



Railway Housing
Association



Annual Report
2013

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About this report

This annual report tells you about our performance and how we compare to other landlords. In 2012/13, housing associations were required to achieve certain standards that were originally written after listening to tenants' views across England. In this report we will explain each standard, tell you whether or not we met the standards and our plans for improvement.

We've also included information about our local offers – services that go beyond the standards. These were developed by residents who attended the 2010 Annual Residents' Conference, Focus Group meetings, scheme meetings and replied to a postal survey of all residents. The offers have since been amended and enhanced following further consultation with residents.

Residents from our Scrutiny Panel have helped with the production of this report by deciding on the style and content.



Residents at our annual conference

Welcome

2012/13 has been another successful year for Railway Housing Association during which Board Trustees, staff and residents have worked closely together to ensure that we continue to provide high standards of service with a strong focus on maintaining homes.

We invested £927,850 last year improving homes. We again prioritised the replacement of inefficient central heating boilers and will continue to do so for the next few years.

During the last year we also completed the purchase of 55 properties in York from another housing association; built 16 apartments in Swanland near Hull, to replace 20 homes that no longer met modern standards and couldn't be refurbished at a reasonable cost; and supported a regeneration scheme by selling a bungalow in Middlesbrough to the local council.

Early in 2013 we completed a resident satisfaction survey and are delighted that there are still high levels of satisfaction with our overall service, the quality of our homes, our repairs and maintenance service and that we listen to residents' views and act upon them.

Our business strategy reflects the priorities that residents have consistently told us are important to them. We really appreciate the valuable contribution made by those residents who participate enthusiastically in a number of different forums such as the Scrutiny Panel, focus groups and as armchair monitors.



Residents of Tempest Anderson House, Darlington

It is our mission to be an excellent landlord that puts people at its heart and provides services that are value for money and meet the aspirations of current and future residents. This is particularly important during these challenging times. We are constantly looking for ways to provide better value for money. We are pleased that savings have been made without affecting the quality of services by changing energy suppliers, changing the specification for the replacement central heating boilers and by tendering of contracts.

We are aware of the difficulties faced by many people at the moment, especially the difficulties caused by welfare reform. Our staff have been visiting residents affected by these changes, to offer advice and support. *(Continued on page 4)*

Not only have we retained our accreditation with Investors in People but we have been upgraded from bronze to silver status as a reflection of how well we invest in our staff to achieve our business plans. We fund extensive staff training and have supported the national apprenticeship scheme by taking on another apprentice. We are delighted that our first two apprentices have now gained full time employment and we are hoping for the same success for our newest recruit.

A visit from our regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency, in July 2012 resulted in confirmation that we are meeting the required 'economic standards' relating to governance, financial viability and value for money.

In the coming year we will:

- Continue to update and maintain homes to a high standard.
- Help residents with the challenges posed by changes to welfare benefits.
- Complete the building of another 10 homes in Swanland in the East Riding.
- Plan how to respond to the reduction in grants for building new homes.
- Invest in mobile working technology to improve customer service and efficiency.

Finally we would like to thank all our Board trustees, staff and involved residents for their hard work over the last year.



Barrie Ward
Chair of the Board of
Trustees from 2007 to 2013

"It's been a privilege and a pleasure to Chair the Association for the last six years. Having completed the maximum term allowed as the Chair I am delighted to be staying on as a member of the Board and look forward to continuing to work with my fellow Board Trustees, staff and residents. I wish the new Chair, Geoff Proudlock, well in taking the Association forward"



Anne Rowlands
Chief Executive

Repairs & Maintenance Standard

What does the standard say?

We must maintain all homes to a standard set by the Government or the standards that applied when the home was built if this is higher; provide a cost effective repairs service that offers choices to residents, aims to complete repairs 'right first time', balances the amount spent between planned and responsive repairs, achieves value for money and meets all legal requirements for health and safety; and work with other organisations such as local councils to provide an adaptations service.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim to provide warm and safe well maintained homes, whilst delivering value for money and reducing any negative impact on the environment. To achieve this we:

- Maintain all of our properties to a standard that exceeds the standard set by the government.
- Prioritise the maintenance of existing properties over building new homes.
- Ask residents to complete a satisfaction survey after we carry out any repairs. Every survey that is returned to us is read and the feedback is used to improve our repairs service.
- Provide choices for residents when major works are carried out such as a choice of kitchen units and electric fires.

- Replaced 131 central heating boilers in 2012/13 with more energy efficient models.
- Externally insulated 24 solid wall properties that are unsuitable for cavity wall insulation.
- Inspected and tested gas installations in every home with gas appliances.
- Funded and/or helped to arrange adaptations on behalf of 89 residents, including 36 grab rails and hand rails, 5 sets of lever taps, 31 level access showers, 6 ramps and a door entry system.
- Investigated the most cost effective way to replace outdated and inefficient electric heating systems.
- Investigated why younger residents are less satisfied with our repairs service and what we can do about it.
- Asked residents the best way for us to keep them informed about our work on improving energy efficiency.
- Have investigated 'tenant cash-back' schemes and will explore this further in 2014.
- Have started to assess outdated bin stores and recycling facilities and plan for replacement or renewal of these.



Hackworth Court, Stockton

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Percentage of residents satisfied with the condition of their home	93%	93.1%	✓
Percentage of residents dissatisfied with the condition of their home	4%	4.5%	✓
Gas servicing completed within anniversary date	100%	99%	✓
Percentage of residents satisfied with disabled adaptations service	100%	97.6%	✓
Percentage of residents satisfied with the repairs service	96%	97%	—
Percentage of repairs completed right first time	85%	83%	✓
Average number of days taken to complete a repair	4.1	7.7	✓
Percentage of repairs completed on time	99%	94%	✓

? Jargon buster:

Planned maintenance - we survey a sample number of each type of property in each area every three years and use this information to plan when major work such as replacement of kitchens, bathrooms, central heating boilers and windows will need to be done. This work is known as 'planned maintenance'.

16 new apartments were built in Swanland, East Riding, for older people. These were to replace 20 homes that couldn't be refurbished at a reasonable cost.

Resident Leonard Peach said: "We now have so much more space and everyone is really pleased with their new homes."



Opening of Swan House, Swanland

You Said	What We Did	What difference has this made?
We don't know what Railway Housing Association is doing to improve the energy efficiency of homes	We asked residents how they would like us to publicise our energy efficiency work	A special newsletter will be sent to all residents in 2013 to tell them about all of our repairs and maintenance work, including energy efficiency
The enhanced repairs service provided to residents of sheltered schemes should also be available to residents who live in bungalows and apartments on the same site	The enhanced repairs service is now offered to residents who live in bungalows and apartments on the same site as our sheltered schemes	542 residents are now eligible for the enhanced repairs service
The 'facilitated' repairs service for sheltered scheme residents isn't needed	The facilitated repairs service is no longer offered to residents	The costs of administering the scheme have been saved

Local offer for Repairs & Maintenance in 2013/14

Residents told us that we should do more for elderly residents so we met with residents of our sheltered schemes and agreed an enhanced repairs service for them. This means that we carry out minor repairs that we do not usually do, such as changing light bulbs and easing doors when residents have new carpets fitted. This free scheme is aimed at helping residents who have difficulty with household repairs that would normally be their responsibility. It has been very successful and has been extended to include residents who live in bungalows and apartments on the same sites as the sheltered schemes. This means that a total of 524 residents now receive this service.

In 2012/13 residents used this service to request 42 repairs, which cost a total of £3,227.

We also offered to help residents to get other household jobs done such as carpet cleaning, taking down curtains, decorating and window cleaning, by agreeing prices with trustworthy contractors who are known to the Association. However, this service was only used once and residents told us that it was not required so we have now dropped this service.

Plans for Improvements

We were not able to keep our promise to introduce mobile technology for maintenance staff due to a delay with the software, but we intend to do this in 2013. We will also try to increase resident involvement in planned maintenance.



Kirby House, Driffeld



Earl Street, Hartlepool

Resident Involvement & Customer Service Standard

What does the standard say?

We must keep residents informed, using methods that are appropriate to the diverse needs of our residents; involve residents in making decisions about their homes; deal with complaints promptly, politely and fairly; and treat all residents with fairness and respect.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim to work with residents to develop and deliver excellent services that meet their aspirations and value diversity. To achieve this we:

- Provide services to over 1,400 residents.
- Offer a free-phone telephone number for residents to contact us.
- Welcome and learn from complaints – 29 were received in 2012/13.
- Offer a variety of ways for residents to become involved in the management of their homes, from Board membership to our Scrutiny Panel, Focus Groups and 'Armchair Monitors'.
- Have an ongoing training programme for members of our Focus Groups.
- Sent a satisfaction survey (STAR) to all our residents and over 55% completed and returned the form.

- Held an annual conference attended by over 40 residents.
- Discuss and agree our annual budget and maintenance plans with residents.
- Asked residents to review the performance information that is reported in their newsletter.
- Involve residents in setting targets for our performance.
- Consult residents about the best way to involve them in governing and scrutinising the Association.
- Have started to involve residents in how the Association buys goods and services.
- Have a single equality and diversity policy, which sets out our commitment to treating everyone equally and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- Monitor lettings, board membership, staff and resident profile against community profiles.
- Have collected information from 91% of our residents about their age, gender, religion, disability, any support needs and more, so that we can tailor services to meet their individual needs.
- Provide information to residents in a format that best suits their needs, e.g. languages other than English, large print, audio tape and Braille.
- Train all staff on using Text Relay service.
- Publicised the text relay service to all residents and applicants.
- Have a portable hearing loop for use at residents meetings.



Our residents:
 66% are aged over 65 years
 Only 5% are aged under 35 years
 41% have limited mobility
 12% are partially sighted
 24% are hard of hearing

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Percentage of residents satisfied with overall service	89%	93.8%	⊖
Percentage of residents dissatisfied with overall service	3%	3.3%	✓
Percentage of residents satisfied their views are listened to and acted upon	84%	75.9%	✓
Percentage of residents not satisfied that their views are listened to and acted upon	7%	6.5%	⊖
Percentage of residents that think we are good at keeping them informed	92%	91%	✓
Percentage of residents that think we are poor at keeping them informed	2%	3.2%	✓
Percentage of complaints resolved at first stage	93%	98%	⊖
Percentage of complainants satisfied with case handling	67%	86%	✗
Percentage of complainants satisfied with outcome of their complaint	67%	80%	✗



Pictures on this page were taken at our annual residents' conference

Residents' Scrutiny Panel

The Residents' Scrutiny Panel is a small group of residents who scrutinise our performance and services. In the last year they made several more recommendations to improve services:

The Scrutiny Panel Said	We Did	What difference has this made?
Publicise the local call rate telephone number for use by residents calling the Association from mobile telephones	The free-phone and local call rate numbers were publicised in the August 2012 edition of RHA News	More residents should be aware of the free-phone and local call rate numbers available for them to contact the Association
Residents of sheltered schemes should be informed of the target dates for completion of repairs to communal areas and facilities	Target dates for repairs to communal areas and facilities are now displayed on the notice board of sheltered schemes	Residents of sheltered schemes can now easily check when repairs to communal areas and facilities should be completed
The free-phone telephone number should be provided in all correspondence with residents	The free-phone telephone number is now provided in all correspondence with residents	All residents who receive correspondence from the Association are informed that they can contact us free of charge from a land line
Groups of residents, such as focus groups, should be able to ask the Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise a service that they are concerned about	We agreed with this recommendation	No requests have been made to the Scrutiny Panel yet but groups of residents are able to do so
Consider providing suitable smoke detectors for all residents with hearing problems	The number of residents with hearing difficulties, the cost of suitable smoke alarms and the availability of funding will all be assessed within the next 12 months	If it is affordable this will mean that suitable smoke detectors will be provided for residents with hearing problems
Ask to be added to the mailing lists of Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK in each area so that the Association is notified of any special projects or new initiatives	We agreed with this recommendation	This may help residents to benefit from projects or funding from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK
Send the lettable standard satisfaction survey form to new residents 2-3 weeks after they move in; and offer a quarterly prize draw of about £25 as an incentive	We agreed and implemented these recommendations	The number of residents completing the survey forms has increased significantly and this is providing valuable feedback
The Association's lettable standard should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A statement about the condition of fencing, gates, gullies, drains and guttering A minimum number of electrical plug sockets in each room Removing all nails, hooks and screws from walls and making good loose plaster Making good any seals in the kitchen & bathroom Plumbing for a washing machine, except where communal facilities are available Key(s) for external meter cupboards to be provided where applicable 	We accepted the recommendations, with the exception of the recommendation that a minimum number of electrical sockets should be provided in each room. However, we are running a pilot scheme of changing single sockets to double sockets in each habitable room. This will be reviewed after 3 months to check whether or not it is financially viable to continue	It is too soon to know what difference this has made but it is anticipated that it will increase new residents' satisfaction with the standard of their new home

The Residents' Scrutiny Panel also scrutinised the results of a value for money review of the repairs service and a review of how we buy goods and services. The Panel were satisfied that the Association is taking appropriate actions in response to the consultant's recommendations for achieving better value for money.

Jargon buster:

The lettable standard explains the condition that each of our homes will be in when re-let. It is used to assess the condition of empty properties and identify if any repairs are needed.

Armchair Monitors are residents who have volunteered to complete postal or internet questionnaires on a regular basis and on a wide range of subjects, from the comfort of their own home. Their views help us to decide on our policies and changes to services.



Scrutiny Panel member Jim Race

Plans for Improvement

We were not able to keep to our promise to investigate the possibility of installing hearing loop systems in the communal lounges of each sheltered schemes but we still intend to do this.

In 2013/14 we will:

- Identify more meaningful and interesting ways of presenting information to Focus Groups & Armchair Monitors to help residents to have greater influence on our policies.
- Consider applying for a customer service excellence accreditation so that there is an independent evaluation of our customer service.

Local offer for Resident Involvement & Customer Service Standard in 2013/14

Residents told us that we needed to improve on the way that we communicate with members of our Focus Groups and Armchair Monitors. In response to this we agreed service standards with residents for how we communicate with, and provide feedback to, these residents.

In 2012/13 we only achieved 78.6% of these standards but 90% of focus group members are satisfied with how we communicate with them and provide feedback.

In 2013/14 we will strive to meet the standards set for us by residents and maintain the high level of satisfaction with how we communicate with focus group members and Armchair Monitors.

Tenancy Standard

What does the standard say?

We must let our properties in a fair way, making the best use of them whilst helping local councils to meet the housing needs in their area; offer residents access to an internet based mutual exchange service; offer appropriate tenancies and meet all legal requirements relating to tenancies; offer services to deal with overcrowding and under occupation of homes; provide information to help residents who wish to move; minimise the length of time properties are empty before being re-let; and have clear policies on managing tenancies and help residents to keep their tenancy, including making sure that each home is occupied by the person we let it to.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim to let homes in a fair and transparent way to meet housing needs. To achieve this we:

- Let our homes to applicants with the most need for housing.

- Offer half of our empty homes to applicants nominated by the local council so we can help local councils to meet housing needs in their area.
- Are members of HomeSwapper, a national scheme that helps residents to move home by exchanging with another resident.
- Have a clear policy for the succession and assignment of tenancies.

We also:

- Offer lifetime tenancies to all residents.
- Visit all new residents within 6 weeks of their tenancy starting.
- Offer twice yearly home visits to all residents to offer advice and assistance and listen to resident's views on our service. We also check that the property is occupied by the person(s) we let it to.

In 2012/13 we let 139 properties.

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Percentage of new residents satisfied with the condition of their new home	80%	85%	—
Average re-let time per property	40.46 days	31.43 days	✗
Percentage of lettings to applicants nominated by their local council	41.3%	39.8%	✓
Percentage of rent lost due to empty properties	1.5%	0.99%	—
Lettings to black and minority ethnic applicants as a percentage of total lettings	5.84%	4.24%	✓

? Jargon buster:

Re-let time – this is the average number of days it takes to get a new resident moved into one our properties when the previous resident leaves.

Introductory tenancies are short term tenancies that are changed to life time tenancies if the new resident keeps to the terms of their tenancy agreement.

Plans for Improvements

We were disappointed with the time we were taking to re-let homes so we asked an external organisation – the Northern Housing Consortium - to look at the way we do things. Over the next year we will start to make the changes that they have recommended.

In 2013/14 we will also consider the use of introductory tenancies for new residents aged under 60 years.

Neighbourhood & Community Standard

What does the standard say?

We must keep the neighbourhood and communal areas clean and safe; co-operate with partners to help promote social, environmental and economic well being; and work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti social behaviour.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim for our schemes and estates to be safe and attractive, contributing to the well being of local communities and we work in partnership with other organisations to help promote social, environmental and economic well being. To achieve this we:

- Have estates that are tidy and look well maintained.
- Carried out 110 estate inspections in 2012/13.
- Reviewed the specification for the garden maintenance service with residents, re-tendered the service and will save £89,380 over the next five years.
- Started to involve residents in the selection of contractors for estate services by offering training to members of our Focus Groups and sheltered scheme forum.
- Make small budgets available to fund environmental and community projects.

- Receive reports of anti social behaviour by telephone, via our website, email, letter, in person.
- Responded to 28 complaints of anti social behaviour in 2012/13.
- Only take legal action as a last resort. In 2012/13 we had to issue 1 legal notice against a tenancy.
- Agreed a policy for the use and storage of mobility scooters, in consultation with residents.
- Started to assess outdated bin stores and recycling facilities at each scheme.
- Continued to assess the car parking provision at each scheme.



Jubilee street party at Auckland Ave, Darlington

Residents successfully bid for funding from our Estates Improvements budget for the :

- Provision of extra signs at Paterson House, Forster House and Stephenson Court in Hull. Problems had been experienced by emergency vehicles trying to find specific addresses on the Chanterlands Avenue site shared by these schemes.
- Shrub planting at Great Western Court in Hereford to improve security.



Knitters for charity at Great Western Ct, Hereford

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Percentage of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	94%	94%	✓
Percentage of residents dissatisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	3%	3%	✓
Percentage of residents satisfied with the final outcome of their complaint about anti social behaviour	49%	70.8%	✗
Percentage of residents dissatisfied with the final outcome of their complaint about anti social behaviour	28%	8.3%	✗
Percentage of residents satisfied with the way that their complaint about anti social behaviour was dealt with	63%	83.3%	✗
Percentage of residents dissatisfied with the way that their complaint about anti social behaviour was dealt with	21%	8.3%	✗
Percentage of estate inspections completed within six months	93.3%	88.2%	✓

You Said	What We Did	What difference has this made?
Bin-stores are no longer suitable for the type of bins provided by our local council	We have started to assess the bin store and recycling facilities at every scheme	We will be able to plan for alterations to, or renewal of, bin stores that are no longer suitable
Residents should have more say in how our gardens are maintained	We asked every resident who receives the garden maintenance service for their views on the specification for the service	Residents' views influenced the specification for the garden maintenance service before it was re-tendered
We don't have any/enough car parking	We now have a programme for assessing the car parking at every scheme by 2015	It will mean that we can start to plan and budget to improve car parking



Mary Franklin, winner of the 2012 Good Neighbour Award

The Good Neighbour award was introduced to recognise the excellent work many of our residents do in the communities in which they live. The 2012 winner was Mary Franklin of Yellowley Court, Darlington. Mary was nominated by her neighbour, Gillian Griffiths, who described her as "one in a million". Anne Rowlands, our Chief Executive, said: "Mary is a very worthy winner and exemplifies the kind of community spirit we seek to promote in the areas where we have homes."

Unfortunately we only received one entry for the gardening competition, perhaps a reflection of last summer's poor weather, so the competition was cancelled. However, it will take place again in 2013.

Plans for Improvements

We were not able to keep to our promise to review the effectiveness and benefits of estate inspections but we still intend to do this to make sure that these provide good value for money.

We will also review our service for dealing with anti social behaviour to increase residents' satisfaction with the way that we deal with their complaints of anti social behaviour and the final outcome.

Local offer for Neighbourhood & Community in 2013/14

Residents told us that they would like to make changes to the way that communal gardens are maintained so we arranged to meet with residents of two schemes. The two schemes were chosen because we had received the most feedback from the residents of those schemes in recent years.

There wasn't any interest from the residents of one scheme, in Darlington, in changing the garden maintenance. The residents of the other scheme, in Hull, decided not to make any changes to the routine maintenance but some one-off works were completed during 2011/12 at their request. As a result their satisfaction with the garden maintenance service increased by 5% to 91%.

In 2012/13 this local service offer was extended to all residents who were asked their views on the specification for the routine garden maintenance service before it was re-tendered. The vast majority of residents did not want any changes made to the specification so, in accordance with their wishes, no changes were made.

Rent standard

What does the standard say?

We must charge rents in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Government; and provide clear information to residents about how rents and service charges are set and changed.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim to keep rents at an affordable level. To achieve this we:

- Charge rents in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Government.
- Offer a range of payment methods.
- Send quarterly rent statements to residents.
- Contact residents as soon as rent is not paid in full.
- Offer affordable repayment terms, advice on budgeting and managing debt.
- Help residents to claim all of the welfare benefits they are entitled to.
- Provide a welfare benefits checker on our website for use by residents.
- Only take legal action as a last resort.
- Always pursue residents who leave a debt behind when they move home.

You Said	What We Did	What difference has this made?
Direct debit should be available as a payment method	Direct debit will be introduced as a payment method in 2013	This will add to the range of payment methods already available to residents – telephone, internet, standing order, post office and PAYZONE

Welfare benefit changes

At least 60% of our residents have low incomes that entitle them to receive housing benefit towards their rent. Over the last year we have been contacting and visiting residents who may be affected by changes in welfare benefits, particularly those whose housing benefit has been reduced because they are deemed by the government to be under-occupying their home. Information has also been included in our residents' newsletter and on our website to explain the changes to benefits and encourage residents who may be affected to contact us for advice and assistance.

Plans for Improvement

In 2013/14 we will introduce direct debit as a payment method; improve our website so that residents can view their rent account on line; and provide more information to residents about how their rent is spent.

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Percentage of residents satisfied that their rent provides value for money	91%	94.2%	⊖
Percentage of residents not satisfied that their rent provides good value for money	3%	2.6%	⊖
Percentage of residents satisfied that their service charges provide value for money	85%	Not measured	-
Percentage of residents not satisfied that their service charges provide good value for money	4%	Not measured	-
Percentage of current rent owed (as a percentage as the total amount due)	2.36%	1.61%	⊖
Percentage of rent due collected	97.64%	98.39%	⊖



Great Western Court



Resident Lilian Walkenshaw

Governance & Financial Viability Standard

What does the standard say?

We must ensure that we have effective governance arrangements that deliver our aims, objectives and intended outcomes for residents and potential residents in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. Our governance arrangements must ensure that we adhere to all relevant legislation; comply with our governing documents and all regulatory requirements; are accountable to residents, our regulatory body and relevant stakeholders; safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the sector; have effective risk management and internal controls.

We must also manage our resources effectively.

Do we meet this standard? **YES** ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We aim to have an appropriate governance structure that is effective in ensuring that we are well managed and have robust and prudent financial controls to ensure our future financial viability. To achieve this our Board of Trustees:

- Has nine unpaid members (reduced from 11 in January 2013) responsible for the overall control of the Association.
- Had two residents as Board Trustees in 2012/13.
- Receives regular reports on how the Association is being run, financially managed and performing.
- Carries out annual appraisals of individual Trustees and the overall effectiveness of the Board.

- Complies with the National Housing Federation's Code of Excellence in Governance and Code of Excellence in Standards of Conduct, with one exception to the terms of office. One Trustee is serving one additional term of office due to their exceptional skills and experience. The Codes ensure that the Board of Trustees have clear roles and responsibilities and are managing the organisation well.
- Has a 3 year training programme.
- Supports the work of our Residents' Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise the Association.

Our regulator, the Homes & Communities Agency, considers that our Board maintains satisfactory control; and that we meet their requirements in relation to financial viability.

Our auditors concluded that we have effective arrangements for governance, risk management and control.

Every report to the Board includes the views of service users and an assessment of the impact on service users, whenever applicable; as well as value for money.

Our lettings and recruitment policies include guidelines for the offer of accommodation or employment to persons with a close connection to staff or Board members.

We have effective controls and procedures in place to make sure that our assets are secure and that we are making proper use of public funds. We carry out robust and prudent business planning to ensure that we have access to sufficient funds at all times. We also make sure that financial forecasts are based on appropriate and reasonable assumptions and take into account possible risks.

We have a robust process for identifying and managing risks. We regularly review, report on and challenge our risk management process and ensure that we identify possible new risks by keeping informed about the external environment.

In 2012/13 Board Trustees undertook training in value for money, financial management, treasury management, resident involvement, risk management and asset management.

Three Board Trustees retired during the year – John Carter, John Smailes and Michael Tasker. There were two vacancies at the end of March 2013.

The Board of Trustees has elected Geoff Proudlock to take over as Chair from Barrie Ward, who has stepped down after the maximum six years allowed in the role.

Plans for Improvement

In 2013/14 we will:

- Carry out an annual assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of financial controls.
- Carry out a further review of the effectiveness of the governance structure following the changes made in 2010.
- Hold a Board away day to debate the strategic planning process and other key strategic issues.
- Arrange a performance workshop reviewing reporting and improvement processes and examine the role of the board in value for money.
- Review the appraisal process prior to the 2014 appraisals.

Board Members 2012/13

Jargon buster:

Governance is how an organisation is run and managed.

'Financially viable' means that the Association has sufficient funds to maintain homes and carry out our business plans.



Barrie Ward



John Mayfield



Carol Bustard



Anne Mumford



Geoff Proudlock



John Carter



John Moorley



Alistair Brown



Michael Tasker



John Smailes

Value for Money Standard

What does the standard say?

We must manage our resources economically, efficiently and effectively to provide quality services and homes; plan and deliver ongoing improvements in value for money; and tell residents how we are achieving value for money.

Do we meet this standard? YES ✓

How are we meeting this standard?

We strive to achieve value for money throughout the organisation. To do this we:

- Have a value for money strategy.
- Recognise that involving residents is key to achieving value for money because residents can provide feedback to ensure that we are focusing our resources on the things that are most important to them and that we do it as well as we possibly can.
- Consult with residents who are members of our focus groups each year about our budget and our business plans for the year.
- Put all contracts or purchases over £50,000 out for tender so that different companies have to bid for the work and we can compare them and get the best value. For contracts and purchases between £750 and £50,000 we get a number of quotes and choose the company that offers us the best value.
- Evaluate the 'life cycle costs' of all the products we use in repairing, improving and building homes to ensure that we get the best value for money over the life span of each product.

- Replaced 131 central heating boilers in 2012/13 at a cost of £572,000. This improved energy efficiency and should save the residents of these properties about £350 per year on fuel costs.
- Obtained grants of £24,000 to provide external insulation at 24 homes that are built of a single brick wall and are therefore unsuitable for cavity wall insulation.
- Will continue to apply for grant funding so that we can insulate the rest of our single wall properties so that more residents can benefit from these improvements.
- Compare our costs against those of other landlords. The average costs of our repairs service (£591.22 per property) compares very well with other landlords (6th of 48 landlords) but our costs are above average for housing management (£599.69 per property and 36th of 48 landlords). Our costs are above average for estate services but reduced by almost £9 per property from £215.53 in 2010/11 to £206.59 in 2011/12. Source: HouseMark's Northern & Midlands Traditional Housing Association Benchmarking Club report for 2011/12.
- Develop an action plan each year to address any issues identified when we compare our costs to other landlords.
- Saved £8,239 by holding non urgent repairs and then carrying them out as one project.
- Saved £27,087 (9%) by moving our utility contracts to different suppliers.
- Saved £22,166 (4%) by changing the specification for the central heating boiler replacements.
- Saved £10,316 (42%) by tendering for non domestic gas servicing contracts (communal and office).
- Agreed with residents how any savings are used.

You Said	What We Did	What difference has this made?
Install new energy efficient central heating boilers to save residents' fuel bills	Prioritised the replacement of old, inefficient central heating boilers and fires	Residents should save up to £350 each year on their fuel bills
Provide advice to residents on the best deals from utility companies	Publicised details of energy comparison organisations in our residents' newsletter	Information has been provided to residents on how to get the best deals from utility companies

The Association has an annual turnover of over £5 million and it is essential that we are prudent and manage funds carefully. We have long term financial plans to make sure that we can meet future costs that are likely to occur. Our five year financial forecast shows that we will spend less than the income we will receive and will therefore have money in reserve, which ensures that the Association has sufficient funds.

Our value for money strategy aims to achieve our business plans by improving our understanding of our current value for money position; achieving efficiency gains; increasing customer satisfaction; targeting resources towards frontline services; encouraging a value for money culture; setting value for money targets; reporting our performance to residents and ensuring they are consulted about how any gains should be used.

Reviews have already been carried out on the repairs service, re-letting of vacant properties, and how we buy goods and services. These reviews have resulted in changes to the way that we work, which will improve value for money and services to residents.

Significant investment has been made in the Association's information technology to improve efficiency and customer service, including electronic document management to save time and the cost of transferring information between different offices; web access for residents to access their rent account and other information on line; and web access for Board members to access documents electronically saving staff time, printing and postage costs.

Jargon buster:

Value for money is more than saving money, it is about getting the right balance between cost, resident satisfaction with our homes and services, performance and sustainability (long lasting and environmentally friendly).

Turnover is the income the Association receives from rents, service charges, management fees and contributions to the Railway Benefit Fund.



Sayers Close, Leeds

We have assessed all of our properties to find out how much income is expected and how much each scheme costs to manage and maintain. The total value of the income from all of our properties over the next 35 years, after the costs of maintenance and management have been deducted, is estimated as £33.7 million, with an average value per property of nearly £24,000. We will now investigate why some properties have lower values because these generate less income and/or cost more to manage and maintain; and what we can do about this.

Our properties are worth a lot more than we have borrowed to build new homes. We will be looking at how we can generate more funding so that we can build new homes for people in need without putting the Association at financial risk.

A full copy of our self assessment against the value for money standard is available on request.

Plans for Improvements

We were not able to keep to our promises to establish a value for money steering group that includes residents, staff and Board members; report on costs and performance based on geographical area; or develop a 5 year programme of value for money service reviews covering all areas of the Association but we still intend to do these.

We will also review our procurement policy; and set targets to make value for money savings in each service.

How we performed	2012/13	2011/12	
Value for money savings achieved as a percentage of total revenue spend	1.09%	0.62%	✓
Percentage of residents satisfied that their rent provides value for money	91%	94.2%	⊖
Percentage of residents not satisfied that their rent provides good value for money	3%	2.6%	⊖
Percentage of residents satisfied that their service charges provide value for money	85%	Not measured	-
Percentage of residents not satisfied that their service charges provide good value for money	4%	Not measured	-

How we compare to other landlords

	Of 48 landlords we were ranked:
Percentage of complainants satisfied with the outcome of their complaint	7th
Percentage of complainants satisfied with complaint handling	14th
Percentage of residents satisfied with the overall quality of their home	5th
Total cost of repairs, including repairs to empty properties ready for re-letting	6th
Percentage of residents satisfied with repairs and maintenance	10th
Average time to complete a repair	26th
Total housing management costs per property	36th
Percentage of rent collected	12th
Current tenant rent arrears as a percentage of rent due	22nd
Former tenant rent arrears as a percentage of the rent due	15th
Percentage of residents satisfied their views are listened to and acted on	7th
Satisfaction with overall service	3rd
Percentage of properties available for letting at the end of the year	42nd
Average time in days to re-let an empty property	34th
Rent lost due to empty properties	24th
Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live	2nd

These figures are taken from the comparison of 48 landlords in HouseMark's 'Northern and Midlands Traditional Association Benchmarking Club report' for 2011/12.



Jargon buster:

Benchmarking is when we compare our Association against other landlords. We use a company called HouseMark who collate information from a large number of landlords and we use this information to compare ourselves against others.

The higher our ranking, the better our performance, for example, being ranked 2nd shows that we have performed very well compared to the other landlords but being ranked 42nd shows that we have performed very poorly compared to the other landlords.

Housing management costs include the costs of collecting rent and rent arrears, resident consultation and involvement, dealing with complaints of anti social behaviour, managing tenancies and letting properties.

Financial Information

Notes on the Association's financial position at 31 March 2013

The Association's surplus at the end of 2012/13 was £585,065 compared with £601,189 for the previous year.

The amount of money held on deposit increased by £335,545 during the year; whilst cash decreased by £2,899,655 due to the purchase of 55 properties in York early in the year.

At 31 March 2013 the Association had cash of £885,370 plus short term investments of £954,981.

Building of new homes was funded by grants from the government, borrowing and surpluses.

Rent written off (bad debts of former tenants) was 0.34% of the rent due.

Our properties are worth significantly more than our current borrowing. Debt was equivalent to 14% of the Association's net worth.

The Board of Trustees are satisfied with the financial results and confident that there are adequate funds to achieve the business plan and ensure the future viability of the Association.

Summary Income & Expenditure Account

	2013 £	2012 £
Turnover	5,807,345	5,222,726
Operating costs	-4,806,506	-4,209,227
Operating surplus	<u>1,000,839</u>	<u>1,013,499</u>
Profit on the sale of fixed asset investments	41,233	
Legacies receivable	28,072	
Interest receivable	5,442	57,043
Interest payable	-490,521	-469,353
Surplus for the year	<u>585,065</u>	<u>601,189</u>

Summary Balance Sheet	2013 £	2012 £
Fixed assets:		
Housing properties	24,772,002	19,832,984
Other fixed assets	413,233	399,256
Total fixed assets	<u>25,185,235</u>	<u>20,232,240</u>
Current assets:		
Debtors	288,293	632,869
Cash & investments	1,840,351	4,404,461
Total current assets	<u>2,128,644</u>	<u>5,037,330</u>
Less creditors falling due within one year	-1,206,665	-1,467,273
Net current (liabilities)/assets	<u>921,979</u>	<u>3,570,057</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>26,107,214</u>	<u>23,802,297</u>
Creditors falling due after more than one year	6,600,854	4,881,002
Accumulated surplus	3,868,917	3,656,981
Designated reserves	15,637,443	15,264,314
Association's funds	<u>26,107,214</u>	<u>23,802,297</u>

This information has been summarised and the full audited accounts are available on request.



Jargon buster:

Surplus is the amount left over at the end of the financial year when all costs have been paid.

Turnover includes rents and service charges, income from managed associations, other income from housing activities; and contributions to the railway benefits fund.

Financial Information

Where our money comes from

	£	Key
Rents from housing for older people	3,086,572	Orange
Rents from general needs housing	1,814,928	Red
Service charges from housing for older people	700,193	Dark Blue
Service charges from general needs housing	51,081	Cyan
Leasehold schemes for the elderly service charges and other income	152,052	Light Green
Management services	1,340	Pink
Contributions to the benefit fund	1,179	Light Blue
Total	5,807,345	

Jargon buster:

Housing management includes the costs of collecting rent and rent arrears, resident consultation and involvement, dealing with complaints of anti social behaviour, managing tenancies and letting properties.

Services and support – these are the costs of providing services such as garden maintenance, cleaning of communal areas and the emergency alarm call system for older residents.

Jargon buster:

Bad debts are rent arrears owed by current and former tenants that cannot be collected.

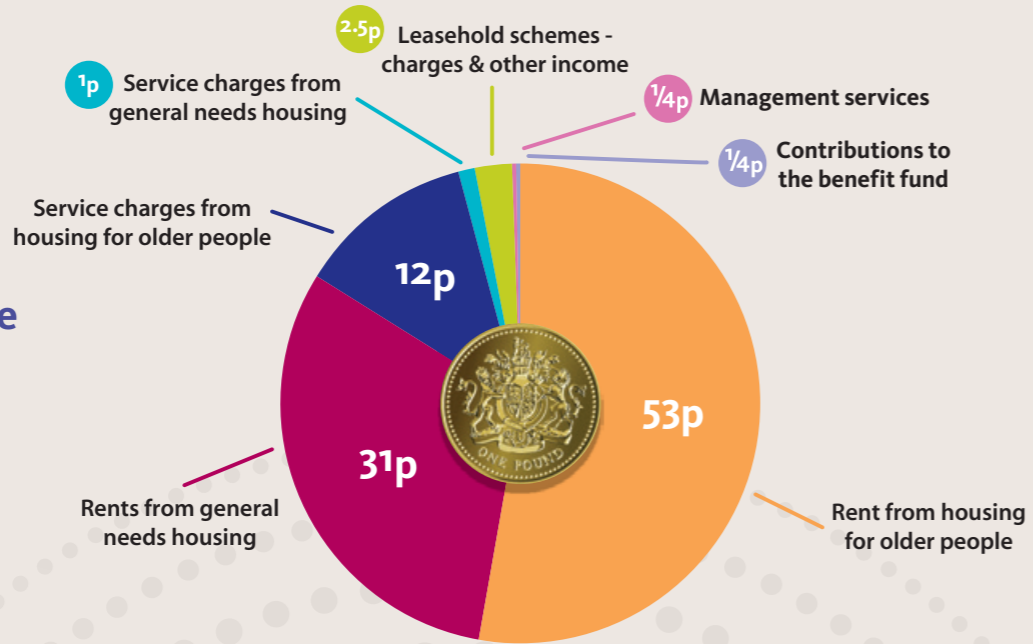
Management services are costs incurred from managing a small number of properties for another organisation.

Benefit fund – this is a small charitable fund managed on behalf of railway workers.

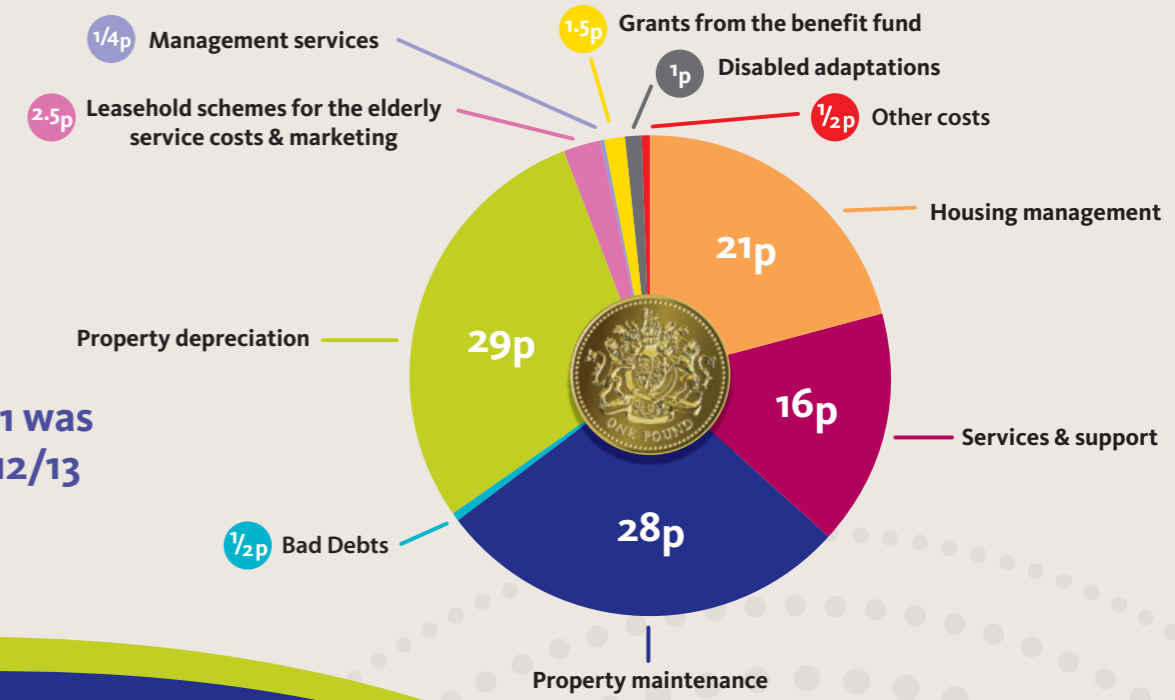
What we spent our money on

	£	Key
Housing management	1,009,493	Orange
Services and support	787,867	Red
Property maintenance	1,344,152	Dark Blue
Bad debts	16,655	Cyan
Property depreciation	1,392,962	Light Green
Leasehold schemes for the elderly service costs and marketing	119,260	Pink
Management services	1,340	Light Blue
Grants from the benefit fund	84,261	Yellow
Disabled adaptations	37,266	Grey
Other costs	13,250	Red
Total	4,806,506	

Where each £1 came from in 2012/13



How each £1 was spent in 2012/13





Railway Housing
Association

About us

As at 31 March 2013, Railway Housing Association has 1,487 homes in 24 local authority areas – Northumberland, Carlisle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead, Sunderland, Durham, Hartlepool, Stockton on Tees, Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Hambleton, Harrogate, Selby, Scarborough, Ryedale, Leeds, York, Doncaster, Kingston upon Hull, East Riding and Hereford.

917 of our homes are for older people; 495 are for people aged under 60 years of age; 73 are leasehold properties for older people; and 2 are family houses for shared ownership.

Our office in Darlington (Bank Top House, Garbutt Square, Neasham Road DL1 4DR) is open between 8.30 am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Out of office hours, residents can report emergency repairs by using their emergency pull cord or alarm if they have one; or by telephoning 01429 298988.

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

Please let us know what you think about this report, we would love to hear from you

Railway Housing Association

Telephone: 0800 0287428 or 0300 1230737

Text (to report non urgent repairs): - 07508 526708

Email: info@railwayha.co.uk

www.railwayha.co.uk