

Inspection report

January 2004



Inspection Report

**Family Housing Association
(Manchester)**

Contents

Summary	3
The Housing Corporation, the Housing Inspectorate and the inspection	3
Assessment of the service	3
What works well in FHA	5
Recommendations	5
FHA response	6
Overall assessment of service	7
The inspection: terms of reference and coverage	7
A profile of FHA	7
How good is the service?	10
Is FHA working for continuous improvement?	13
Review of service areas	14
Maintaining homes in good condition	14
Letting homes	22
Dealing with nuisance and anti social behaviour	25
Ensuring that services are sensitive to the needs of communities	28
Services to customers	32
Influence of tenants over service delivery	35
Appendices	38
The inspection team	38
Number of person days on site	38
The inspection process	38
Reference documents	38
Glossary of terms	41

Summary

The Housing Corporation, the Housing Inspectorate and the inspection

- 1 In June, a team of inspectors from the Audit Commission visited Family Housing Association (FHA), to assess both the services that the association gives to its tenants and other customers, and how the association is trying to improve those services for the future.
- 2 The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local and national services to the public. Within the Audit Commission the Housing Inspectorate now inspects and monitors the performance of local authority housing departments, housing associations and other forms of social landlord. In inspecting housing associations we work closely with the Housing Corporation, the statutory body which regulates housing associations. Our findings are used by the Housing Corporation in assessing whether a housing association is well governed, well managed and financially viable.
- 3 Our inspectors spoke to tenants and staff at FHA and to members of the association's Board of Management. We talked to the local authorities, contractors and other organisations that work closely with the association. We visited homes that it owns and manages. We looked in particular at how well the association performs in the following six aspects of the service:
 - ◆ maintaining homes in good condition and asset management;
 - ◆ letting homes;
 - ◆ dealing with nuisance and anti social behaviour;
 - ◆ involving tenants in the activities of the association and tenants' influence over service delivery;
 - ◆ how the association ensures that its services are sensitive to the needs of the communities it serves, including black and minority ethnic communities;
 - ◆ how customers receive services, including how complaints are managed.

What is FHA association?

- 4 Family Housing Association (Manchester) Ltd is a "Registered Social Landlord" which was set up in the early 1960s. It is a traditional Housing Association or Registered Social Landlord with approximately 3,800 units and around 200 supported units. FHA is now a subsidiary of the Adactus Housing Group.

Assessment of the service

- 5 Our inspectors have assessed each service area that they inspected and have made an overall assessment for:
 - ◆ how good the association's services are; and
 - ◆ whether the association is working for continuous improvement.
- 6 A more detailed explanation of the assessments can be found on the Housing Inspectorate website (www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

We have assessed FHA as providing a service that is satisfactory. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below. The assessment chart displays performance in two dimensions.

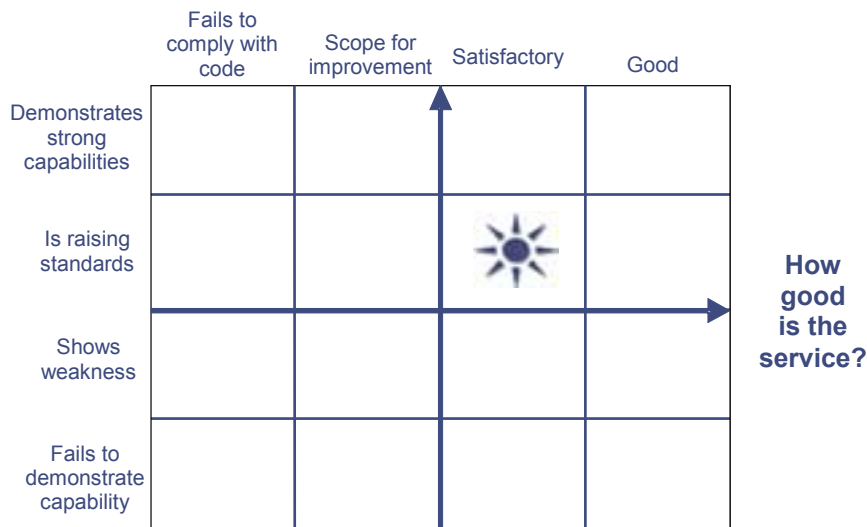
The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from failing to comply with the regulatory code (at the left-hand corner) to good (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

Assessment chart: Family Housing Association (Manchester) - Inspection Report

Is the association working for continuous improvement?

The service is satisfactory.

The service is raising standards in service delivery.



What works well in FHA

What we found

7 In our inspection we asked two key questions:

- ◆ how good is the service delivered to residents?

FHA delivers its services mainly in areas of considerable socio – economic stress. Its commitment to these areas and its residents is commendable. It works closely with all other stakeholders in these areas and was particularly praised by the one local authority with whom we had contact. It seeks innovative means of delivering services and is keen to involve tenants and residents. Its work in preventing and dealing with anti-social behaviour is particularly noteworthy. The majority of tenants encountered during the inspection expressed generally high levels of satisfaction with the service, although there were some complaints about the repairs service and the manner in which transfer applications were dealt with. All tenants were particularly impressed with the manner in which the association worked with B & ME tenants.

The association has acknowledged that its offices are not particularly accessible and has a programme of office re development. A stock condition survey is underway. Once received it needs to take measures to ensure all their properties meet the Decent Homes Standard. This should not be an onerous task: Board reports indicate that approximately only 6% of their homes are unlikely to meet the Decent Homes Standard. The imminent stock condition survey will confirm the number of homes failing to meet the standard. The association has received the Investors in People award.

Overall we consider that the association's services are satisfactory.

- ◆ Is the association working towards continuous improvement?

For some time FHA have sought to improve their services through formal review. They have had some success in this and a number of changes to their services have come from it. Despite these successes the work done to date has had a 'top down' feel to it. Areas selected for review, the structure of the review and the selection of the review team have all been considered management tasks. Tenants have only been involved to review the work of the teams, rather being than integral parts of them.

Nevertheless we presently consider the association's approach to continuous improvement is raising standards in service delivery.

Recommendations

8 The main recommendations made to the Board of Management at FHA following our inspection are set out below. These are broadly in order of significance.

- ◆ Prioritise the introduction of the Schedule of Rates in order to more accurately attribute estimated costs to repair orders. It is also recommended that the SOR is used to monitor repair frequencies to feed into planned and cyclical programmes.
- ◆ Introduce a repairs appointment system using two hour timescales.
- ◆ Introduce effective reporting arrangements to the board for exclusions and review how exclusions are authorised/time limits can be set.

- ◆ Review the information presented to applicants to ensure that they understand how priority has been awarded and how they can appeal about the number of points allocated.
 - ◆ Amend the application form to include language flags and highlight the availability of a large print version.
 - ◆ Introduce lettings service standards
 - ◆ As part of the planned best value review, consider how sustainability can be addressed within the allocation system.
 - ◆ Take steps to monitor telephone calls received and how they are dealt with.
 - ◆ Take steps to make the local area offices more accessible and welcoming, particularly for disabled tenants
 - ◆ Adopt an overarching strategy drawing the various strands of the equality and diversity policy together.
 - ◆ Complete access audits of offices in preparation for the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - ◆ Ensure all staff and Board members have mandatory training in equality and diversity issues.
 - ◆ Starter tenancies should either be converted to Assured Tenancies or terminated after 12 months, not extended for a further six.
 - ◆ Ensure all incidents of racial harassment are reported to the police as per the recommendation of the Home Office Code of Practice on Reporting Racial Incidents.
 - ◆ Ensure that the revised Tenant Participation strategy includes an action plan with clear targets/timescales and responsibilities.
 - ◆ Ensure that Tenant Participation activity is reported to the Board.
- 9 We have asked FHA to produce an action plan within three months to show how it intends to respond to these recommendations. The Housing Corporation keeps in regular contact with all the housing associations that it regulates and will monitor and keep us informed of the association's progress in working to deal with these issues.

FHA response

The Association welcomes the findings of its Inspection and will respond positively to the report's recommendations.

We will publish both this report and our own action plan to implement its recommendations on our company website: www.FHManchester.co.uk

Overall assessment of service

The inspection: terms of reference and coverage

- 10 We would like to thank the tenants, staff and board members of FHA, particularly the staff who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

A profile of FHA

Role and history

- 11 In August 2002, the Association formed the Adactus Housing Group in partnership with another housing association, County Palatine Ltd. The parent company in this group structure, the Adactus Housing Group Ltd, does not own any property but provides central services such as, for example, personnel and marketing to the rest of the group members. Beech, FHA's Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) subsidiary, and County Palatine's LCHO subsidiary, Palatine Home Ownership merged in April 2003.
- 12 The association has a mission statement:
- 13 'Our mission is to work in successful partnerships with others to provide and maintain affordable housing for rent and sale. We operate in ways that help produce sustainable balanced communities. We are committed to being an organisation that people want to work for and to work with.'

Context and performance

Key statistics Family HA Manchester

General Needs Performance Indicators for the year to 31 March 2003

Performance Indicator		2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2002/3 National Mean Average	2002/3 Quartile Position	2002/3 Comparison Group Mean
Average weekly gross rent	£	51.74	53.57	55.20	59.90	2	52.76
Weekly cost of management	£	9.68	12.90	14.05	11.97		11.78
Weekly cost of repairs	£	17.69	13.09	12.68	16.01		13.72
Rent collection	%	94.75	94.77	93.73	94.28	4	94.27
Rent arrears	%	6.42	5.63	5.47	5.32	3	5.39
Rent written off	%	0.51	0.93	2.26	1.17	4	1.77
Rent lost due to vacant dwellings	%	3.61	2.96	2.60	2.10	4	3.01
Dwellings vacant and available to let	%	2.6	1.6	2.3	1.3	4	2.2
Dwellings vacant and not available to let	%	3.9	3.5	3.0	1.5	4	2.1
Re-let time	Weeks	5.5	5.5	4.1	5.4	2	6.8
Tenancy turnover	%	12.5	-	7.8	6.0		9.2
Lettings to BME households (Old)	%	29.1	-	38.0	14.0		11.2
Lettings to BME	%	-	-	39.1	14.2		11.4

households (New)							
Average SAP rating		-	68.0	68.5	61.1	2	61.0
Failing decent homes standard	%	-	-	6.1	23.0	2	21.4
Emergency repairs completed in target	%	97.0	96.0	97.0	95.2	2	96.8
Urgent repairs completed in target	%	95.0	96.0	93.0	91.9	4	94.5
Routine repairs completed in target	%	97.0	97.0	96.0	92.9	2	95.0
Appointments made and kept	%	100.0	-	-	94.0		93.1
Tenant satisfaction overall	%	87.0	88.0	88.0	78.7	1	84.7
Tenant satisfaction with participation	%	87.0	48.0	48.0*	60.0	4	64.0

Collection error led to artificially low satisfaction rating. During the inspection the team found high levels of tenant satisfaction with the opportunities made available to them to become involved with the management of the association.

Location and areas of operation

- 14 FHA operates mainly in Manchester but has around 600 units in Trafford and a few properties in neighbouring boroughs. Its supported housing caters for a wide range of client groups but mainly people with learning difficulties and women at risk of domestic violence. It employs 167 full time equivalent staff.
- 15 It has three area offices in the Lightbown, Moss Side and Openshaw areas of Manchester. Its head office in Old Trafford is also open to the public. The majority of its stock is in areas suffering considerable socio economic stress and low demand. This is reflected by the number of initiatives taking place in these areas, most of which come under the banner of New Deal for Communities banner. A proportion of its stock lies in clearance areas and is due to be demolished. Some of these units will be replaced by new build designed to meet the changing needs of these areas. The photograph below illustrates the extent of low demand in these areas.
- 16 The Chief Executive has overall control of the group and is assisted by three directors of Housing Management and Maintenance, Development and Finance.



Audit commission 250603

Area suffering from low demand and abandonment

- 17 The association has a fairly extensive development programme, mainly working in the Manchester and Trafford areas, but also occasionally in Vale Royal. FHA has been selected as a joint commissioning partner in Cheetham SRB and East Manchester areas. It is lead developer for the Toxteth Street area of Openshaw. FHA is one of the associations that will be most affected by Housing Market renewal in Manchester as it has stock in North, East and South Manchester. FHA was also selected as a preferred partner for B & ME developments in Trafford.
- 18 The association has a Direct Labour Organisation which completes the majority of its day to day repairs.

Profile of tenants

- 19 Core reports for the financial year 2002/03 reveal that FHA let 443 properties, 84 per cent of which were in Manchester and 11.5 per cent in Trafford. Over 65 per cent of the head of households were under 45 and only 28.6 per cent of all households were in full time work. Nearly 57 per cent of all lettings were let as starter tenancies and nearly 60 per cent were from applications made directly to the association. When compared with the financial year 2001/02 the only figures showing a significant change are the number of properties let which show a fall from 581 in 2001/02.
- 20 The association continues to let a significant proportion of its stock to members of the Black and Minority Ethnic Community. This rose from 29.1 per cent in 2001 to 33.2 per cent in 2002. Recently released census figures show the B & ME population of Manchester to be 19.52 per cent of the total population and CORE figures 2001/02 show total lettings to the B & ME community to be 29.6 per cent of total lettings.

Strategy and priorities

The association has seven key objectives

Objective 1

- ◆ To promote interest in rented social housing.

Objective 2

- ◆ To explore and extend the range of services we provide.

Objective 3

- ◆ To work in partnership with County Palatine Ltd as part of the Adactus Housing Group Ltd.

Objective 4

- ◆ To improve the collection of rent and reduce the amount of rental loss.

Objective 5

- ◆ To work in partnership with other organisations.

Objective 6

- ◆ To improve services to our tenants by use of Best Value initiatives.

Objective 7

- ◆ To provide training and employment for tenants and residents in the communities we work.

How good is the service?

- 21 Throughout the inspection we encountered high levels of satisfaction from tenants. Tenant's spoke of the association's desire to do a good job and its commitment to areas showing signs of stress. Other stakeholders, and in particular a local authority who regularly deal with the association, praised their partnership working and eagerness to use innovative techniques in, for example, controlling neighbour nuisance.
- 22 Several concerns were expressed by tenants which mainly centred on the day to day repairs service and the way in which the association deals with tenants seeking transfers. Further concerns were expressed about the way the association deals with requests for major adaptations and the speed with which some complaints about neighbour nuisance are dealt with.
- 23 It is easy to make contact with the association by telephone. A mystery shopping exercise found that the phone was answered quickly and politely, however, at least half of the staff did not give their name when answering. It is not, however, stated company policy that staff should give their name. Requests for information were dealt with efficiently and good advice was given.
- 24 The association has four area offices, three in Manchester, near to stock concentrations and one at their head office in Trafford. All the offices have level entry and are well equipped with leaflets and other information. The three Manchester offices are in converted terraced houses. The association has taken steps to ensure they can be accessed by people with disabilities even though the buildings design and structure does not lend itself to this. As illustrated in the photograph below. The office in Old Trafford is situated in a large office block and not easy to find. The association is aware of the shortcomings of its accommodation and has a programmed review of. It is considering options for a possible relocation of its head office in Old Trafford and is building a new office in

Openshaw to house the North and East area teams, which it will share with the City Council. The Moss Side office will also be refurbished.



Audit Commission 130603

FHA's North Manchester area office.

- 25 Considerable steps have been taken to ensure the association is inclusive and none discriminatory. It subscribes to Languageline and all its publications carry language flags and are available in Braille, large text and on tape. It holds a weekly 'surgery' for tenants in the Cheetham area with a Housing Officer and translator. It has a disabled adaptations budget; but at least two tenants complained about requests for downstairs W.C.'s being refused. They were refused because of cost and technical difficulties.
- 26 The association provides an effective emergency repairs service and staff are aware of the importance of security to its tenants. Properties in areas of high crime are fitted with alarms and area offices supply property marking kits. The association has developed close links with the police and other agencies dealing with anti social behaviour.
- 27 Staff are aware of the importance of the Data Protection Act and the association has a policy for access to confidential information.

Does the service provide quality homes that meet people's needs?

- 28 The estates and properties visited were found to be in good condition and well suited to their occupants needs.
- 29 The association works in partnership with other social housing providers and organisations concerned with social housing tenants. It is involved with numerous bodies working to improve the areas where it already has and wants to develop property.
- 30 It is presently seeking out its tenants from a B & ME background so it can direct and tailor its services to meet their needs.

- 31 The association recently conducted a survey into satisfaction levels of B & ME tenants with the repairs service and found them to be lower than that found with non B & ME tenants. It is currently researching the reasons for this.
- 32 This work had resulted from a recent Best Value review and the inspection team could not find any other examples of where the needs of customers had been so carefully researched, either from a B & ME or none B & ME background. There are currently some gaps in the assessment of customer satisfaction. A STATUS compliant resident satisfaction survey was underway at the time of Inspection and this will help to address some of the gaps but there is a need for more assessment with regard to the satisfaction levels of tenants recently let homes.

Does the service make best use of resources?

- 33 The association's DLO has recently undergone an external testing of their management and staffing arrangements. The association also provide a responsive maintenance service for three other Housing Associations.
- 34 The association has a partnering arrangement with its paint supplier. The supplier provides a specification of works, monitors the materials quality used by contractors and the standard of their workmanship.
- 35 The association is working with Manchester City Council and Northern Counties HA to employ a 'super' void service incorporating regular patrols of void properties. Such has been the success of the scheme that most voids which would have previously been boarded up are now left without visible means of security.
- 36 The association appears to provide an efficient service. Most functions have been computerised and one of its Housing Officers works remotely from home.
- 37 A comprehensive review of its office accommodation has recently been undertaken. The outcome of the review is currently uncertain but it is likely that its offices will become more accessible to the public.

Overall assessment

- 38 FHA delivers its services mainly in areas of considerable socio – economic stress. Its commitment to these areas and its tenants is commendable. It works closely with all other stakeholders in these areas and was particularly praised by the one local authority with whom we had contact. It seeks innovative means of delivering services and is keen to involve tenants and residents. Its works in preventing and dealing with anti social behaviour is particularly noteworthy and tenants were generally praiseworthy of their attempts to deal with it. The majority of tenants encountered during the inspection expressed generally high levels of satisfaction with the service, although there were some complaints about the repairs service and the manner in which transfer applications were dealt with. All tenants were particularly impressed with the manner in which the association catered for the needs of B & ME tenants.
- 39 The association has acknowledged that its offices are not particularly accessible and has a programme of office re development. Its Asset Management strategy is still in its formative stages and needs to include more tenants than it has to date. A stock condition survey is underway. Once received it needs to take measures to ensure it meets the Decent Homes Standard, although committee reports indicate that this is likely to be a relatively small number of properties. The association has received the Investors in People award.
- 40 Overall we consider that the association's services are satisfactory.

Is FHA working for continuous improvement?

Are there formal and widely used internal processes for driving continuous improvements?

- 41 The association has used a variety of business improvement techniques for some time. Initially it started with a Quality improvement programme. A quality council oversaw the work of quality improvement teams which covered most service areas. Approximately three years ago the association changed to a Best Value methodology. The association made the change as they consider that BV has more of a focus on including tenants; and in that respect considered it an improvement.
- 42 A three year programme of reviews was drawn up. Twelve service areas were selected for review and, due to the length of the programme, all had performance plans drawn up at the beginning. Best Value reviews were started on 6 areas chosen by management as areas of underperformance or those where they may secure quick and easy wins. The reviews led to a number of changes. A review of rent payment methods led to the introduction of ALLPAY and credit and debit card payments. A review of housing management arrangements resulted in one Housing Officer, who served remote properties, to work from home thereby allowing them to make more visits to tenants in their homes.
- 43 The reviews were generally of a reasonable quality. The out of hours emergency repairs service looked at all aspects of the service and made cost comparisons with other Housing Associations. The review made a number of changes to the service which included a clarification of what constitutes an emergency to tenants and contractors. As with other reviews tenants were not directly involved in either the review or in any assessments of the efficacy of the changes.
- 44 FHA adopted a group approach to Best Value as outlined in its report to their Board in November last year. The report proposed 10 broad service areas to be reviewed over a five year period; these ranged from repairs to income management. Within each service area equality issues will be considered.
- 45 Comprehensive service reviews will be headed by the Group Communications Manager, doing much of the early research and undertaking the writing of final reports. Staff meet to discuss each area only when necessary. Project teams contain staff from a variety of levels in the organisation and include a senior manager with delegated authority to make decisions.
- 46 Existing Tenant Participation structures will be used to consult tenants and residents. Officers hope to use Tenant Inspectors from the other associations within the group to cross inspect each association.
- 47 Staff and other stakeholders considered that BV reviews were driven by management and that their role was peripheral. The association may also benefit from including people not directly involved in the association.

Is it using feedback from residents and other stakeholders to critically examine and improve services?

- 48 FHA has completed some pioneering work in this area. From tenant satisfaction surveys it was identified that B & ME tenants satisfaction levels with the repairs service was lower than none B & ME tenants. The association is currently researching the reasons for this.
- 49 The association invites complaints and conducts satisfaction surveys after repair works. It uses the information from them to consider the continued inclusion of contractors on the select list.

- 50 Nevertheless staff felt that tenants' views were not used as a means of reviewing the way services are provided, for example there is no satisfaction monitoring with the lettings service.

Does it have a track record of setting ambitious targets and achieving them?

- 51 The Board is supplied with quarterly monitoring reports. The reports cover: rents, voids, maintenance and management costs per unit, gas servicing and repairs. The reports are in an easily digestible format stating performance in each area in comparison to targets. The reports clearly state where the association is not meeting its targets.
- 52 Some targets are particularly ambitious, in particular those relating to repairs performance. For example the association completed 90% of its routine repairs within target time in 2001/02; but for 2002/03 set a target of 98% completion. By quarter three it had achieved a completion rate of 95%. Its less ambitious target of 2% of vacant properties available for letting as a percentage of all stock is easily met with a performance of 1.1%. Given the areas the association works in this is a commendable performance, however statistics around available to let voids should be accompanied by statistics on voids which are not available to let.
- 53 The association is setting targets and working to achieve them. There was a problem with the high cost of repairs at year end 2001-02 and this was addressed over 2002-03 to reduce the cost to lower than the national average. The Best Value Performance Plans for responsive, planned and void repairs have targets within them and these have generally been achieved.

Overall assessment

- 54 For some time FHA has sought to improve its services through formal review. They have had some success in this and a number of changes to their services have come from it. Despite these successes the work done to date has had a 'top down' feel to it. Areas selected for review, the structure of the review and the selection of the review team have all been considered management tasks. Tenants have only been involved to review the work of the teams, rather than integral parts of them.
- 55 The association has now moved to a group approach to BV. Whilst we are confident that FHA's good work in this area will be continued concerns about the involvement of front line staff and service users persist.
- 56 We presently consider the association's approach to continuous improvement is raising standards in service delivery.

Review of service areas

Maintaining homes in good condition

Key features of the service

Description:

- 57 The association has its own direct labour force called the 'Direct Labour Squad' (DLS) based in Hulme, Manchester. In September 2003 the section of the DLS completing day to day repairs will be managed from the area offices. A central maintenance team will remain in Hulme to manage the responsive repairs service to supported housing, planned and cyclical maintenance and voids over £5000. The association also provide a responsive maintenance service for three other Housing Associations. The aim of the proposed changes is to have staff take ownership of their budgets and the repairs ordered across the repairs and

maintenance teams. In 2002/03 the association completed around 11,500 responsive repairs.

Key findings

Planning:

Responsive Repairs

- 58 Although the responsive repairs will be managed from the area offices the budgets will remain flexible across the areas.
- 59 The association has a rechargeable repair policy and procedure (undated) and staff are given discretion when dealing with elderly or vulnerable tenants.
- 60 An independent review of the maintenance service has been carried out and reported to Board 17th March 2003 – the Watts report. The report involved an overall review of existing maintenance systems and management arrangements.
- 61 There is a procedural guide for responsive repairs (undated).

Planned and Cyclical

- 62 There is a planned maintenance procedure dated 2001 version no. 1.
- 63 There is a procedure guide for commissioning contractors, suppliers and consultants 2002 / 2003.
- 64 The current stock condition data is out of date.
- 65 Plans to initiate a 10 year programme of cyclical electrical safety checks is currently on hold.

Gas Servicing

- 66 The gas safety check procedure provided is dated 8.10.02 and is an updated part of the planned maintenance procedure.

Void works

- 67 There is a relet works procedure guide dated May 1998.
- 68 There is an undated minimum relet standard for void repairs.
- 69 The reletting of properties has undergone a service review in 2002-03.

Aids and adaptations

- 70 The procedure for aids and adaptations is version no. 1 dated 2001.

Delivery:

Responsive Repairs

- 71 Repair requests are taken at the area offices and when allocating work, priority is given to the DLS.
- 72 The DLS work on a day work rate basis plus materials when charging works to the association.
- 73 The association maintains a select list of contractors. Contractors sign up to the associations service standards when entering the select list of contractors.
- 74 All supported housing stock is maintained through the central maintenance team with the DLS. It is considered by the association that supported housing tenants prefer the 'familiar face' of the DLS.
- 75 Area offices have a Customer Services Officer dedicated to taking repair calls and a Maintenance Supervisor to provide support and carry out technical inspections and supervision.

- 76 All repairs are entered onto the 'QL' property data base and its parameters restrict the authorisation of works orders and invoices above officer's individual authorisation levels.
- 77 Repair requests are identified using "Jobfax" that also attributes the repair priority.
- 78 Target times on repairs are calculated from the time the tenant reports them.
- 79 Costs for repairs are estimated using guide costs and support from technical staff.
- 80 The percentage of responsive repairs that are attributed as emergencies is 14.5% (4.5% DLS, 10% external contractors).
- 81 Nearly one third of responsive repairs requests are pre-inspected including those on schemes with a manager on site.
- 82 Details of repair recharges sit alongside the rent account on the QL system.
- 83 Tenants are sent an acknowledgement of the repair requested together with satisfaction questionnaire and pre paid envelope.
- 84 Failed access properties are 'carded' and a duplicate sent to the relevant Customer Service Officer.
- 85 Thirty per cent of repairs are post inspected with 10% by phone and 20% by a technical officer.

Planned and cyclical

- 86 Planned repairs and maintenance is carried out alongside the cyclical five year painting programme.
- 87 The association has a partnering arrangement with its paint supplier. The supplier provides a specification of works, monitors the materials quality used by contractors and tests samples.
- 88 In 2000 the association began to develop area investment plans for schemes in low demand areas, led by areas managers in consultation with other internal departments and revised every two years
- 89 The investment plans use the knowledge of local staff and the old stock condition data to prioritise the needs of properties that require replacement of components with less than five years life or 'appropriate and justified enhancements/re-improvements'

Gas servicing

- 90 All gas servicing is carried out by DLS operatives who are CORGI and ACOPS registered.
- 91 Operatives are managed from the central repairs team location.
- 92 Access to properties in Cheshire are arranged by letter providing the date of the visit while access to all other properties are gained by the operative visiting the property leaving a card to inform them they will visit the following day.
- 93 In both access arrangements contact phone numbers are provided and a pre paid envelope for tenants to return with alternative access arrangements.
- 94 The association has been very successful in gaining access to the Cheshire properties. There is a procedure in place for gaining access to properties for gas servicing.

- 95 Properties that are known not to have a gas supply are sent a letter annually asking the tenant to confirm that there has been no change. If there is no response it goes through the normal access procedures.
- 96 Gas service engineers audit the work of colleagues which is overseen by the team leader.
- 97 Additional works identified by the DLS on the service visit are ordered through an external contractor.
- 98 The association failed to gain access for servicing to 121 properties in 2002-03. This was reported to the Board. Follow up action is to take place.
- 99 The DLS manager meets with assistant area managers bi-monthly to discuss gas servicing access problems.

Voids

- 100 Void repair works are carried out by three contractors who have submitted tenders on a Schedule of Rates.
- 101 The SOR has composite rates within it for standard repairs that involve more than one individual rate.
- 102 Voids costing less than £500 are managed by staff in the area offices and paid out of the responsive budget under the relevant cost centre.
- 103 Voids costing over £500 are delivered from the central maintenance team.
- 104 All void repairs are post inspected.
- 105 Inspection of void properties showed that homes are prepared to a high standard.
- 106 Void properties are not signed over to the tenant until the gas and electrical certificates can be provided.

Aids and adaptations

- 107 Small adaptations costing less than £1000 are delivered by the area office through the responsive repairs budget.
- 108 For larger aids and adaptations the association requests the Local Authority and their Occupational Therapist to priorities the needs of the applicant, the association will support with funding.
- 109 The budget set aside for aids and adaptations has been sufficient to cover the needs identified by the association for a number of years. It should be noted however that at a Tenant Focus Group two tenants complained that their requests for downstairs W.C. had been refused on the grounds of cost.

Direct Labour Services

- 110 The DLS meet with other direct labour organisations at the Direct Works Forum but do not benchmark with any similar groups.
- 111 The DLS currently has 20 maintenance operatives, 2 apprentices and 17 neighbourhood wardens. They also employ ten New Deal operatives and a trainer and assessor who are employed directly by the association.
- 112 Joiners have had electrical training up the 16th edition for multi skilled needs on small electrical works.
- 113 The internal Health and Safety (H&S) officer provides DLS staff with relevant H&S training.
- 114 Operatives have monthly trade meetings to discuss issues relevant to their trade, training and health and safety.

- 115 The DLS has an annual meeting of all staff when the broader views of the organisation are presented.

Consultation and involvement

- 116 All tenants who have had repairs completed in their home are asked if they are happy with the work. The current response rate is 19%.
- 117 Tenants are consulted on the style of replacement kitchen units and colour schemes to communal areas. Tenants were content with the choices given to them. A representative of the kitchen installers visits the tenant with details of the type and colour of kitchen available to them.

Monitoring and review

- 118 The out of hour's repairs service underwent a Best Value Review in 2000.
- 119 Reviews have also been carried out in 2002/03 on the responsive and void repairs service.
- 120 The service is not currently benchmarked with a peer group, however performance data provided by the Housing Corporation is used as a comparator.
- 121 Expenditure is monitored monthly in reports showing spend against budgets with forecast outturns.
- 122 The association are aware of the properties that have not been accessed for gas servicing.
- 123 Tenant's comments are considered during the annual review of the select list of contractors.
- 124 The QL database is compatible with Microsoft Access and the association has a number of effective management and performance reports that can be used to monitor responsive and cyclical maintenance including gas servicing.
- 125 There is an audit trail in the authorisation of invoices for all types of repair and maintenance.
- 126 Complaints on repairs survey responses are investigated by the DLS manager or maintenance supervisor as appropriate.
- 127 Positive feedback on repairs carried out by DLS are fed back to the operative.
- 128 The weekly cost of repairs is being monitored and has seen a reduction from the 2001 year end figure and now stands below the national average.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

- 129 The results of the responsive repairs tenant satisfaction survey showed that 97% of tenants were satisfied with the service. Tenants spoken to during the inspection were generally satisfied with the service provided, however there were some complaints made by tenants about unsatisfactory kitchen units. The units were considered to be insufficiently robust for family accommodation. There were also complaints about contractors having to make multiple visits to properties to complete repairs. Completion times for repairs need to be more closely monitored, together with the number of properties accessed for gas servicing. The arrangements in place for gaining access to properties in Cheshire appear to work well and the association may wish to use the same tactics elsewhere.
- 130 DLS performance compares well with that of external contractors. The reports produced by the QL and Microsoft Access databases are useful, although some work needs to be carried out to remove old data from the QL system to make it a more effective monitoring tool.

131 The judgement of the inspection team is that the level of service provided by the association is satisfactory.

What works well?

- ◆ The use of Notice of Intention to Seek Possession (NoSP's) to gain access for gas servicing works has resulted in a 98% success rate.
- ◆ The QL database can identify recharges outstanding for repairs.
- ◆ The interface between the QL and Microsoft Access databases provides reports to monitor service delivery.
- ◆ The contract files for planned and cyclical works are well organised and there is a clear audit trail of events within the works time frames, minutes of meetings, agreeing variations and paying invoices.
- ◆ All contracts tendered have completed forms of tender together with the necessary contractual notifications.
- ◆ Tenants receive full notification for planned and cyclical programmes of repairs with timescales and contact details together with a full schedule of the works to be carried out on their property.
- ◆ Repair requests are sent to the DLS electronically providing real time response.
- ◆ Aids and adaptations are led by need and not budget availability.
- ◆ Quarterly Board reports are produced showing the progress of all planned maintenance schemes and gas servicing.
- ◆ The association is working with Manchester City Council and Northern Counties HA to employ a 'super' void service incorporating regular patrols. Such has been the success of the scheme that most voids do not need boarding up.
- ◆ The number of out of hour's emergency repairs has been reduced through a Best Value Review. Tenants and the out of hours contractor were provided with reminders of what sort of repair constitutes an emergency leading to a reduction in emergency call outs.

Positive practice

The arrangements in place for gaining access to service the gas equipment in Cheshire has been very successful. A letter is sent to giving the tenant notice of the visit. The letters have contact numbers or postal addresses to arrange alternative dates. The letter also informs the tenant that not having the system checked may be dangerous.

Key findings and recommendations for Maintaining Homes in Good Condition

Issues	Recommendations
Responsive repairs	
The association needs to test the cost effectiveness of its DLS.	Examine the cost effectiveness of the DWF using the Housing Corporations 'Good Practice Guide for RSL's assessing the performance of their Direct Labour Organisations 2003.
Committed costs are less accurate than the association would like. There is a proposal to	We recommend the introduction of the SOR is prioritised in order to more accurately attribute

introduce a Schedule of Rates (SOR) to achieve this. The association do not currently monitor repair frequencies.	estimated costs to repair orders. It is also recommended that the SOR is used to monitor repair frequencies to feed into planned and cyclical programmes.
<p>The association do not have an appointment system in place. Discussions with tenants and staff indicated that contractors generally use a cold call method for access.</p> <p>It was also identified that there is little flexibility allowed for tenants who are working and they are generally expected to leave keys with relatives or neighbours.</p>	<p>We recommend that an appointment system is introduced using two hour timescales.</p> <p>Consider making appointments for working tenants outside the normal 9am till 5pm time frame.</p>
Post inspections are carried out with a site visit by the maintenance supervisor, however very little data is returned from this visit to monitor the quality of work received from individual contractors	Collect data at the time of the post inspection to effectively monitor the service received from contractors.
Staff and tenants have not been included in the Best Value reviews of responsive, planned and void repairs and maintenance.	Review services involving staff and tenants working together on review teams and with ongoing monitoring of service provision.
An inspection of the QL property data base on which repairs are recorded and monitored revealed that there are 889 repairs currently showing as incomplete and date back to April 2001. Repairs approaching target time are monitored however some are slipping through this process and appearing incomplete.	<p>Revise the monitoring reports for outstanding repairs to identify all repairs failing to be carried out.</p> <p>It is recommended that the outstanding repairs on the database are removed, if the work is no longer outstanding.</p>
The performance monitoring of repairs achieving their target times are shown as a percentage of the "repairs completed". Therefore any repairs failing to be completed are not considered in these monitoring figures.	Ensure that the reports used to monitor contractor performance also consider repairs that are not completed within the target time, but still remain active on the data base.
A further check on the repairs database revealed that orders sent to the Direct Labour Squad (DLS) remain as outstanding jobs if the DLS do not pick up the repair request. For various reasons there are a number of orders on the database that are awaiting action that will remove them from this 'outstanding' position. The last such job was requested and showing outstanding is dated 21/08/01.	Review the contents of the database and ensure that no orders are held awaiting action between housing management and the DLS.
Orders sent out to contractors contain the estimated cost for the work attributed by the association.	It is recommended that the estimated costs on printed orders to contractors are omitted.
The QL database is not currently used to identify vulnerable tenants.	Consider using the alert flags on the database to identify vulnerable tenants.
Planned and Cyclical	
The service standard set by the association	Communicate the service standards to tenants

and signed by the contractor is not communicated to the tenants. Therefore the tenant cannot measure the standard when completing the satisfaction questionnaire	in order that the standard of their work and dealings with tenants can be properly assessed in the survey responses made by tenants.
The tenant satisfaction rating on the survey form is not equally weighted and is inclined in favour of a satisfactory outcome.	Revise the satisfaction ratings to provide a more balanced assessment by tenants.
The plan to initiate a 10 year programme of cyclical electrical checks is currently on hold.	A 10 year programme of cyclical electrical checks should be prioritised and introduced.
Gas Servicing	
The procedure provided by the association, prior to the inspection, for gas servicing is not consistent with that used by the DLS who carry out the servicing works.	Ensure the procedure for gas servicing is consistent across all users and develop a means of ensuring that staff are aware of the latest version in use.
With the exception of properties in Cheshire, advance notice is not provided to tenants that gas servicing works are due to be carried out in their area and the importance of gas servicing is not communicated to tenants.	Provide tenants with advance notice that the gas service works are being carried out in areas and highlight the importance of ensuring this work is carried out.
Arrangements for access to the properties for servicing works are not made with the tenant prior to the operative visiting the property. The result is that the operative 'cold calls' and leaves a card at the property.	Consider following the good practice used in arranging access to the Cheshire properties.
Only Notices Seeking Possession (NoSP) are used to gain entry for gas servicing.	Consider the use of injunctions to gain access to properties for gas servicing works.
The procedure for gaining access to properties for gas serving works sets out timescales however these will allow over eight months to elapse before NoSP's will be implemented. A report to the Board of Management at the end of the financial year 2002/03 shows that 121 properties had gas servicing outstanding that had not been completed within the timescales set in legislation.	Ensure all properties have their gas appliances serviced within prescribed timescales.
An inspection of the gas safety certificates (CP12) revealed that the full address of the property where the servicing was concerned is not always shown on the certificate.	Ensure the full address of the property is stated by the engineer on the gas safety certificate (CP12) in accordance with gas safety guidance.
Voids	
The current process of inspecting voids can result in two visits by a maintenance surveyor. If the first visit by the area maintenance supervisor indicates the work will be over £500 then another inspector will visit from the central maintenance team. Clearly having two visits is inefficient.	Ensure that the September review incorporates the inefficient double visits.
The turn round times for the completion of void	Consider using tighter turn round times for

works has a considerable variation from the time allowed for works below £500 of four weeks to that allowed for works over £500 up to £4999 of ten weeks.

works of lower value in the priority category £500 to £4999.

Letting homes

Key features of the service

- 132 The association works in partnership with Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council on its choice based lettings pilot. The properties offered through this scheme are in place of the Authority's usual nomination rights.
- 133 The association is in the process of joining the Manchester common housing register.
- 134 The association is undertaking a review of its undated policies and procedures relating to lettings and is in the process of combining these into a single lettings policy and procedure. A draft of this document was available at the time of the inspection. This included its approach to exclusions. The present policy is points based but lays heavy emphasis on the needs of the community as well as the applicant.
- 135 Local lettings policies were introduced in three areas in 1995.

Key findings

- 136 The central services team is responsible for the administration of the waiting list.
- 137 The Association carries out pre termination visits and in some areas monitor reasons for terminations.
- 138 All applicants are issued with a pack of information containing:
 - ◆ A copy of the Housing Corporation's applicants charter;
 - ◆ A useful property advice leaflet providing photographs and details of properties available (currently under review);
 - ◆ An application form;
 - ◆ Reference forms (applicants are asked to provide two references).
- 139 All housing applicants are interviewed, usually at area offices. Housing officers have a standard interview checklist.
- 140 Housing officers are responsible for void properties and work to target dates of:
 - ◆ Repairs less than £500- 4 weeks;
 - ◆ Repairs >£500-9 weeks;
 - ◆ Repairs >£5000- 12 weeks.
- 141 There is a centralised lettings section who are contacted when the housing officer receives notification of a void. They are responsible for short listing and interviewing applicants and for the marketing of difficult to let properties. Staff accompany prospective tenants on viewings.
- 142 Housing officers carry out sign ups. There is a sign up checklist and applicants are provided with a range of information, including the tenant's handbook, information on gas safety and housing benefit forms.
- 143 Specific guidance on starter tenancies and rights/responsibilities of short hold tenants is given at offer stage and sign up for new tenants.
- 144 There is a clear process for monitoring starter tenancies.

- 145 At the end of the fixed term period, starter tenants are issued with conversion notices, information about their new rights and a copy of the Housing Corporation's assured tenants charter. There is an appeals process for those tenants whose tenancies are not converted and against whom possession is sought.
- 146 The Association is developing new lettings leaflets in close consultation with tenants. There is innovative use of questionnaire style surveys to measure clarity of information provided.
- 147 The local lettings policies are reviewed every three years.
- 148 A number of transfer applicants complained that they were not given priority over general applicants.
- 149 Lettings performance information is reported quarterly.
- 150 There is a reletting of property performance plan; although a best value review of lettings has not taken place. A review is planned for next year.
- 151 The best value performance plan, which precedes the BV review, for lettings has been discussed with the tenants forum. There has been close consultation with tenants over the production of new information about lettings, and there is clear evidence that the Association has responded to the issues raised by customers.
- 152 The Association completed an audit of the allocations process in February 2003 and a clear action plan was produced.
- 153 The application form is not language flagged or available in large print

Summary of overall performance in this service area

- 154 The Association has demonstrated a commitment to working with other partners on strategic lettings initiatives such as the Manchester City Council common housing register and the Trafford MBC choice based lettings pilot. Lettings are dealt with by specialist officers who work closely with housing management teams to ensure that allocations are both timely and sensitive.
- 155 The Association needs to strengthen its approach to exclusions and local lettings. The quality of information available to applicants needs to be reviewed and service standards should be developed. The overall judgement is that the lettings service is satisfactory.

What works well?

- ◆ Good links between housing officers and relet officers to ensure allocations are sensitive and appropriate.
- ◆ System to audit allocations.
- ◆ Work with Manchester City Council on the common housing register.
- ◆ Work with Trafford MBC on a pilot choice based lettings scheme.
- ◆ There is a system to ensure relet officers can identify previous tenants who may have been evicted.
- ◆ The Association asks applicants to provide proof of identification.
- ◆ Recent training has been provided for the relets team by the Immigration Service on immigration status issues.
- ◆ Pre termination and new tenancy visits.
- ◆ Links to floating support service for new tenants under 25.

Key findings and recommendations for Letting Homes

Issues	Recommendations
<p>There is no reporting of exclusions to Board by type or ethnicity.</p> <p>Exclusions should be signed off by the officer's line manager.</p>	<p>Introduce effective reporting arrangements and review how exclusions are authorised/time limits can be set.</p>
<p>Applicants are not provided with information about the way in which their points have been awarded.</p> <p>The application form is not language flagged and not available in large print. Applications can only be made in writing.</p>	<p>Review the information awarded to applicants to ensure that they understand how priority has been awarded and how they can appeal about the number of points allocated.</p> <p>Amend application form to include language flags and highlight availability of large print version.</p>
<p>There are no lettings service standards and no targets for relet officers</p>	<p>Introduce lettings service standards</p>
<p>Although the association is working closely with local authority partners, the remainder of the housing is allocated through its own system. There is no reference to sustainability within this system</p>	<p>As part of the planned best value review, consider how sustainability can be addressed within the allocation system.</p>
<p>There are local lettings policies in three areas. They were developed several years ago and contain no clear targets.</p> <p>The starter tenant's procedure states that new starter tenants cannot decorate their properties during the first year. In addition, the definitions of who can and cannot be allocated a tenancy are not clear (does not include tenants of other social landlords) and allows extension of starter tenancies beyond twelve months.</p>	<p>Review the local lettings policies and develop clear targets, in partnership with customers and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Association should fully review the starter tenancy procedure.</p>
<p>The void target for properties requiring repairs costing >£500 is nine weeks. This appears to be generous, given that a single repair could reach this level.</p> <p>Currently two technical inspections are undertaken to properties requiring over £500 of repair. It is understood however that this will no longer occur following a restructuring of the maintenance section in Summer 2003.</p>	<p>Review the void targets. Consider whether other criteria could also be used to set targets.</p>
<p>There is no analysis of reasons for refusal or termination of properties.</p>	<p>Introduce a system to monitor reasons for refusal and termination.</p>
<p>Applicants are only given three days to arrange a property viewing and to accept a property.</p>	<p>Consider if three days is a reasonable period to allow applicants to view a property and make an acceptance decision.</p>
<p>Although there is lots of individual work</p>	<p>Consider developing a marketing toolkit to</p>

undertaken to market properties staff may benefit from the Association drawing together best practice into a marketing toolkit.	assist staff to market properties.
The current target for lettings to B & ME households is across the stock. It would be preferable to break this down to areas.	Develop area based targets for B & ME lettings to ensure that lettings accurately reflect the areas in which they are working.
Currently each housing officer manages their own void spreadsheet. In addition, the relets section and maintenance sections have separate spreadsheets. Staff suggested it would be useful to have one spreadsheet that all staff could access. This would potentially aid marketing of properties across the stock and allow more strategic analysis of total voids.	The QL It system may potentially provide this facility. Consider the benefits of developing a central void database.
There are no measures of customer satisfaction with lettings service. Several tenants expressed dissatisfaction with the way applications for transfers are assessed.	Introduce a system of measuring customer satisfaction with the service.
Staff suggested that a more organised approach to dealing with mutual exchanges, perhaps by using QL and offering a mutual exchange matching service, might provide an enhanced service for tenants.	Consider how the mutual exchange service could be improved.

Dealing with nuisance and anti social behaviour

Key features of the service

- 156 The association has a Neighbour Nuisance procedure. The procedure adopts a 'common sense approach' incorporating the latest thinking on how to combat the problem. The procedure is comprehensive covering all eventualities and giving clear directions and instructions to staff. Tenant representatives have also received training in the procedure with particular emphasis on collecting evidence and some of the difficulties and delays in taking effective action.
- 157 The procedure incorporates services standards which include seeing emergency cases within 24 hours. The standards are informally monitored at individual case reviews. Staff claim they meet the standards.
- 158 The association has an undated Neighbour Nuisance and Racial Harassment Performance Plan. The plan talks in general terms about implementing policies and procedures and helping to deliver the Local Authorities strategy to reduce crime and disorder. It also mentions monitoring performance on a case by case basis.
- 159 Forms or documents for staff and tenants to complete when dealing with cases are straightforward and easy to use. The Neighbour Nuisance case report, whilst very comprehensive, is long and staff report being reluctant to use it for minor nuisance cases. It may be worthwhile drawing up a shorter nuisance form. Separate case files are kept for more serious cases.
- 160 Other procedures and policies are complimentary to the Neighbour Nuisance procedure. The lettings procedure, for example, asks applicants for two validated references and where appropriate, police checks. The association is part of the

Manchester Common Waiting list and accesses Manchester Housing's list of applicants temporarily excluded from rehousing.

- 161 The majority of new tenancies are Assured Shorthold or 'starter tenancies'. The tenancies expire after 12 months and are used in specific areas to promote sustainable communities. Post letting visits are carried out between one week and one month after the letting. A second visit is carried out 6 months later. A decision about continuing with the tenancy is made at 9 months. Conversions to Assured Tenancies are made using the correct legal notices
- 162 The associations procedure allow for the extension of a starter tenancy for a further six months from the original 12 months. This is contrary to the Housing Corporations guidance in 'good practice guide: a guide to starter tenancies for RSL's, which recommends that starter tenancies should either be converted to Assured Tenancies or terminated after 12 months.
- 163 The Moss Side social landlords group, which includes Manchester Housing, Aarawak Walton, Mosscafe and Space produce a Starter tenancy information leaflet. The leaflet explains Starter Tenancies, how they are ended and the appeals processes. It also states that the Moss Side social landlords group shares information about troublemakers.
- 164 Details of terminated Starter Tenancies are reported to the Committee of Management which includes details of any appeal made by the tenant. Possession orders are also reported to the Board.
- 165 Whenever appropriate the association states its opposition to ASB and resolve to deal with it. For example, the Assured and Assured Short hold Tenancy Agreement has a section on Community Responsibilities and the Tenants Handbook makes it clear that neighbour nuisance will not be tolerated.
- 166 FHA area offices are interim reporting centres for hate crime. The association is part of the Greater Manchester Probation service information sharing protocol, and several other partnerships that deal with neighbour nuisance such as the Local Area Partnership and Sub Divisional Partnership. It also financially contributes to, and sits on the East and North Manchester Neighbour Nuisance Teams. The teams are managed by Manchester Housing's Neighbour Nuisance Unit and provide advice and support in dealing with neighbour nuisance.
- 167 The association has a Young Tenant Support Scheme funded through the Community Fund. The scheme provides support for 16 – 25 year olds, regardless of their landlord, on basic living skills and advice about other issues concerning young people. The association is involved in various other pro active initiatives such as young people's painting projects and the donation of prize money to schools for environmental projects.
- 168 The association acts as the employer for Neighbourhood Wardens operating in the East Manchester area. The Warden's manager is working on secondment from FHA. The Wardens offer basic advice on crime prevention and other anti crime measures such as property marking.
- 169 Front line staff are closely involved in dealing with neighbour nuisance on a case by case basis but also as part of a multi agency approach. They have regular meetings with the police liaison officer and often conduct nuisance interviews with police officers. In at least one area the Area Manager has a monthly 'walkabout' with council officers and local 'beat' officer.
- 170 Front line staff feel supported and safe when dealing with neighbour nuisance. All staff report that if they are entering a potentially difficult situation steps are taken to guard their safety, such as being accompanied and informing other staff of their whereabouts and expected return time. Staff were consulted on the

procedure before its introduction. The association has a lone workers policy and the Neighbour Nuisance complaints form has a section on staff health and safety.

- 171 Training for staff dealing with neighbour nuisance appears to be patchy. One member of staff has had no training, despite asking for it and another's last training was nearly three years ago.
- 172 Different strategies and tactics are used to deal with nuisance. This ranges from using CCTV and professional witnesses to using injunctions and ASBO's. In recent months the association has preferred to use injunctions rather than possession proceedings. In an attempt to stop anti social tenants surreptitiously moving from one landlord to another, the association plan to subscribe to a web site which will carry details of all tenants evicted for a breach of tenancy conditions in the East Manchester area. The site is still at a formative stage.
- 173 Staff and tenants have access to funds to carry out minor environmental works to either improve security or remove items which are causing a nuisance.
- 174 The association subscribes to a mediation service. One tenant however complained that mediation was used by the association to avoid dealing with a long standing elderly tenant who was clearly breaching their tenancy conditions. The complainant considered that under the guise of mediation, they had been compromised into accepting the nuisance as part of their daily life and the association had avoided dealing with a potentially difficult situation.
- 175 Two nuisance cases involved an element of racial abuse. Neither case however was reported to the police as per the recommendation of the Home Office Code of Practice on Reporting Racial Incidents.
- 176 It is part of the HA's policies and procedures to create "action plans" with victims of nuisance and to send "closing letters" when the housing officer considers the nuisance to have ceased; the inspection found no evidence of either policy in action.
- 177 The association does not monitor the overall cost of nuisance. Service standards are monitored on an informal basis during supervision sessions with Housing Officers. Letters to tenants when closing nuisance cases should incorporate some form of satisfaction survey.

Key findings

- 178 The associations resolve to deal with neighbour nuisance is palpable. It has had some success in this and it is difficult to identify any areas the association is deficient in. It takes a holistic approach and contributes to the wider debate on the problem.
- 179 Solutions to nuisance are not always seen to lie in punitive action. Other approaches are also considered which can involve support services provided directly by the association to the involvement of other agencies.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

- 180 The association has to deal with all the sort of problems one would expect in the areas where it holds significant stock holdings. Graffiti, rubbish and abandoned cars are a common sight. In conjunction with other agencies it has taken considerable steps to deal with these problems. Some of the areas it works in appear in a considerably better condition than they did only two years ago. Tenants whilst always regretting any nuisance they suffered were generally satisfied with the association's attempts to deal with the problem.
- 181 Overall we consider that the association provides a good service when dealing with neighbour nuisance.

What works well?

- ◆ The association subscribes to Manchester Neighbour Nuisance Team who provide advice and assistance in individual cases and wider issues. The association works in partnership with all organisations dealing with nuisance. This multi agency approach has not only helped to deal with individual cases but also general anti social behaviour in the areas where the association has properties.

Positive practice
FHA area offices are interim reporting centres for hate crime.

Key findings and recommendations for Dealing with nuisance and anti social behaviour

Issues	Recommendations
The association’s procedure allows for the extension of starter tenancy to 18 months.	This is contrary to the Housing Corporations guidance in ‘good practice guide: a guide to starter tenancies for RSLs’ which recommends that starter tenancies should either be converted to Assured Tenancies or terminated after 12 months.
Two nuisance cases involved an element of racial abuse. Neither case, however was reported to the police as per the recommendation of the Home Office Code of Practice on Reporting Racial Incidents.	Ensure all incidents of racial harassment are reported to the police as per the recommendation of the Home Office Code of Practice on Reporting Racial Incidents.
The leaflet explaining starter tenancies is in small dense text. It is not in translation nor carries language flags.	Produce leaflet in larger type with at least language flags.
Training for staff dealing with neighbour nuisance appears to be patchy.	Address training needs of front line staff and instigate rolling programme of courses.
Individual cases are not recorded across the association in a systematic manner.	Introduce an association wide electronic means of recording and reviewing individual cases.
Policies and procedures include the drawing up of action plans with victims of nuisance and the sending of ‘closing letters’ to them when the Housing Officer considers the nuisance to have ceased. The inspection team, however could find no evidence of this.	Ensure action plans are drawn up and ‘closing letters’ sent at the end of each case.

Ensuring that services are sensitive to the needs of communities

Key features of the service

182 The association has an Equal opportunities policy stating their desire to achieve equality of opportunity in all its housing and employment practices. It mentions their acceptance of their responsibilities under legislation up to 1983. The policy applies to all sections of its business and those it employs/contracts. Although the policy mentions targets for the employment of different groups it sets no figures

for this apart from the statutory 3% disabled employee's target. The Director of Housing is the association's equality champion.

- 183 A report to the Board in September of last year on the Race and Housing Challenge report contained an action plan which proposed 2 annual reports to the board detailing performance against ethnicity. The action plan covers all the main points of the Race and Housing enquiry and steps they have taken to achieve this. This included, amongst other things, that all Board members take part in race equality training by June 2003, though this training and other aspects of the action plan have yet to be implemented.
- 184 The associations Business Plan for the three years commencing 2003 has a section devoted to Equality and Diversity. It talks generally about what action has been taken in the area but does not set targets for applicants, lettings and recruitment – these are within the BME & Diversity Action Plan of 2002. The plan lists priorities for 2003 :
1. To review policies and procedures in light of the recommendations from the Race and Housing Enquiry Challenge report.
 2. To contribute towards the production of a group B & ME diversity plan.

FHA are looking to adopt a group approach to E & D and to share good practice. Presently the Director of Housing acts as the champion of equality and diversity issues, but this is soon to transfer to the Head of Group Communications.

- 185 In the absence of 2001 census data the association have adopted a 16% B & ME target for 'access to housing and staff employment. In the light of recent census data the target will have to be reviewed.
- 186 An internal audit report on meeting the needs of B & ME communities was approved by the Board in February of this year. The audit was to ensure that adequate and effective systems are in place to ensure the B & ME community is not disadvantaged in any of the services it receives. It included such things as adherence to the Equal Opportunities policy being part of staff terms and conditions of employment and board members are being issued with the policy.
- 187 An action plan has been produced to progress the report's recommendations to ensure the Association meets the requirements of the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Good Practice Note No4.
- 188 Job adverts, when appropriate, carry messages saying applications are particularly welcome from members of the B & ME community. A target for a member of the senior management team to be from a B & ME background has yet to be met.
- 189 The board has one member and a shadow member from a B & ME background. Advertisements for Board members have appeared in papers serving the B & ME community, on stalls at events for the B & ME community and in FBHO publications. In May of this year the Board approved targets for membership from the following groups: women, the disabled and people from a B & ME background. No training is available for new or longstanding Board members on Equality and Diversity issues. The Board have not appointed an Equality and Diversity champion.
- 190 The Adactus Board in November of last year agreed that Equality and Diversity is to be a consideration in all BV reviews.
- 191 The associations Racial Harassment policy was drawn up December 1999. The policy defines racism and racial harassment and takes a victim orientated approach. The policy would benefit from updating to reflect the findings of the McPherson report, Home office guidelines on reporting racial incidents and their

Code of Practice on tackling racial harassment, Housing Corporations Good Practice Note No4 of November 2002 and the Race and Housing Inquiry. The policy states that staff will be provided with anti racism and cultural awareness training.

- 192 The policy is advertised to tenants in a leaflet which does not carry language flags.
- 193 The association is involved in a variety of initiatives to build links with the B & ME community. The Tenant Participation officer is working on initiatives to achieve representation from B & ME tenants in the running of the association which includes a video. They contribute to employment costs of link workers. A tenant's 'surgery' is held in Cheetham Hill with a translator. A number of Asylum Seekers housed in FHA property have been trained as freelance translators, course fees came from lottery funding. FHA employs them on an intermittent basis. All the associations' offices have been designated interim hate crime reporting centres. The association are the preferred B & ME developer in Trafford and are members of FBHO and COFEM.
- 194 A B & ME support worker was funded for three years through lottery funding. The worker not only dealt with case work but also completed a project on incorporating cultural needs into the design of large houses.
- 195 The association commissioned a report from Salford University into: 'The needs, aspirations and perceptions of services of B & ME residents'. The report identified a lack of involvement from B & ME tenants and an action plan to address this has been put in place. The research also found some dissatisfaction with the repairs service. In response the Association made this area the focus of a Best Value service review and has undertaken further research work to clarify the extent of the issue.
- 196 The main finding of the report is that FHA needs to think creatively on how it will communicate with its B & ME tenants. A significant number of FHA's B & ME residents are Asian and communication is a problem, for example, only 3% of respondents to the survey were aware of the availability of translation services.
- 197 The recent customer satisfaction survey, as well as carrying translation flags, had section where tenants could indicate if they had difficulty with the written word. The survey also asks for the ethnic origin of the respondent. An analysis will be made of the differing levels of satisfaction between ethnic groups.
- 198 The association is compiling a database of B & ME, disabled and elderly tenants with their preferred language and means of communication. The data will be used to focus resources into areas where they are most needed. The data could also be used to address issues which some communities suffer from, such as mental health issues or low levels of benefit take up.
- 199 In the financial year 02/03 lettings to the B & ME community increased from 29.1% of their total lettings to 33.2%. The association considers this rise is due to the generally good relations they have established with the B & ME community. Census details for 2001 show that B & ME households make up 19.52% of Manchester's population.
- 200 The association has an interim target of 16% of all successful applicants for housing and employment to be from a B & ME background. This needs to be revised in the light of recent census information.
- 201 All staff have access to Language line. Posters are prominently displayed in area offices advertising the service.

- 202 New members of staff do not receive induction training on Equality and Diversity issues. Longer standing members of staff confirmed that they have had a variety of training, but there is not a systematic approach to it.
- 203 The association has a specific budget for disabled adaptations. Minor adaptations are completed by the association, for large adaptations they seek help from the Local Authority.
- 204 In partnership with Social Services they employ a Physical Disabilities Support Team to assist the disabled in independent living, regardless of their tenure.
- 205 The association have not had access audits of their public offices. This and a more general review of their services to the disabled need completing to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 206 A couple with learning difficulties have purchased a share of an FHA property. The lease has a variation to allow for a service charge to cover the cost of repairing the property. Additional support is provided by the Local Authority's Social Services.

Key findings

- 207 The associations Equal Opportunities and Racial harassment procedures are out of date and need updating to incorporate new legislation and guidance.
- 208 Training for staff and Board members needs to be approached in a systematic manner.
- 209 FHA are involved in a number of initiatives and projects. Their work in this area may benefit from forming a strategy with aims and outcomes.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

210 It is clear that FHA are determined that their services meet the needs of all groups within the community. Their present approach however lacks a strategy, and the move to dealing with the issue on a group basis may assist in this. Nevertheless we consider that the association's performance in this area is satisfactory.

What works well?

- ◆ The association has regular 'surgery' and translator in an area with a high B & ME population.
- ◆ The association commissioned a report from Salford University into: 'The needs, aspirations and perceptions of services of B & ME residents'.

Positive practice
 A database of tenants preferred means of communication is being compiled. This will be used to direct the right type of resources into the right areas.

Key findings and recommendations for Ensuring that services are sensitive to the needs of the community

Issues	Recommendations
<p>Their present approach lacks a strategy and the move to a group approach to the issue may assist in this.</p> <p>FHA may benefit with drawing the various strands of their equality strategy together into a single document</p>	<p>Adopt an overarching strategy drawing the various strands of the policy together.</p>

The association needs to implement the findings of the internal audit report into the needs of the B & ME community, if it is to meet the requirements of the Housing Corporations Regulatory Good Practice Note No4 of November 2002.	Implement the findings of the internal audit report into the needs of the B & ME community to meet the requirements of the Housing Corporations Regulatory Good Practice Note No4 of November 2002.
Access audits have not been carried out on their public offices.	Complete access audits of offices in preparation for the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Not all staff and Board members have received training on equality and diversity issues.	Ensure all staff and Board members have mandatory training in equality and diversity issues.
Several leaflets produced by the association do not have translation panels, are in small type and are not available on tape and in Braille.	Review leaflets to ensure all have at least translation panels and highlight the availability of larger type-faced, audio and Braille versions
Current targets for the recruitment of B & ME staff do not reflect recently released census figures.	Amend targets for the recruitment of B & ME staff to reflect recently released census figures.
Several aspects of the September 2002 action plan have yet to be implemented.	Implement all aspects of the September 2002 action plan.
There is no champion for Equality and Diversity on the Board.	Encourage the Board to appoint an Equality and Diversity champion.

Services to customers

Key features of the service

- 211 Tenants can access services from four area based offices in Old Trafford, Moss Side, Moston and Openshaw. Administration officers provide reception cover and telephone answering. Phone calls from tenants will then be forwarded to the relevant officers within the area office. Most calls are for the repairs service and will be forwarded onto the customer services officer. All complaints that progress to stage two are monitored through the personal assistant of the chief executive to the Adactus group who are based in the Leigh office. The association has its own Direct Labour Squad.
- 212 The association has a customer care policy dated December 2001 which sets out how it will deliver services to tenants.
- 213 The complaints and appeals policy and procedure is undated.
- 214 There is a communication, customer care and complaints performance plan that is also undated.
- 215 There is a statement of policy for achieving equality of opportunity in its housing and employment practices.
- 216 The association has a policy for access to confidential information (undated) . This sets out how it will ensure that personal information concerning tenants remains confidential.

- 217 Tenant satisfaction with the overall service stands at 88%, showing an increase from the 2001 figure.
- 218 All tenants who have a repair completed in their home are canvassed on how well they thought the repair was completed.
- 219 Opening times are clearly displayed in the area offices. The Maclaren House office, being part of a larger office development cannot show this at the main office block entrance.
- 220 The offices are generally accessible to tenants in wheelchairs or with prams however the Maclaren House office is not wheelchair friendly. The other offices are converted terraced properties with narrow door ways. Reception areas are generally small, the reception desk and seating areas create a tight environment. Toilets in area offices are not accessible for disabled visitors The offices are clean, tidy, well lit and well decorated.
- 221 Maclaren House is not readily accessible to tenants and the name of the office block is not easily identified. This office will also be without a lift for six to eight weeks from August due to engineering work that is out of the control of the association. The association is aware of these issues and will take them into account when considering future office needs.
- 222 Tenants who have language problems can be assisted using language line, a service that staff are familiar with.
- 223 The offices visited during the inspection had a good selection of information leaflets available for tenants.
- 224 All the offices have private interview rooms, suggestion boxes, application forms and publicity material showing available properties.
- 225 Staff will assist visitors to the area offices to complete application forms.
- 226 Complaints are to be initially made to the relevant officer with the hope that it can be resolved informally.
- 227 The target for dealing with complaints at the initial stage is 10 days and managers in the local offices monitor this target.
- 228 Complaints received at the 'informal stage' are logged in a complaints book at the area offices and monitored.
- 229 Should the tenant not be satisfied with the result of the informal process then the tenant is advised (in the complaint form advice) that the complaint can only be progressed if it is in writing. Assistance is available for tenants should they have difficulty with writing.
- 230 Complaint forms are available from each offices reception with the complaints and appeals policy and procedure.
- 231 Complaints are entered onto the database with details of the complaint issue. The target for resolving the issue at this stage is 25 days.
- 232 If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by area based staff, there is an appeals process up the management chain from the Director to the Chief Executive and finally to the association's board, with a target of 60 days to provide a written response. The 60 day target accounts for the Board's meeting cycle.
- 233 Tenants are made aware of the service standards having at the lettings interview, through the newsletter or from the leaflets available in reception areas.
- 234 The association carries out its own annual internal audit of the complaints procedure which is submitted to the audit committee.

235 A weekly surgery in the Cheetham area has an interpreter present to assist tenants from B & ME backgrounds whose first language is not English.

Key findings

Summary of overall performance in this service area

- 236 Tenants spoken to during the inspection indicated they were satisfied with the level of services provided and said that front line staff were very friendly and helpful. While the area offices were accessible and well presented the size of the terraced properties used was limiting. This creates difficulties for tenants in wheelchairs to negotiate the entrance doors, corridors and reception areas. The reception desks also were not user friendly for visitors in wheelchairs.
- 237 Family keep tenants informed through newsletters and leaflets . Tenants enjoyed having an area office. Customer service standards are known by staff and tenants. Staff locally monitor the way in which services are provided against service standards. The association has not monitored telephone calls against the service standards; this would be helpful in respect of calls lost during peak periods.
- 238 Staff are generally applying the procedures for dealing with complaints and managers are monitoring their progress. The inspection team found that complaint files did not always present the full story of the complaint and how it passed to different stages in the procedure. The association provide information for tenants to submit a formal complaint but the inspectors found little evidence that complaints resulted in changes to how services were provided. The association do however use tenants as mystery shoppers to carry out reality checks on the services provided.
- 239 Overall the inspection team found the level of service provided by the association to be satisfactory.

What works well?

- ◆ Suggestion boxes are positioned in the reception areas of each office.
- ◆ Complaint forms and advice on submitting a complaint are on display at each area office.
- ◆ The association use language line and staff have received training in its use.
- ◆ Literature is available in alternative languages at area offices.
- ◆ Tenants spoken to during the inspection said they were aware of the service standards and gave examples of some of the standards set within it.
- ◆ Front line staff show a commitment to provide a good level of service to tenants.
- ◆ Tenants spoken to said staff were very friendly and helpful.
- ◆ The newsletter is well presented and used effectively to keep tenants informed.

Positive practice

The association have recruited a team of tenants that act as mystery shoppers to carry out reality checks on the services provided.

Key findings and recommendations for Services to Customers

Issues	Recommendations
--------	-----------------

Telephone answering service standards are not monitored.	Take steps to monitor the telephone calls received and how they are dealt with. It is also important to monitor the calls that may be lost during peak periods due to high levels of repair calls, and identify how this can be addressed if necessary.
The area offices have narrow entrances, doors and internal corridors together with small reception areas making it difficult to manoeuvre with wheelchairs or prams. The Moss Side office has a particularly high reception desk with a bell press on it to gain attention that could be difficult to see and operate from a wheelchair	Take steps to make the local area offices compliant with the DDA
Reception areas do not have an audio induction loop system for visitors with hearing aids, information in Braille or large print leaflets.	Take steps to provide tenants who may have hearing or visual impairments with a service that ensures equality of access and information.
None of the offices visited have toys available to distract children while their parents are speaking to officers.	In the light of available office space, take steps to provide distractions for children while their parents or guardians are in discussions with staff.
Complaints are dealt with at various locations and it was difficult to follow the whole story of the complaint.	Ensure that the complaint file contains all details of the complaint and that all correspondence is arranged in a manner that presents the whole story of events pertaining to the complaint.
Complaints are to be acknowledged within 10 working days however in some instances this target was not achieved. In one particular case the officers involved were unaware of whether an acknowledgement had been sent.	Ensure the targets set for acknowledging and dealing with complaints are kept as appropriate.
Discussions with front line staff indicated that the complaints received and dealt with are not used to shape the services to customers. They felt that managers made decisions and did not feed back or involve staff at the front line.	Take steps to use the feedback from tenants to review the way in which services are provided to them.

Influence of tenants over service delivery

Key features of the service

- 240 Tenant participation (TP) is included in the Business plan 2003/2006 with clear objectives for 2003.
- 241 There is a TP strategy for the period 00/02. There is a TP policy dated 1996. Both are currently under review.
- 242 A tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken in 2001. The Association plans to undertake a more detailed survey in 2003.
- 243 Board membership by tenants has recently increased from one tenant member to two.

- 244 The tenant's annual report 2002 was based on tenant involvement activity. Tenants were encouraged to read the report with the inclusion of a feedback prize draw.
- 245 The Association has produced a 'menu of involvement' leaflet which describes the various ways in which customers can work with the Association. It is included in sign up packs and is available in area offices. Most tenants that we spoke to were aware of tenant membership at Board level.
- 246 There are around 12 resident's groups/associations, some of which are relatively new. Not all comprise solely of Family Manchester tenants and not all are supported by the Association.
- 247 The Association employs a dedicated TP officer, with a budget of around £18000 per year to support tenant involvement activity. The current officer has been in post for around 12 months and during this time, levels of involvement with the Association have increased.
- 248 Tenants who are able/willing to attend meetings are invited to the tenant's forum, to which any tenant can attend. There is a terms of reference for this group although this is now out of date and under review. The tenants are involved in influencing decision making at the Association, and have helped shape the way the Association deals with complaints and repairs.
- 249 The TP Officer is trying to develop a 'virtual forum' which will consist of tenants who are happier being involved through an e-mail group. Some tenants are already consulted using the e-mail service. This could then be extended through the development of an interactive website.
- 250 There is a postal consultation group. The issues that they are consulted on are linked to the work of the forum.
- 251 The TP Officer is developing an 'intelligent' database which will ensure that consultation can be directed towards those customers who have expressed a particular interest in certain areas of service delivery. At the time of the inspection, consultation was taking place over lettings information leaflets and feedback from this was being actively used to change the content of the proposed publications.
- 252 The Association undertakes a form of mystery shopping. An agreed group of tenant's complete questionnaires whenever they have contact with the Association, usually over repairs issues.
- 253 The TP Officer talks to new housing officers as part of their induction training.

Key findings

- 254 The tenant satisfaction survey 2002 identified that 48% of tenants were either fairly or very satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision making. The majority of tenants (65%) did not know how to become a Board member or a member of FHA.
- 255 An internal audit into tenant participation was carried out in November 2002 and an action plan resulting from this work was agreed
- 256 The satisfaction survey 2001 did not analyse satisfaction by ethnicity although the survey currently underway will do this.
- 257 The Association used to employ a B & ME Support Officer, which was partly funded from the lottery. Contact was then made with B & ME customers who had expressed an interest in becoming involved in the work of the Association.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

258 At a strategic level, the Association recognises that it needs to develop a more focussed and co-ordinated approach to the development of tenant participation and monitoring activity. At a practical level however, a great deal of work is underway to try and ensure that all customers can be involved at a range of levels and in a variety of ways. The overall judgement is that service delivery in this area is satisfactory.

What works well?

- ◆ Dedicated TP Officer and substantial budget for officer to support own TP activity.
- ◆ Significant effort has been made to increase involvement in the housing forum.
- ◆ A virtual consultative group has recently been created, with involvement over internet/through the post
- ◆ Information on TP is available in the tenant handbook and menu of involvement available in the sign up pack and at area offices
- ◆ Annual tenants report
- ◆ Joint work between TP officer and some housing officers to support frontline activity
- ◆ Two tenant Board members
- ◆ Increased involvement in the Housing Forum

Positive practice

The Association is in the process of producing a video for B & ME customers in order to promote involvement and encourage their participation in the work of the Association. Staff have been given specialist training in order to produce a professional product. B & ME customers are involved in shaping the production and content of the film. Their involvement at early stage has helped mould the content of the film to ensure that it is relevant to the communities at which is targeted and that it is culturally sensitive.

Key findings and recommendations for Influence of tenants over service delivery

Issues	Recommendations
<p>The TP strategy requires updating and the TP policy is out of date. At the moment there are no clear targets.</p> <p>There is no monitoring of TP activity at a Board level.</p>	<p>The Association recognises that work needs to be done in this area and the strategy and policy are currently under review. Ensure that the revised strategy includes an action plan with clear targets/timescales and responsibilities.</p> <p>Ensure that TP activity is reported to the Board.</p>
<p>Housing officers are closely involved in promoting TP to new tenants and supporting the formation of new groups along with the work of existing groups. Housing officers do offer support but there are no clear resources for this work and no guidance for customers or staff on the support available.</p>	<p>Review the support available to new and existing groups and promote this to staff and customers.</p>
<p>A number of new groups have recently</p>	<p>Consider how better use could be made of</p>

formed. At the moment, their involvement with the work of the Association appears to be limited.

As membership of the tenant's forum is not static, individuals are at different levels of knowledge about the work of the Association. The forum cannot currently be used to involve tenants in the management of services e.g. the forum does not receive or consider performance information and has no role in decision making.

these groups and include this within the TP strategy. Consider how meetings of involved tenants across these groups could help support the work of both tenants and the Association and generally how customers could be increasingly involved.

Appendices

The inspection team

Dawson Noone, Lead Inspector;
Lee Banfield, Technical Inspector;
Susan Cheini, Tenant Inspector;
Dolores Fallon, Inspection Co-ordinator;
Gill Stead, Inspector.

Number of person days on site

Twenty four

The inspection process

The inspection team carried out the following activities as part of the inspection:

- ◆ Tenant focus groups
- ◆ Meetings with tenant groups
- ◆ Stock tour
- ◆ Void inspections
- ◆ File checks
- ◆ Staff focus group
- ◆ Attending housing officers meeting
- ◆ Staff interviews
- ◆ Contractors survey
- ◆ Review of tender book
- ◆ Interviews with tenants
- ◆ Meetings were held with:
 - ◆ Local authority
 - ◆ Tenant Board Members
 - ◆ Neighbourhood Wardens
 - ◆ Tenants

Reference documents

General:

- ◆ The associations self-assessment submission prior to inspection
- ◆ Business plan
- ◆ Annual report to tenants
- ◆ Tenant satisfaction survey (where there is one within the last three years)

Service area documents:

- ◆ Maintaining homes in good condition:
 - ◆ Self assessment completed by Family HA (Manchester)
 - ◆ Stock profile
 - ◆ Stock investment plans
 - ◆ Direct labour squad structure
 - ◆ Proposed new staff structure of DLS
 - ◆ Staff structure chart May 2003
 - ◆ Direct labour squad procedures Version no. 1 2002
 - ◆ Sample tenant repair confirmation
 - ◆ FHA examples of good practice May 2003
 - ◆ Gas monitoring spread sheets
 - ◆ Contract monitoring reports
 - ◆ Telephone post inspection questionnaire
 - ◆ Aids and adaptations procedure
 - ◆ Best value performance plan -Responsive repairs
 - ◆ Best value performance plan - reletting of property
 - ◆ Best value performance plan - planned maintenance
 - ◆ Best value pilot project 'out of hours emergency repairs service' 4/12/00
 - ◆ Responsive repairs manual and procedure
 - ◆ Area maintenance reports
 - ◆ Maintenance budget meeting minutes 29th April 2003
 - ◆ Report of ICI concerning paint analysis on metal railings – Norman Grove, Longsight
 - ◆ Agreement of practices and procedures signed by contractors with code of practice Tenants' handbook
 - ◆ Procedure guide for commissioning contractors, suppliers and consultants 2002 / 03
 - ◆ Report of maintenance review to Board 17th March 2003
 - ◆ Void inspection form
 - ◆ Procedure manual for monitoring valve servicing (Legionnaires)
 - ◆ DLS employees training log sheets
 - ◆ DLS training and development review
 - ◆ DLS employees self assessment document
 - ◆ DLS employees performance review document
 - ◆ Minutes of electricians monthly meeting 6/8/02

- ◆ Relet works procedure guide May 1998
- ◆ Housing management and maintenance procedure guide for relet works
- ◆ Void property minimum relet standard
- ◆ Rechargeable repairs procedure
- ◆ Sample tender document for cyclical maintenance 2003 – 2004
- ◆ Sample cards left by operative when access is failed on gas servicing and responsive maintenance
- ◆ Letter sent to tenants in Cheshire for gas service work arrangements
- ◆ Planned maintenance procedures version no. 1 (date varies within the document 2001, 2002 & 2003 while all state version no. 1)
- ◆ Gas safety check procedure updated 8.10.02
- ◆ Results of cyclical maintenance programme 2001/02 satisfaction survey
- ◆ Schedule of rates for void property repairs with composite rates
- ◆ Analysis of repair satisfaction according to ethnic origin
- ◆ Stock investment plans
- ◆ Asset management strategy approved by Board 28th November 2002
- ◆ Decent homes standard report for Board 22nd April 2003
- ◆ Letting homes:
 - ◆ Draft allocation policy
 - ◆ Lettings performance plan
 - ◆ Internal audit report Feb 2003
 - ◆ Sign up pack
 - ◆ Applicant pack
 - ◆ Standard letters
 - ◆ Interview checklist
 - ◆ Starter tenancy procedures/information
 - ◆ AST conversion guide
 - ◆ Choice based lettings procedure guide
 - ◆ File checks
 - ◆ Draft customer leaflets/consultation on lettings leaflets.
- ◆ Dealing with nuisance and anti social behaviour:
 - ◆ Neighbour nuisance and racial harassment performance plan.
 - ◆ Neighbour nuisance procedure
 - ◆ Individual neighbour nuisance cases
 - ◆ Racial Harassment policy
 - ◆ Tenants Handbook
 - ◆ Assured and Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement
 - ◆ Procedure Guide Starter tenancies
- ◆ Involving tenants in influencing service delivery:

- ◆ TP files/consultative exercises
- ◆ Annual report/tenants
- ◆ Tenant constitution
- ◆ Housing forum terms of reference
- ◆ Example newsletters
- ◆ Tenant contact base
- ◆ Tenant handbook
- ◆ Menu of involvement
- ◆ File checks
- ◆ Services to customers:
 - ◆ Self assessment completed by Family HA (Manchester)
 - ◆ Communication, customer care and complaints performance plan
 - ◆ Internal audit report of complaints procedure 20th February 2003
 - ◆ Compensation scheme dated 19/5/03
 - ◆ Customer care standards dated December 2001
 - ◆ Various leaflets available in local area offices
 - ◆ File checks
 - ◆ Complaints log book check
- ◆ Ensuring that services are sensitive to the needs of communities:
 - ◆ FHA internal audit report – meeting the needs of B & ME communities.
 - ◆ Equal opportunities policy
 - ◆ Race and Housing Challenge report – BME equality and diversity action plan. Report to Board. September 2002
 - ◆ A study of the needs aspirations and perceptions of services of BME residents. A study completed by Salford University and commissioned by FHA.

Glossary of terms

Glossary of terms

B & ME - black and minority ethnic

HB – housing benefit

Maintenance contribution - rent

PI – performance indicators

RSL – registered social landlord

Scheme – the legal document that says who the almshouse can house

Sign up – the point where a new resident signs the licence agreement

Standards of Almshouse Management – This document has recently been updated by the Almshouse Association with direct input from the Housing Corporation. Elements of the document are accepted as compliance with the Regulatory Code for housing management issues and it is recognised as good practice for almshouses.

Void – empty property