

# Annual report for residents

Our performance 2009/10



# Annual report for residents



## About this report

We want to provide you with the best services and want to make sure we listen to what you say and use that to help us improve. An important part of this is to let you know how we are doing and how we plan to improve our services more.

All information and performance figures in

this report are for the period April 2009 – March 2010.

We have outlined in this report:

- what you've told us about our services, mostly from the Future Choices events we held in the spring this year;
- what we think we do well;
- where we know we need to do better;
- our local offer to you;
- our commitments about the things we intend to improve.

Our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), exists to make sure that residents are getting a good service from their landlord and has set new standards we must meet.

We're not obliged to include information about homeowners in this report as the TSA standards don't apply to homeowners; but we have decided that it is important to report on how we are doing for all our residents.



# How we've developed this report

Residents have been involved in the development of this report, including:

- Input at Future Choices events – views on our services were gained from each of the workshops held;
- The Chair of Residents' Council, Antony Hamilton, joined a group of senior staff which was set up to scrutinise and challenge the current level of service – both good areas and areas requiring improvement. The work of this group helped us to decide the contents of this report;
- Consultation with Intouch members, Residents' Council and Residents' Representatives on the content and style of this report;
- Residents' Council were also asked their views on how many reports we should produce and how we should distribute it, to make sure residents are happy we are getting value for money.



Where possible we have provided comparisons (benchmarking) with other housing providers so that you can see how our service compares to other housing associations. We know that this is an area where there is scope to improve, and plan to include more comparisons in next year's report.



We have also asked a specialist housing advisory organisation, Housing Quality Network, to review our approach to developing and improving our services. They validated the approach we have taken, and will continue to look at our progress, to ensure we review and improve our services.

## Keeping in touch with you

We are always keen to hear your views and would like to know if you found this report useful or if you have suggestions for how we could improve it.

## Alternative formats

If you would like to receive this document in an audio format (tape or CD) please contact our Service Centre on 0800 280 2575 or [servicecentre@hanover.org.uk](mailto:servicecentre@hanover.org.uk). If you wish to receive this publication in another format please speak with your estate manager.

## Customer care and ways you can be involved



### What we do well

- Local estate manager service which provides a comprehensive first port of call for residents
- Giving residents choice and the ability to make decisions about the local service you want through Local Agreements
- We have a number of ways for residents to get involved with Hanover – we continue to review these to make sure there's a choice of ways for you to tell us what you think about the services we provide
- Access to someone who can help you is available from Hanover on Call, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- We have been awarded the nationally recognised customer service excellence standard for our approach to providing residents with service
- We encourage the Residents' Council to scrutinise our services – plenty of feedback was gathered from residents at the different types of estates Residents' Council members visited



### What we need to do better

- More regular surveys of how satisfied residents are with our services
- Let you know the ways in which you can contact us
- Make sure that residents are satisfied with how we handle complaints
- Although our customer service has been recognised as being good we don't seem to always be able to provide the answers residents want first time
- Help our staff to understand diversity so that our estates are welcoming to everyone

## In the spotlight

- A large consultation exercise about how we provide you with information about services found that the residents' handbook and purchasers' information pack were not thought to be the most appropriate ways to provide information. This consultation led to us deciding to replace these documents with a series of help sheets.
- We consulted residents on Extra Care estates about the catering service and as a result we are now developing a range of flexible models. A pilot is being run at Bramble Court in South Shields and another pilot is due to take place at our Tadcaster estate next year.



## What you told us

- We need to make sure we provide feedback – even if it's to say we can't do something
- We must keep our promises – whether that's doing some major works or returning a phone call when we say we will
- Face to face meetings are the most popular way of communicating
- Local meetings are preferred (and more will be held in the future) – forums were thought to be too formal

## Facts and figures

### Number of complaints in the year

At stage 1:

346

At stage 2:

30

At stage 3:

14

Sent to Housing Ombudsman:

3

Upheld:

0

Awaiting response:

1

### Number of residents on Intouch

525

### Hanover on Call

Total calls received: 370,738

Total calls made: 246,266



## Maintaining your home; repairs and planned works



### What we do well

- Reports show high satisfaction with both the quality of our homes, with how we manage the upkeep of estates and with the day to day repairs service
- Residents have the opportunity to be involved in selecting local repairs contractors and we provide a local repairs budget for each rented estate
- We have developed a pilot copayments scheme – to offer help and funds to those who choose to replace their kitchen or bathroom before Hanover plans to do it
- There are a number of ways to report a repair – via your estate manager, to the repairs centre (or Hanover on Call if outside office hours)

#### And these things are about to happen...

- Provide you with performance statements about repairs contractors twice a year
- Production of a budget breakdown for your estate



### What we need to do better

- Improve how quickly we replace older kitchens and bathrooms
- Speed up how quickly we carry out aids and adaptations
- Inform you about major works planned for your estate and try to obtain better value for money for these jobs
- Develop a way to measure when repairs are completed properly on the first visit
- Make sure our homes are energy efficient
- Carry out more detailed surveys of homeowner estates to make sure we know what works are needed longer term

## In the spotlight

- **Repairs in Local Agreements** – During widespread consultation about the repairs service residents strongly objected to Hanover’s plans to move towards a national contractor (standard practice for many housing associations). Residents now select the contractors they wish to use at their estate. Residents at Dove Court in Bradford agreed the important areas to look at in contractors’ performance and decided a full breakdown of costs should be available on request. They will then review the repairs service (including contractors performance and cost) at their annual service charge meeting.
- **Copayments pilot, Hanover Close, St Neots** – This scheme helps eligible tenants to buy the kitchen or bathroom of their choice with Hanover paying towards the cost, and taking responsibility for future maintenance. Mr and Mrs Fosdicke (*pictured below right*) decided to take up Hanover on their offer and now have a new kitchen and bathroom. The couple used one of their estate’s contractors and are very pleased with the work.

## What you told us

- You value the local repairs contractors and are pleased that Hanover listened to you about this
- More clarity is needed about improvement works – including the difference between repairs and planned works
- You would like more technical presence on estates
- Renewing older kitchens and bathrooms is still a major priority

## Facts and figures

Repairs: achieved rates against targets

Completed within target timescale (emergency):

91%

peer benchmark\*: 97%

Completed within target timescale (urgent):

91%

peer benchmark\*: 95%

Completed within target timescale (routine):

97%

peer benchmark\*: 95%

Average cost of a repair:

£120

peer benchmark\*: £115

\*landlords who perform the best

Amount we spent on major works:

£13.7m

Amount we spent on responsive repairs:

£5.9m



## Letting properties, rents and charges



### What we do well

- We hold meetings on estates about service charges – enabling you to get involved and challenge costs
- We have a good applications process – and it is about to be improved even more
- We use the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) code to guide how we manage our homeowner estates
- Through Local Agreements we're clear about the services available on each estate
- We provide welfare rights advice about paying your bills and living comfortably, and we have a specialist system that identifies residents potential entitlements
- Our rents are set according to the government's rent restructuring rules



### What we need to do better

- Improve how quickly we let empty properties
- Carry out formal consultation on major repairs being paid through service charges
- Review how we calculate reserve funds for homeowners
- Get better at collecting money owed to us by residents for unpaid rents and/or service charges
- We need to be better at providing opportunities for residents to move home (with us and to other housing providers)

## In the spotlight

- We carried out a survey of prospective residents who turned down an offer of a property to find out why – views were also obtained about the lettings process, and how we manage our waiting lists. This is being used to help us to improve how we let our properties.
- A homeowner survey helped us to produce a leaflet aimed at residents who currently rent (and for prospective residents) who want information about buying a property.



## What you told us

- We asked you about rent statements. You told us we needed to make further improvements and print out statements when requested by residents in addition to the bi-annual mailing that we do
- You like the estate manager service
- You would like more visits to estates by senior managers
- You would like us to consider existing tenants for priority transfer to ground floor properties in a better way

## Facts and figures

### Empty properties

Time to re-let empty rented properties:

**40**days

Empty properties as a % of all housing stock

**1.5**%

### Source of incoming residents

Transfers:

**8**%

Waiting list:

**29**%

Nominations:

**40**%

Leasehold sales:

**23**%

Arrears (monies owed to Hanover – rents or service charges)

Current: **£1,500,000**

Former: **£420,000**

### Management fees and estate manager pay

Homeowner meetings were held about estate manager pay and management fees. As a result, we have agreed how management fees should be calculated and the services to be provided.



# Working in your local community



## What we do well

- We try to make sure that the estate you live on is welcoming, clean and tidy – we can have discussions about the upkeep of the estate as part of the Local Agreement so that you decide how you want it managed
- We have a new anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy and procedure – it aims to keep residents informed of the progress of a case
- Local Agreements provide each estate the opportunity to set out the services they expect and details of any partnerships with contractors and local community groups and initiatives
- Where residents are happy to, we try to involve community groups – from visits by PCSOs to visits from local school groups or members from a local youth offending team



## What we need to do better

- Better sharing of best practice – so that you can see what others are doing and possibly use their ideas on your estate
- Make sure we represent and make links with local communities – including different backgrounds and cultures

## In the spotlight

- **Tackling ASB** – Residents at Runnymede Court in Nottingham had been affected by anti-social behaviour from students coming home late or playing football on the street. A meeting was arranged by the estate manager and local policemen for the residents, students, local council and students' union to get together. Following the meeting the students' union invited the residents to join the students for a game of snooker. The get-togethers now take place annually when the new students start at college.
- **Involving partners at estates (Norfolk)** – With unemployment rising, Hanover has teamed up with an independent organisation funded by the government called TNG. Hanover benefits from extra help and access to potential future employees. The young job seekers get hands-on experience and a reference from Hanover.

## Facts and figures

### Anti-social behaviour

Logged cases of anti-social behaviour:

49

### Greenshoots

Our Greenshoots programme continues to be popular and provides residents with an opportunity to work together with each other, often with local organisations.

Number of applications that received Greenshoots funding:

82

## What you told us

- The terminology linked with Local Agreements isn't easy to understand. We are therefore doing more work with staff and residents to re-launch and make clearer the decisions that can be made locally.



# How we deliver cost-effective services



## What we do well

- Through service charge meetings we discuss the costs of the local service
- Provide a discount scheme for residents including discounts with leading high street stores
- We provide a specialist insurance company for residents that represents value for money
- We are able to provide details of what we spend money on at an estate level and through local repairs budget closely examine how much repairs are costing
- We work together with residents to decide the level of estate manager service locally so that residents get the value for money and level of service required



## What we need to do better

- Do more work to compare our service and costs with other landlords
- Introduce different ways to deal with major works contracts to save money – as we did recently with new decorating contracts that made savings
- Understand how well our resident engagement methods work and identify whether they represent value for money
- We need to look in more detail at how we carry out some processes in Hanover to see if we can save more money

## In the spotlight



- Benefits advice can result in more income for residents, as Myrna Browne (pictured above) realised. Her estate manager thought there was a chance that she could be eligible. The Lisson Grove programme identified Myrna as being eligible for some benefits. Following an application (with the assistance of the local Citizens Advice Bureau) Myrna is now over £100 per week better off, thanks to the help of her estate manager and the specialist benefits programme, Lisson Grove.
- Homeowners were asked their views on the estate manager service. 34 estates\* made the decision to change the hours of their estate manager service. (\*These estates consisted of 34 homes and fewer.)

## What you told us

- You want us to make sure we provide value for money so that service charges are kept as low as possible
- Costs of providing service – should be proportionate to the number of units and facilities on an estate

## Facts and figures

### Savings achieved

Total cashable savings achieved:

£1m

National catering contract saving:

£39k

Re-tendering decorating contracts saving:

£68k\*

*\*this figure is for a new contract covering seven estates in the South and West regions*

### Management costs

Annual cost of managing a Hanover property:

£224





## Our current position

- Local Agreements were introduced on our estates to give residents greater choice and more say about the services delivered on their estate
- Meetings have been held on most estates with residents to discuss how the estate is managed and the level of services and facilities provided. From this we produced a Local Agreement for each estate. Each estate's agreement is different – they capture local decisions and what's expected by both residents and Hanover
- The content of Local Agreements really is for residents to choose locally, but can include: repairs; the estate manager service; cleaning and gardening contractors; how Hanover communicates locally (i.e. local newsletters); car parking; guest room usage; laundry access.



## What we do well

- We've consulted residents about the local choices they have and how they want local services to be delivered



## What we need to do better

- Be clear about what choices we can offer locally and make Local Agreements easier to understand

## What you told us

- The terminology we use is not friendly and is therefore sometimes misunderstood
- The idea of Local Agreements is helpful but we need to be clearer about the choices that are available
- We need to be careful not to over consult residents on what they think
- We should review Local Agreements regularly – it's important that the document is kept up to date
- It shouldn't be too lengthy/too short – we need to get the right balance!
- Residents should choose what degree of consultation they want about the services on their estate and informing and reviewing the Local Agreement

## What happens next

We have Local Agreements in place and are now working to improve the things identified in your feedback. The main area we are looking at is to be much clearer about the choices that are available to residents. These fit into three categories;

1. Individual choices that residents can make
2. Collective choices by a group of residents on an estate
3. Landlord choices that Hanover have to make

By making it clearer who can make decisions and choices, we will be able to develop our local services more to meet the needs of residents. We hope this will lead to further improved resident satisfaction with our services.

# Our commitment to you

## Top 10 commitments that we will prioritise over the next 12 months

This report has set out a lot of things we think we do well and a lot where we know we can do better. We are committed to working hard to improve but can't do everything at once. Our commitment to you is to make improving the following 10 areas our priority - when we report next year we'll tell you how we're doing on this. This doesn't mean the other areas will be forgotten but plans to address them may need to be picked up in the future.

1. Carry out regular surveys to find out how satisfied residents are with our services
2. Make sure residents are satisfied with how we handle complaints
3. Help our staff understand diversity so our estates are welcoming to everyone
4. Improve how quickly we replace older kitchens and bathrooms
5. Develop a way to measure how many repairs are completed successfully on the first visit

6. Carry out more detailed surveys of homeowner estates to make sure we know what works are needed longer term
7. Improve how quickly we let empty properties
8. Get better at collecting money owed to us by residents for unpaid rents and/or service charges
9. Do more work to compare our service and costs with other landlords
10. We need to understand how well our resident engagement methods work and identify whether they represent value for money

We plan to regularly review where we need to do better and report on our progress to Residents' Council. We'll keep you informed of improvement to our services via local meetings with your estate manager, through area meetings and in Hanover News. We'll also produce an update report in 12 months' time to show you our performance since this report.



## Feedback slip – let us know what you think about this report

Reply by 30th November 2010 and you could win a £50 voucher in our prize draw!



Was the report easy to understand? Yes  No

What did you think of its written style? Excellent  Good  Adequate  Poor

Were the performance figures easy to understand? Yes  No

Comments: .....

Did you find the report useful? Yes  No

Further comments and suggestions for improvement: .....

.....

Is there any more information you think we should include in future editions?.....

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Name..... Address.....



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Call 0800 280 2575



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**FREEPOST HL599  
Hanover  
1 Bridge Close  
Staines  
TW18 4BR**