure, and associated staff changes, we are planning to review and improve our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour, applying best practice consistently across the group
- ➔ improving how we keep residents informed of developments in anti-social behaviour cases
- ➔ always offering you a choice of male or female member of staff to meet with you, as promised in our service standards
- ➔ developing a stronger victim and witness support policy, and publishing a group-wide victim support plan.

How have we performed against our targets on addressing anti-social behaviour?

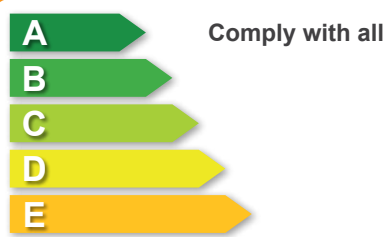
Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
Satisfaction with how reports of anti-social behaviour were dealt with	54.6%	49.8%	49.8%	Improving
Anti-social behaviour cases reported in the four months from April to July 2011	83	145	228	Improving

Our performance on satisfaction with how reports of anti-social behaviour were dealt with has improved from 41.6% to 49.8% this year. There are no national comparisons available for this figure.

Less anti-social behaviour cases are being reported across the group this year. There are no national comparisons available for this figure. Figures from our independent annual Status survey indicate that 77% of residents experience anti-social behaviour seldom, rarely or never.

How do we rate our work on addressing anti-social behaviour?

Overall, how well do we think we comply with the TSA standards on anti-social behaviour?



Overall, how do we rate the quality of our work on anti-social behaviour?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? *If not, please let us know.*

➔ Allocating homes

This includes the national TSA standards on allocations and tenure.

What are our standards for allocating homes?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- **let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way, and take into account the housing needs and aspirations of residents and potential residents. We should demonstrate how we:**
 - **make the best use of available housing**
 - **ensure lettings are compatible with the purpose of the housing**
 - **contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities**
 - **have clear application, decision-making and appeals processes**
 - **offer and issue the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community. We should meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements.**

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page six of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

This year we have achieved significant improvements in how quickly we let properties, saving over £150,000 across PHA and Tor Homes.

PHA and Tor Homes each fully participate in either the Devon or Cornwall 'Home Choice' choice-based lettings schemes. These schemes address under/over occupation and homelessness by suitable priority being awarded through clear and transparent needs assessment. The choice-based lettings schemes allow for appropriate local lettings policies and a percentage of lettings to be kept for transfers of existing tenants. All of this enables us to make best use of our available housing whilst supporting the local authorities' strategic and statutory housing function.

In particular, this year we have liaised closely with local councils on our approach to the government's new affordable rent product.

PHA and Tor Homes each offer the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of housing and the sustainability of the community. When people first move in we give them an introductory tenancy, and then give them a full assured tenancy when they have shown that they keep to the conditions. Our tenancy agreements have been verified by solicitors as having fair terms and conditions, and in meeting legal requirements.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- as part of letting newly built homes through the government’s new affordable rent product, developing new fixed-term tenancies of up to seven years. These proposals only affect new lettings – existing tenancies are not affected.
- further improving our lettings process to reduce the time that properties are empty between lettings
- considering incentives to encourage residents to move to smaller properties where appropriate
- reviewing the incentives we use to make sure that properties are left in good condition when residents move out
- publishing a policy addressing how we identify and deal with unauthorised occupation of our properties.

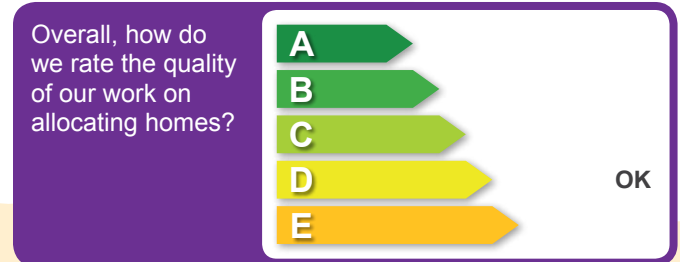
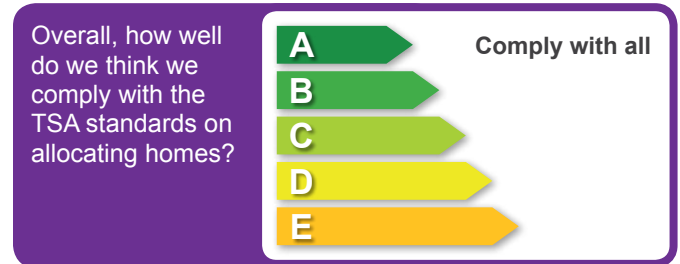
How have we performed against our targets on allocating homes?

Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
The average time taken to re-let a property when a tenant leaves	29.3 days	33.5 days	31.6 days	Improving
The amount of rent lost due to empty properties as a percentage of the rent due	0.91%	1.84%	1.43%	Improving
The percentage of new residents satisfied with the lettings process*	89.5%	96.8%	93.4%	*this information comes from non-standardised internal surveys, and there is currently no trend or national comparison available

We are letting our properties, on average, over 4 days quicker than a year ago, and we are losing less rent due to empty homes since April 2011 compared to the same three months last year.

A housing association performing at the national average would be letting properties in 29.8 days. To achieve our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations, we would need to achieve performance of 23 days, and further improvement is therefore required in this area.

How do we rate our work on allocations and tenure?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? If not, please let us know.

While our performance is improving, and we have a high proportion of satisfied residents, we still have some way to go on the speed of letting properties. We are confident that our improvement plans will have raised our performance in this area by the time we next report to you.

➤ Paying your rent

This includes the national TSA standard on rents.

What are our standards for delivering services on rents?

The TSA nationally say that we should charge rents in accordance with the government’s framework.

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page seven of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

For existing properties, we follow the government’s rent setting formula (based on house values and local average

incomes), and we report on this to our boards each year.

From later this year, newly developed properties and some relet properties will be charged a proportion of the market rent, as part of the government’s new affordable rent product. The PHA and Tor Homes boards are agreeing how this will work in practice. It is likely that the relet properties with higher rents will be newer homes, which are more cost-efficient for tenants in terms of energy cost. This will be fairer, with residents paying a lower rent in older properties where energy costs are generally higher. These proposals only affect new lettings – existing tenancies are not affected.

We offer a wide range of methods to help make paying your rent as convenient as possible including swipe cards to pay at local shops, telephone payments with debit cards, direct debits and standing orders. We also have a range of advice and information available to help residents manage their money. Please let us know if you would like to find out more.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **implementing the revised rent frameworks for newly built and relet properties**
- **reviewing service charge administration across the group.**

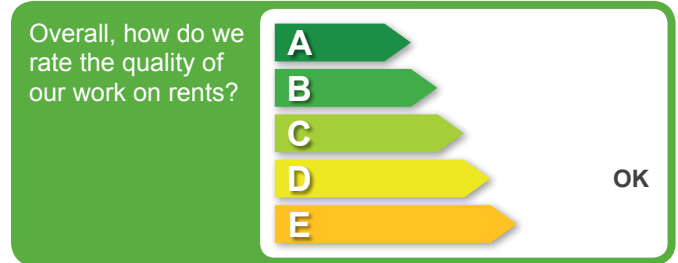
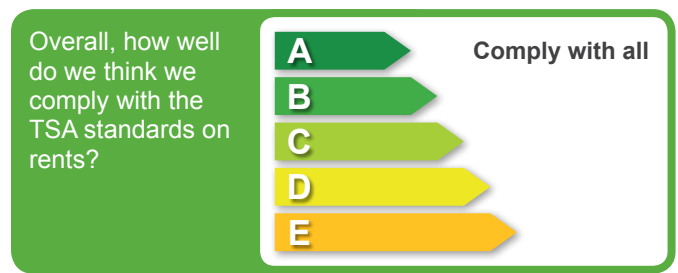
How have we performed on collecting rents?

Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the rent due in the year	3.89%	4.00%	3.95%	Improving

Over the year our rent arrears have improved from 4.16% to 3.95%.

A housing association performing at the national average would have rent arrears of 3.9%. To achieve our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations, we would need to achieve performance of 2.7%, and further improvement is therefore required in this area.

How do we rate our work on rents?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? *If not, please let us know.*

While our performance is improving, and our rents are comparable to other social landlords, we still have some way to go on rent arrears. We are confident that our improvement plans will have raised our performance in this area by the time we next report to you.

➤ Estate and neighbourhood services

This includes the national TSA standard on neighbourhood management and local area cooperation.

What are our standards for delivering estate and neighbourhood services?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- **keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that we own clean and safe**
- **work in partnership with our residents and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so**
- **cooperate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being in the areas where we own properties**

Our own local Devon & Cornwall Housing (DCH) service standards are set out on page seven of our Service Standards leaflet.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

PHA and Tor Homes each keep communal areas maintained to a clean and safe standard as agreed with tenants. As well as our own grounds maintenance, communal cleaning and grass cutting contracts, we work in partnership with other agencies in monitoring and managing public open space.

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **improve our engagement with agencies such as the police and health services**
- **developing fire safety plans to issue to residents**
- **developing a consistent group approach on how we carry out neighbourhood inspections and estate walkabouts with residents**
- **responding to reports of abandoned vehicles within the one day stated in our service standards, rather than the current five days**
- **making sure we display the cleaning timetable in the lobby of all blocks of flats that have cleaning.**

How have we performed on estate and neighbourhood services?

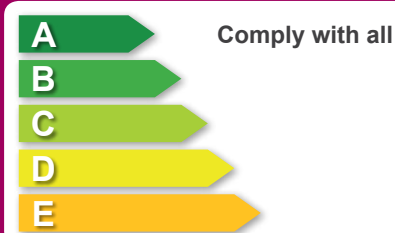
Measure	PHA	Tor Homes	DCH group	Trend
Satisfaction with neighbourhood	86.8%	84.6%	84.9%	Improving

Our performance on resident satisfaction with their neighbourhoods has improved from 81.2% to 84.9% this year.

A housing association performing at the national average for resident satisfaction with neighbourhoods would be achieving 82.1%. Our performance of 84.9% is very close to our target of being in the top quarter of housing associations (85.5%), which is encouraging.

How do we rate our work on estate and neighbourhood services?

Overall, how well do we think we comply with the TSA standards on neighbourhood services?



Overall, how do we rate the quality of our neighbourhood services?



We have made this assessment based on our performance figures and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents whether they agreed with this assessment, and we took their views into account.

Do you agree? *If not, please let us know.*

➔ Value for money

This includes the national TSA standard on value for money.

What are our standards for delivering customer services?

The TSA nationally say that we should:

- ➔ have a comprehensive approach to managing our resources to provide cost-effective, efficient, quality services and outcomes to meet tenants' and potential tenants' needs
- ➔ demonstrate to residents how expenditure has been prioritised in relation to each of the standards and in the delivery of local offers, and in meeting other needs such as investment in new social housing provision; how we have ensured value for money has been secured and tested; and our plans and priorities for delivery of further improvements
- ➔ have arrangements for residents to influence the services delivered and the cost of those services that result in service charges to residents.

Our own local DCH service standards incorporate value-for-money throughout – please see the attachment to this report.

How well do we comply with these national and local DCH service standards?

What improvements are we planning for the next 12 months?

Our work includes:

- ➔ measurable goals in our group value-for-money strategy
- ➔ annual value-for-money reporting highlighting what we have achieved
- ➔ training for board members, staff and active residents on evaluating value-for-money
- ➔ careful budget planning and financial control, with all new activities receiving a value-for-money assessment
- ➔ ensuring that we take advantage of our group buying power when buying goods and services
- ➔ reviewing energy contracts to make sure we use the most effective tariffs
- ➔ working closely across all our organisations to make sure that we collaborate effectively as a group.

During the year we published our group-wide service standards, following extensive consultation with residents. Part of developing these standards was a careful balancing of cost against quality, ensuring that we achieve maximum value for money.

Services and costs are considered by a range of panels across the group, at local and strategic levels. This includes mystery shoppers, focus groups, service improvement panels, and resident board & committee membership. During the year Grid (our group-wide resident involvement steering group) and the former DCHA regional committees agreed to end their work, as part of establishing the new resident scrutiny process. Before then, these bodies were closely involved in scrutinising performance and targets.

Value-for-money achievements this year have included:

- **simplifying our governance structure through amalgamating DCHA and DCHT**
- **further streamlining governance by reviewing and reducing the number of committees within the group**
- **savings of over £150,000 from letting properties quicker and collecting a greater percentage of rent due**
- **increased collaborative working between staff in all our subsidiaries, also now facilitated through our common housing software system**
- **improving the Open Door resident magazines by bringing the Tor and PHA editions together into a consistent design, sharing content and saving money. This has reduced the total design and print costs for each copy from £1.77 to £0.39**
- **increased group procurement of goods and services**
- **savings in producing a summary annual report to residents, with this full report being available on our website (and by post on request). This has saved over £8,500.**

Our improvement plans to be delivered this year include:

- **subject to resident and stakeholder consultation, continuing stage two of our amalgamation process, so that assets are held by the group parent with local services being delivered by PHA and Tor Homes.**
- **continuing resident consultation as we fully implement and improve our group-wide service standards**
- **improving feedback to residents on our planning and prioritising**
- **a review of service charge processes across PHA and Tor Homes.**

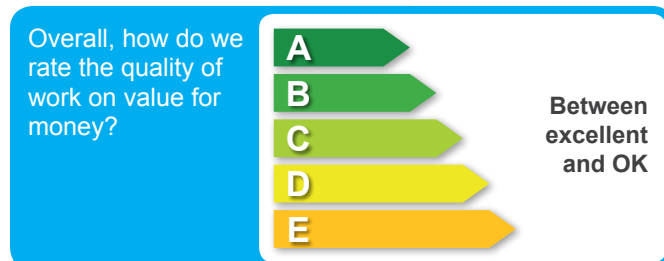
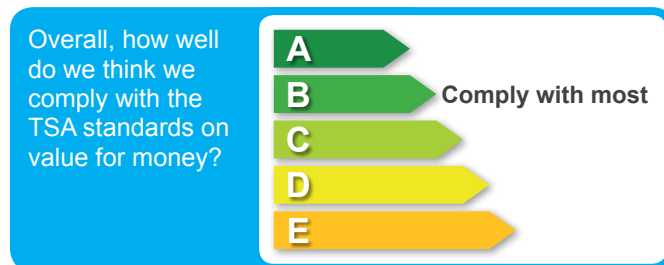
How have we performed on value-for-money?

We use a typical Devon & Cornwall Housing weekly rent of £75 to pay for:

- **£18** Housing management costs, including collecting rents and looking after neighbourhoods
- **£31** Maintenance costs, including improving our existing homes
- **£1** Money lost by properties being empty between lettings
- **£20** Loan repayments and accounting movements on the original costs of building our homes
- **£5** Surplus for investing in new homes and services

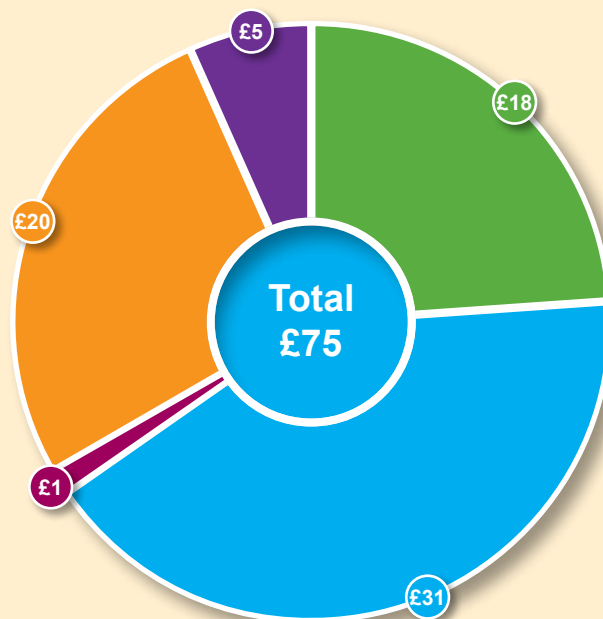
(Some rents are higher, and some are lower. We are using the figure of £75 as an approximate illustration to show very roughly where our tenants' money goes.)

How do we rate our work on value for money?



We have considered making a value-for-money assessment here, based on our costs and customer satisfaction levels, comparing them with other similar organisations. We asked a sample of involved residents what they thought, and their views ranged from OK to excellent.

We think there is more work to do on this area before we can report to you with a value-for-money assessment, and this will be one of the tasks that ServiceWatch, our resident scrutiny group, will be looking at during the year. We will update you on this in our Open Door resident newsletters and our next report to you.



➔ How we have checked our performance

This section tells you:

- ➔ how we have checked the outcomes we reported in the previous section on national and local standards
- ➔ how residents have been involved in scrutinising performance
- ➔ where we have used external checks, and comparisons with other organisations.

There is information on each of these below:

How we have checked our outcomes against the national standards:

- ➔ the assessment we made against the standard last year was checked by all boards, including resident members, and this report updates it
- ➔ there has been an additional 'reality check' from a group of involved residents who compared our assessment to their personal experiences of the service delivery they have received. In particular we asked those residents for feedback on how we rated the quality of service
- ➔ throughout the report we have compared our performance to other housing providers, noting how we compare to the average and our target of being in the top 25%.

How residents have been involved in scrutinising performance:

- ➔ each area of the national standards has been checked against resident satisfaction, including both our in-house surveys and independent external assessments
- ➔ we've taken account of other sources of customer comments such as mystery shopping, resident audit, service improvement panels and learning from complaints

Our proposals on the new resident scrutiny process, set out earlier in this report, will further enhance how performance is being scrutinised in future.

Where we have used external checks, and comparisons with other organisations:

We check our performance against several areas, including:

- ➔ work carried out on validating our service standards by independent consultants, confirming that they are sufficiently stretching for an organisation aiming to provide high-quality services

- ➔ Housemark, a national service for housing organisations to compare performance and learn from each other
- ➔ Status, an independent customer satisfaction survey run by the National Housing Federation, which also allows us to see how we compare with other providers
- ➔ the Respect ASB Charter for Housing, a nationwide initiative to reduce anti-social behaviour
- ➔ Customer Service Excellence, the national accreditation for public services that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering. This year we were successfully reassessed as reaching the standard for this award
- ➔ getting a quality check and feedback on our draft annual report from independent consultants the Housing Quality Network.

Next year, this annual performance report will also include:

- ➔ improved performance information against all sections of our service standards
- ➔ a separate report from the new group-wide scrutiny panel, reporting on their work so far.

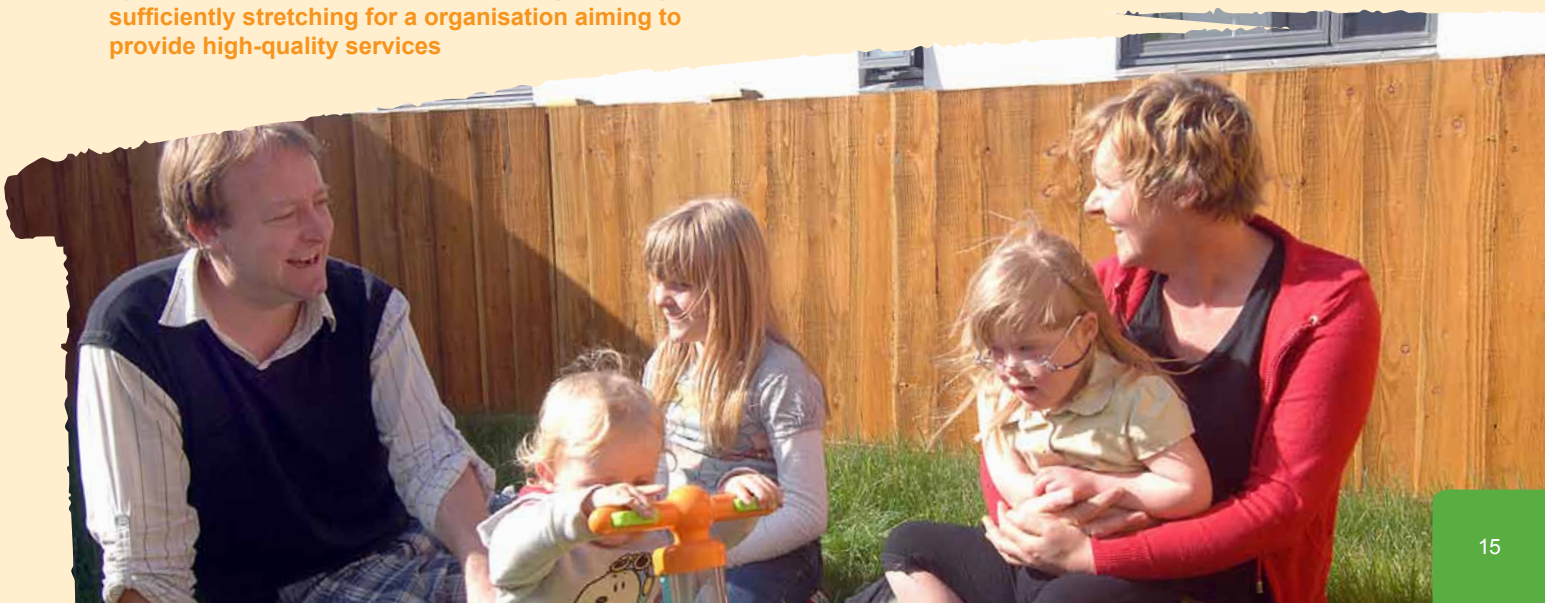
Please let us know if there is any other information you would like to see next year, and if you would like to take part in assessing our performance or producing the report.

How we have involved residents in producing this annual report

We have involved a wide range of residents in the reporting process, including:

- ➔ previous members of the focus group who helped us develop our service standards
- ➔ resident board members of DCH, PHA and Tor Homes
- ➔ the Open Door newsletter editorial panels for PHA and Tor Homes
- ➔ members of the Tor Homes scrutiny forum, and the PHA Doing Things Better group (both of these bodies are to be re-formed as part of the work on ServiceWatch, our new resident scrutiny process).

We have made many changes and improvements to the report as a result of resident comments.



Contact information



Our group head office is at:

- Paris Street, Exeter EX1 2JZ
- Tel: 0300 123 8080



- 67 Morrab Road, Penzance TR18 2QJ
- Tel: 0300 303 8030
- Kenwyn Street, Truro TR1 3BA
- Tel: 0300 303 8030

PHA offices and phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm



- Tor House, St Peters Quay, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5SH

- Tel: 0800 316 88 39

Our Totnes office and phone line is open Monday to Thursday 8am - 5pm and Friday 8am - 4.30pm

- 2 Ker Street, Devonport, Plymouth PL1 4GE

- Tel: 0300 123 8080

- Paris Street, Exeter EX1 2JZ

- Tel: 0300 123 8080

Our Plymouth and Exeter offices and phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm



- 2 Ker Street, Devonport, Plymouth PL1 4GE

- Tel: 01752 275276



www.dchgroup.com

If you would like our residents annual report translated, please call 0300 123 8080

إذا كنت تريد نسخة مترجمة من تقرير نزلنا السنوي، رجاء قم بالاتصال بـ 0300 123 8080

نهگهر ده تهوی رابورتی سالانهی دانیشتونای خویمان ته رجومه بکهین به کوردی بو تو تکابه تلهفون بکه به
ژمارهی 0300 123 8080

如果您希望将我们的居民年度报告进行翻译，请拨打 0300 123 8080

Je li chcieliby Pa stwo uzyska tłumaczenie naszego corocznego raportu mieszkawców, prosimy zadzwoni pod numer 0300 123 8080

Caso pretenda obter a tradução do nosso relatório anual de residentes, ligue para o 0300 123 8080

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact 0300 123 8080