



Railway Housing Association



School Children Open New Development

The rain failed to dampen spirits as children at a Darlington primary school helped Railway Housing Association open its newest affordable housing development in the town.

Youngsters from the reception class at Alderman Leach Primary School (aged 4-5) helped plant a tree to mark the official opening of the Association's development at West Park.

They were joined by the Association's Chief Executive Anne Rowlands, Darlington Borough Council's Director of Housing, Pauline Mitchell, and Tony Cooper, Director of Bussey & Armstrong, the company that built the homes on behalf of Railway Housing Association.

Anne then joined Darlington MP Jenny Chapman (pictured in red) in the

warmer surroundings of Alderman Leach School. To thank the children for braving the rain and helping with the opening, Railway Housing Association donated books to the school, as well as giving the children some well-deserved sweets.

Anne said: "The weather was certainly not the best but we were delighted the children could help us to mark the official opening of our newest affordable housing scheme in Darlington.

"Some of the children who go to the school live in our homes so it was

fitting that Alderman Leach School took part and we would like to thank the head teacher and her staff for their support."

All 13 family homes in the Collingsway area of West Park are now occupied. Railway Housing Association, which is the second largest landlord in Darlington after the local authority, has spent £2.16 million on the scheme, which includes eight three-bedroom houses and five four-bedroom, three-storey houses.

The £2.16 million included funding of £819,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency, which is the housing and regeneration agency for England.

RHHA NEWS

Raise Your Glasses to Hillingdon



Railway Housing Association has started work to build 14 affordable homes in Spennymoor, County Durham, for people aged 55 and over.

The Association is spending £1.9 million with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding of £854,000, to transform the 2,356 sq metre former Hillingdon public house into ten two-bedroom apartments and four two-bedroom bungalows.'

Hartlepool-based developer Cecil M Yuill is carrying out the work on our behalf and completion is scheduled for August 2011.

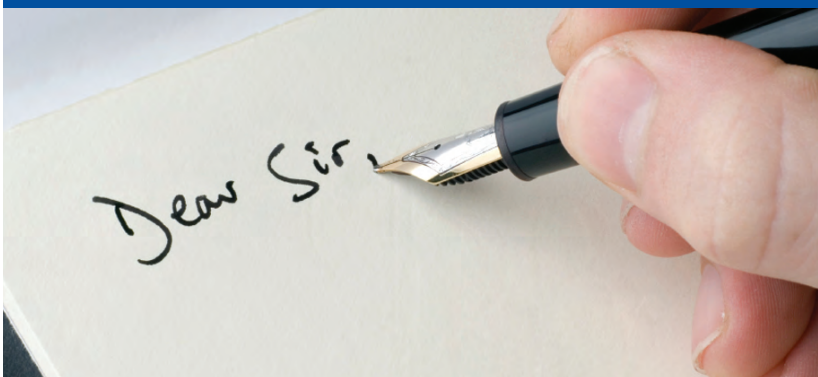
Andrea Abbott, Director of Asset Management with Railway Housing Association, said: "We are delighted to be starting work on site so soon after being granted planning permission and are looking forward to providing much-needed affordable housing for this age group in the area."

As part of the new development, a new road will be constructed from the main road running down the site to serve 14 car parking spaces. The semi-detached bungalows will all have private back gardens.

The two-and-a-half storey apartment block will include a lift and communal areas such as a garden, lounge, bike store, storage space and motorised wheel chair charging and storage facilities.

All properties will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 standard, which means a reduction of 25% carbon emissions is compulsory. The properties will have water butts that are fed from the rainwater in the downpipes from the guttering, a means of reducing water consumption in kitchens and bathrooms, solar panels for the hot water and recycling bins in the kitchens.

Complaints



We always try to provide the best possible service to our customers but sometimes things go wrong and when this happens we need to know about it. We welcome complaints from customers because these help us to improve our services.

Between 1st April 2009 and 31st March 2010, 25 complaints were received. The complaints were about: -

- **Our response to a complaint about a neighbour**
- **The location of some new bungalows**
- **Car parking**
- **Poor communication**
- **Repairs and condition of properties**
- **Provision of digital aerials at individual properties**
- **Removal of a wasps' nest**

- **Removal of garden waste**
- **Compensation following major repairs**
- **Fencing.**

Each complaint was reported to our Board of Trustees.

All complainants are surveyed to find out if they were happy with the way their complaint was dealt with. Although only four completed survey forms were returned, the majority were happy with our complaints procedure, the way their complaint was handled and the helpfulness of our staff.

Two important changes have been made or are likely to be made as a result of the complaints received last year: -

1. Our policy on pest control has been reviewed and is likely to be amended to ensure that we

provide an appropriate level of service to vulnerable residents.

2. The procedure for re-setting central heating boilers at sheltered schemes following a fire alarm has been amended to minimise any delay.

Sandcastle Competition

Andrea Abbott usually oversees the building of houses for Railway Housing Association, but she is also a dab hand at making sandcastles.

Back when the weather was warm, Andrea competed in a sandcastle challenge in South Shields to raise money for the charity Children's North East.

She was on a team with children from St Mary Magdalene's RC Primary School (pictured) in Seaham and they built The Angel of the North, the Stadium of Light and Durham Cathedral. Unfortunately the team did not win any prizes but the children were brilliant. They supplied the ideas and they had thought about what they were trying to build.



The judging was carried out by Denise Welch and Tim Healy and one of the contestants who had been on the BBC TV programme to find a Dorothy for Andrew Lloyd Webber's production of the Wizard of Oz.

The second part of the event was a black tie dinner at The Gosforth Park

Marriott Hotel. It was a fundraising event that required much dipping into pockets for money for auctions, tombola and raffles. A fantastic amount of money was raised for the charity on the evening.

How We Let Your Homes

The Association lets vacant homes to the applicants who are in the greatest housing need.

Usually, half of all vacant homes are let to applicants from the Association's waiting list and half to applicants who have been nominated by the local council.

The following criteria is used in the assessment of housing need:

- Unsatisfactory housing conditions
- Temporary/insecure accommodation
- The need for settled accommodation on medical/welfare grounds
- Domestic violence or harassment
- The need for settled accommodation due to social/economic circumstances.

We may exclude some applicants from our waiting lists. A full list of the reasons can be found in our lettings



policy, which can be downloaded from our website www.railwayha.co.uk, or by ringing 01325 482125 and asking for a copy.

Applicants may appeal against any decisions made in respect of their application for housing. Appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Complaints Procedure.

Kim does 'Great' in half-marathon

Housing Officer Kim Jackson successfully completed the gruelling Great North Run in September.

Kim ran the race with her sister Hayley and they completed in a fantastic time of 2hrs, 5mins & 19secs. The pair are now busy collecting their sponsorship and have so far raised £815 for Bowel Cancer UK.

Kim said the worst part of the run was between miles 11 and 12 while the best part was having a leg massage and a pint of beer after the race.



RHHA NEWS

Home Condition

Earlier this year we surveyed 104 of our Armchair Monitors to ask them what they like and dislike about their home.

Thank you to the 64 residents who filled in and returned the survey form. It was quite a long form and we really appreciate you taking the time to complete it.

The results showed that the majority of residents are satisfied with: -

- The location, size and layout of their home
- The layout of their kitchen

- Internal and external lighting
 - Electrical sockets in the kitchen
 - The landscaping around their home.
- However, residents were less satisfied with the following:

What residents are dissatisfied with	What we are doing about it	Please note
Windows & doors	We have a planned programme for the replacement of old windows & doors. This is publicised in the residents' newsletter. The age & condition of windows & doors is used to decide when these are replaced. This year the windows at 32 homes at North Eastern Court in Gateshead & the doors at 88 homes in Auckland Avenue in Darlington will be renewed.	If the double glazing in your home has failed & there is condensation between the glass, then please let us know and we will arrange to replace it
Low number of electrical sockets in living rooms and bedrooms	We will agree with residents a minimum number of electrical sockets that is more adequate for modern use & include the installation of extra sockets in the planned maintenance programme in future years.	
Fencing	We are replacing the fencing to a number of homes in Darlington this year because the age and poor condition of the existing fencing means that it cannot be repaired.	If the fencing around your home needs repairing then please let us know and it will be repaired or replaced if necessary in due course
Open plan gardens	We are proposing to fence in a small number of open plan gardens so that each of the properties has an individual private back garden. If this is successful we will fence in more open plan gardens in the future (see page 5 for more details).	
Lack of car parking	We will give permission for residents to build a hard-standing for their car within their own gardens where this is practical, subject to the provision of a dropped kerb and the use of suitable contractors and materials. We are also looking into whether or not we could provide a small number of car parking spaces each year, funded from the planned maintenance budget. Obviously, this would reduce the amount of money that is then available for other improvement works such as the replacement of central heating boilers, windows, kitchens and bathrooms so it needs careful consideration. We will start by assessing the car parking at every scheme so we know exactly what is needed.	

We also asked our Armchair Monitors to tell us what improvement work would make the biggest difference to you. The results of the survey showed

that the more important improvements to residents are (in order of priority) – new bathrooms, new central heating boilers, fencing in of individual gardens,

new kitchens, provision of car parking spaces and new windows. We will use these results to help us plan future improvement works.

Proposals to Fence-in Open Plan Gardens

Many residents who live in houses and bungalows with open plan gardens that they share with their neighbours have told us that they would like the gardens to be fenced in so that each home has its own garden.

In response to this we've agreed with our Armchair Monitors that we will do the following: -

- Choose two schemes to try it out and see how well it works over 12 months. We will assume that residents who live in houses may be younger than those who live in bungalows and therefore more likely to be able to look after a garden. We will choose medium-sized schemes with reasonable -sized gardens because the amount of money available for fencing is very limited.
- Consult with the residents of the two schemes and discuss the pros and cons with them.

The gardens will only be fenced in if all of the residents want this to be done.

- Fence-in the back gardens only, because this will provide a private space for each home.
- The Association will continue to look after the open plan front gardens but the residents will look after their own back gardens.

If a resident becomes unable to look after their own garden then they will be responsible for making other arrangements to keep the garden well maintained such as using a local voluntary scheme or employing a gardener.

- The residents would be able to keep pets, in accordance with the Association's pets policy.
- The fencing will be permanent and will be maintained by the Association.
- If the trial at the two schemes is successful then we will consult with residents about budgeting for the provision of fencing to enclose gardens of other schemes over a number of years until all houses and bungalows with open plan gardens are provided with fencing, if that is the wishes of those residents.

RHA Joins Forces with TPAS

We are happy to announce that Railway Housing Association has joined up with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

As one of the first organisations to specialise in resident involvement at a national level, TPAS will be providing Railway Housing Association and its residents with advice on how we can ensure that your involvement can influence how your housing services are delivered.

Railway Housing Association is so committed to resident involvement that we are looking towards gaining the Resident Involvement Quality Standard (RIQ) through working with TPAS. To gain this accreditation,

TPAS will look at our approach to resident involvement and offer support and guidance to ensure that we deliver continuous improvement.

As part of our membership of TPAS all our recognised residents groups will be able to join TPAS for free! TPAS will be contacting these groups very shortly.

If you have any questions regarding the above Julie Clark on 01325 482125.



RHHA NEWS



Mutual Appointments

When we contact you to arrange gas service and safety checks, or any other work that may need to be done to your home, it is important we can gain access to your property.

We appreciate it is not always easy to arrange a time when it is convenient for you, but we do endeavour to be as flexible as possible, even offering evening appointments where necessary.

However, if you can be flexible as well, then this can help us to plan our schedule of work and ensure we can carry out the necessary work as quickly as possible.

Satisfied Customers

Customer satisfaction surveys have shown that the vast majority of you – 94% - are satisfied with the work we did in 2009/10 to carry out major repairs, maintain open plan gardens, painting and gas servicing.

Maintenance 2009-10

Work	Satisfaction Slips Returned	Number Sent out	Rate of Return	Number Satisfied	Satisfaction level
Planned Maintenance e.g. heating, bathrooms, kitchens, windows, doors	31	61	51%	30	97%
Garden Maintenance	245	544	45%	235	96%
Painting	52	92	57%	49	94%
Gas Servicing	135	202	67%	124	92%
Total	503	1038	48%	474	94%



Gas servicing - it's important

Railway Housing Association would like to remind you of the vital need to have any gas appliances in your home checked and serviced every year.

By not having regular services, you could be putting yourself and your family in danger of carbon monoxide poisoning, which has killed 300 people in ten years.

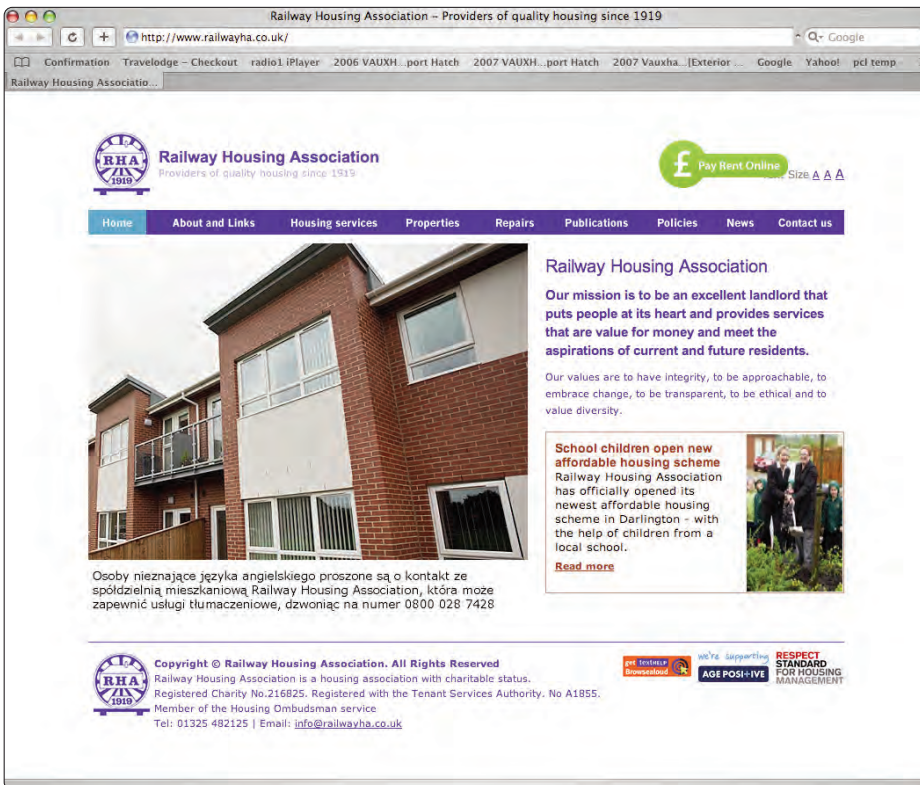
Carbon monoxide is known as the 'silent killer' because it is invisible and odourless, with the old and the young being most at risk.

The Association provides a free annual gas service and safety check, so if you haven't had one, please get in touch as soon as possible.

We have also appointed a new gas service engineer, Keith Abbott. Keith will be providing the gas servicing for 835 of our homes in the North, Yorkshire and Humberside.

Website Changes

Visitors to our website will have noticed that we have introduced some changes.



The website - www.railwayha.co.uk - has been refreshed to make it more user-friendly, with the main changes revolving around the design.

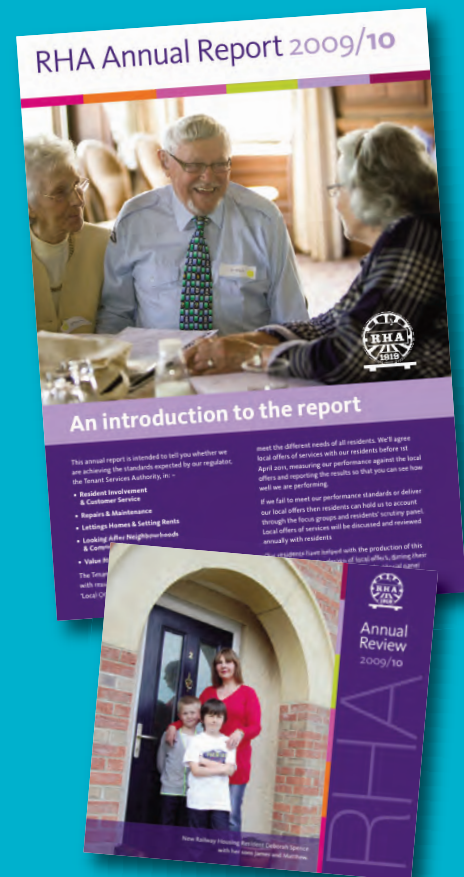
The use of colour shading and boxes now means you can much more easily distinguish between the different sections of the website.

We have also added a pay your rent online icon on the home page, there are separate PDF icons on the housing services and repairs pages showing performance information and our planned maintenance programme respectively, and we now also have a dedicated, and secure, section for our Board members.



At the time of going to press with this newsletter we were also in the process of establishing a dedicated page for our leaseholders.

We hope you like the changes and if you have any comments to make about our website, we would love to hear from you.



New Publications

You will have noticed that our recent publications, such as RHA News, our Annual Review and Annual Report, now all carry the same colour scheme and branding.

We believe having a 'suite' of publications like this in the same style provides us with a real 'identity', as well as ensuring consistency.

The latest publications to be put into this style are four leaflets produced by our Asset Management team. The leaflets, which will be issued to residents, contain useful information on heating your home, energy saving light-bulbs, condensation, and Economy 7 heating.

If you have any feedback on our recent publications, we would welcome your comments.

RHA NEWS

Community News

A New Lease of Life

Partnership working has given a Railway Housing Association resident a new lease of life.



After moving into Patrick Stirling Court in Doncaster in 2003, Jenny Beardsley became physically quite poorly and began to feel isolated.

During a scheme visit Juliet Kerins, Housing Officer for the Doncaster area, noticed that all was not well with Mrs Beardsley. Mrs Beardsley initially refused any help but following advice from her housing officer was persuaded to engage with social Services and care teams.

Mrs Beardsley's health deteriorated further and her first floor flat was no longer suitable for her needs. A ground floor flat became available in Patrick Stirling Court and with help from social services Mrs Beardsley moved in.

With the support of social services, RHA staff and floating support, Mrs Beardsley now tells us that she has had a new lease of life. She is very happy and has become an active member of the Patrick Stirling Court Residents' Association, representing

the views and aspirations of the disabled residents of the scheme.

Mrs Beardsley says she cannot believe how much her life had changed for the better and is grateful for the support she has received.

If you would like information on the different types of accommodation that RHA offers, or if you feel that your accommodation no longer meets your needs, or you feel lonely or isolated please contact your Housing Officer.

Connie is a Real Inspiration

Not many athletes can compete into their 70s, but Connie Boyd is a real exception to the rule.

Connie, who lives in the Association's North Eastern Court in Gateshead, recently celebrated her 70th birthday and took the time to reminisce about her life as track and field athlete.

Connie competed for many years for the Newcastle branch of the British Polio Fellowship and her favourite event was the javelin, closely followed by the shot and discus. During her career she won many



medals, including two gold medals at the North of England Disabled Games and three gold medals at the Disabled Ex-Services Invitational World Games. The three medals she won at this latter event were achieved in 1995 when she was 75-years-old.

Connie was also a dab hand at darts, bowls and archery, and is a real inspiration to all.

Edie is 100 Not Out

Former Springfield Court resident Edie Hilton celebrated her 100th birthday in July.



Her family kindly invited those residents who knew Edie to the lovely party held at Acomb Conservative Club.

We were delighted to see Edie looking so well and obviously enjoying the attention. She had a great number of beautiful cards on display including, of course, 'The Card' from the Queen.

On the Carousel

We were delighted to help one of our residents at **Tempest Anderson House, Raymond Saul, celebrate his 91st birthday in July.**

Ray's family and friends joined him for a party that everyone enjoyed.

For some time Ray has been restoring a model carousel and thanks to his son Ian, it has now been finished and is in perfect working order.



Resident-gate

Two community-minded residents have joined forces to make life easier for residents living in one of our older people schemes in Darlington.

Rita Shellhorn and Maureen Wetherall, who live in Yellowley Court, had grown tired of having to work 3/4 of a mile to get to their nearest bus stop, so they approached other residents to see if they would be willing to fund the installation of a new gate that would provide a short-cut to the bus stop.

An amazing 11 residents agreed to each pay around £50, with Rita and Maureen paying a bit more, to have the gate made and installed.

The pair even made the planning application to the local council themselves.



Jim fixes it for residents

Maureen said: "Some of the residents who contributed are not even well enough to use the gate to walk to the bus stop, and yet they still provided financial support, which is fantastic."

Rita added: "I really enjoyed organising everything. The gate has saved me having to get a taxi to do my shopping, as well as helping many others, so it has been very worthwhile."

Jim fixes it for residents

Railway Housing Association's annual fete at Sayers Close in Leeds attracted more people than usual thanks to the presence of a well-known local celebrity.

Sir Jimmy Savile (pictured above with RHA Housing Officer Juliet Kerins) was the surprise guest at the fete held in August. Sir Jimmy is a close friend of one of Sayers Close residents, John Hattersley, and kindly agreed to open the event after being asked by John.

There were plenty of surprised looks on peoples' faces when they turned up to the fete and saw Sir Jimmy in his famously flamboyant clothes and jewellery.

Sir Jimmy called the fete "Britain's smallest gala" and had a great time chatting with residents and visitors during the afternoon.

Over £800 was raised at the event, which included a smashing crockery stall, bric-a-brac, tombola, raffle, treasure hunt and refreshments. The money raised will go to the Sayers Close residents' fund.

John Hattersley, who has lived at Sayers Close with his wife Irene for just over 12 months, met Sir Jimmy by chance over 20 years ago.

John used to be a publicity manager for an entertainment company and a local DJ, and he used to like playing Sir Jimmy's records. When John saw Sir Jimmy in the street he went over to introduce himself and the pair have remained friends ever since.

John said: "Jimmy invited me to his house for a coffee after our first meeting and we soon discovered we had lots in common.

"The friendship grew from there and even though Jimmy is a celebrity he has no airs and graces about him and the fact he came to open Railway Housing Association's summer fete shows what a nice person he is."

RHHA NEWS

Reporting Anti-Social Behaviour

The Association is committed to ensuring that all residents enjoy their right to peace, quiet and security in their homes. We recognise the varied and diverse nature of the communities in which we work and respect the differences of individuals.

We work in partnership with many agencies, including the police and local councils, to tackle complaints about anti-social behaviour. We treat all complaints in a serious, professional and confidential manner and will support complainants wherever we can.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

- Violence or threats
- Any person causing a nuisance or annoyance
- Harassment and intimidation, including hate crime
- Illegal drug use and supply
- Noise nuisance
- Graffiti, overgrown gardens, animals causing a nuisance.

What is not Anti-Social Behaviour?

- Neighbours or their children not talking to each other
- Children riding bikes on the pavement
- Family disagreements
- Car parking on the road in a space outside the complainant's home

- Personal differences or arguments. However, housing staff will discuss the problem with the complainant and encourage them to talk to their neighbour or consider mediation to resolve it.

What will we do to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour?

- Take early action, including preventative measures where possible
- Support and protect witnesses
- Agree an action plan and keep all parties informed about what actions are being taken and the outcomes
- Work in partnership with other agencies including police and the local council

How to report Anti-Social Behaviour

- Contact your local Housing Officer. If you are not sure of the contact details please ring 01325 482125.
- E-mail us on info@railwayha.co.uk
- Log on to www.railwayha.co.uk, and report it via our website

In 2009/10, the Association received 19 complaints about anti-social behaviour. All of the complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days.

The table below shows the types of anti-social behaviour reported and the various actions taken by RHA to resolve the situation.

Location	Cause of problem	Action Taken	Resolved
Darlington/Co Durham	Late night parties	Visits & letters	One case ongoing
Darlington/Co Durham	Dogs/cats	Visits & letters	✓
Darlington/Co Durham	Children's behaviour	Visits & letters	✓
Darlington/Co Durham/Leeds/Doncaster	Noise	Visits & involvement of other agencies	✓ One case ongoing
Darlington/Co Durham	General anti-social behaviour	Visits & involvement of other agencies	Ongoing
Darlington/Co Durham	Unacceptable state of garden	Visits	✓
Darlington/Co Durham Hull	Ball games Visitors behaviour	Visits & letters Visit & letter	✓ ✓
York/Doncaster	Behaviour of resident	Visits & involvement of other agencies	✓ One case ongoing
Tees Valley	Overcrowding	Visit	✓

Estate inspections

Railway Housing Association has a programme of twice yearly estate inspections wherever we have more than six properties together.

Why don't you come along on the walkabouts and have your say? You can help make the area you live in better by pointing out what needs doing.

You will receive a letter from your local Housing Officer to let you know when the inspection will take place in your area. The inspections are an opportunity to draw upon the knowledge of local residents to help improve the appearance of the area.

Although the Association doesn't currently have any money for major improvements to estates, we will explore alternative means of funding such works.

The estate inspections that have already taken place have resulted in:

- Minor repairs such as repairs to communal gates being carried out
- Health and safety problems such as tripping hazards being rectified
- Suggestions for improvements such as fencing being considered for funding in the future.

Goodbye Mal

Railway Housing Association is saddened by the retirement of one of our board members, Mal Malik, who has retired due to ill-health. Mal joined the board in August 2008.

Anne Rowlands, Railway Housing Association's Chief Executive, said: "Mal has provided excellent service to the board and we are saddened by his departure.

"We understand his reasons for leaving and wish him good health and every success in the future."

Our Performance

We constantly measure and monitor our performance to gauge how good the service we provide is and to make sure we are keeping our promise to offer customers the highest possible level of service.

How we performed 1st April 2010 to 30th June 2010

green
Performance on target



amber
Performance below but close to target



red
Action is needed to meet target



Income Management	New Applications
Amount of current rent arrears outstanding = 1.86%, (target is 1.94%)	Percentage of new applications assessed within 14 days = 100% (target is 95%)
Lettings	Complaints
Average time taken to repair and let an empty property = 17.92 days (target is 26.50 days)	Percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage = 100% (target is 95%)
Disabled Adaptations	Repairs and Maintenance
Percentage of work completed within 4 weeks = 78% (target is 95%)	Average cost of a responsive repair = £111.09 (target is £114.80)
Response to Letters	Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service = 100% (target is 96%)
Percentage of letters responded to within 10 working days = 95% (target is 95%)	Percentage of Priority 1 repairs completed within 1 day = 92% (target is 99%)
Response to Telephone Calls	Percentage of Priority 3 repairs completed within 3 days = 71% (target is 97%)
Percentage of telephone calls answered within 7 seconds = 60.5% (target is 65%)	Percentage of Priority 7 repairs completed within 7 days = 83% (target is 97%)
New Tenancy Visit	Percentage of Priority 31 repairs completed within 31 days = 94% (target is 97%)
Percentage of new tenants visited within 6 weeks = 96% (target is 90%)	

RHHA

English

Information can be made available in other languages, or other formats such as Braille, large format or audio tape, on request.

Arabic:

يمكن توفير المعلومات بلغات أخرى و صيغ أخرى مثل طريقة بريل أو شرائط سمعية ، حسب الطلب

Bengali:

আপনি অনুরোধ করলে এই তথ্যগুলি অন্য ভাষাতে, অথবা অন্য কোনো মাধ্যমে যেমন ব্রেইল-এ বা অডিও টেপে, পাওয়া যেতে পারে।

Somali:

Faahfaahinta waxa kale oo aad ku heli kartaa luuqadaha kale, ama siyaabo kale, sida Farta waaweyn ama canjal maqal ah, waana in aad soo codsato.

Turkish:

Talep üzerine bu bilgi diğer dillerde veya görme engelliler için kabartma alfabesi ve ses bandı formatında da temin edilebilir.

Urdu:

یہ معلومات دیگر زبانوں اور دوسری صورتوں میں (نمائندہ افراد کے لیے خصوصی عبارت) یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر بھی فراہم کی جاسکتی ہیں۔

Railway Housing Association

Bank Top House, Garbutt Square, Neasham Road, Darlington DL1 4DR

Tel: 01325 482125 Fax: 01325 384641 www.railwayha.co.uk

Registered Social Landlord: A1855 Registered Charity: 216825

MEMBER OF THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

