

# ANNUAL REPORT TO RESIDENTS 2011

This supplement to our main Annual Report 2011 sets out RSMHA's recent success in meeting the regulatory standards required of housing associations, together with our improvement plans for the future.

## Standard 1: Resident involvement and customer care

### Resident involvement

We want to ensure that the views of customers are paramount when ever we're planning services or new homes and we're committed to consulting widely with residents at all times.

#### **How you rate us**

88% of tenants and 69% of homeowners think we keep them informed.  
77% of tenants and 60% of homeowners think that we take account of their views.

#### **What we do now**

- We regularly carry out surveys about our services to seek ideas from residents about improvements.
- We arrange and attend meetings and visit estates to discuss local issues and spending priorities.
- We actively support residents groups to bring neighbours together to shape local services.
- Residents are invited to join our recruitment panel for new scheme managers.
- We have a resident Board member who is able to influence decisions at a senior level.
- Information about our services is published on our website and in our Open House newsletter.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We will launch a new Customer Panel to enable more residents to play a greater role in influencing and making decisions about the services we provide via email and postal surveys.
- We will invite residents to observe at our Housing Committee meetings and, if they wish, to apply to join the committee to help examine service and performance across the association.
- We will seek to appoint a second resident to join our Board of Management.
- We will provide training and support for those residents wishing to get more involved.

### Customer care

We want to provide the highest quality of service and care and to make it as easy as possible for you to get in touch. We appreciate that if something goes wrong you expect us to investigate and to put it right.

#### **How you rate us**

90% of tenants and 78% of homeowners are satisfied with our overall level of service.  
89% of tenants and 65% of homeowners say our staff are helpful.  
71% of all residents are satisfied with the ease of getting hold of staff.

#### **What we do now**

- We've published Customer Service Standards setting out the level of service you should expect to receive from RSMHA across a range of areas, including customer enquiries, repairs and maintenance, resident consultation, rent and service charges, and gardening and cleaning.
- We visit all new residents after 6 weeks to check how they're settling in to their new home.
- Residents can pay rent and service charges, report repairs and make enquiries via our website.
- We keep up to date information about residents' needs and requirements (eg household size and disability) so we can match our services to suit.
- We provide a translation service and can supply information in different ways, such as large print.
- We treat all customer complaints seriously and have recently introduced a new Complaints Policy.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We propose to make changes to the way we respond to telephone calls, especially at busy times.
- We will publish advice leaflets on looking after your home, how to make rent payments, etc.
- We will provide more information about aids and adaptations available to older or disabled people.

## Standard 2: Maintaining good quality homes

### Repairs and Maintenance

We want to provide a high quality, reliable and cost effective repairs service for residents.

#### **How you rate us**

91% of tenants and 57% of homeowners are satisfied with our overall repairs service.

89% of tenants and 69% of homeowners are satisfied with the quality of their repairs.

#### **What we do now**

- We aim to complete responsive repairs within set times: *Emergencies* within 24 hours; *Urgent* within 7 days; *Essential* within 14 days and *Routine* within 30 days.
- We will text you (if we have your mobile number) to confirm your repair appointment time.
- 100% of annual gas servicing is done on time and complies with legislation.
- We ask residents to complete and return satisfaction cards after any repair is carried out.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We'll be asking residents for more feedback about our repairs service to make it even better.

### Quality of property

We want to ensure that all our homes are safe, secure and comfortable for residents.

#### **How you rate us**

94% of tenants homeowners are satisfied with the quality of their home.

#### **What we do now**

- Our aim is to provide well designed, spacious homes with a high standard of finish.
- All of our homes meet the Government's Decent Home Standard.
- We're implementing the priorities set out in our health & safety action plan.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We plan to introduce a range of measures to keep our properties ahead of minimum sustainability standards, while providing affordable energy for our residents.

## Standard 3: Empty homes, tenancies, leases, rents & service charges

### Letting empty homes

We're committed to letting all vacancies in a fair, open and efficient way, taking into account the housing needs and preferences of all people who apply to us for housing.

#### **What we do now**

- Details about all RSMHA properties and schemes are published on our website.
- We advertise most vacant homes via 'choice-based lettings' schemes that allow applicants to bid for the home of their choice. Some vacancies (for over 55s) are let via direct application to RSMHA.
- We're developing 'local lettings plans' to help create balanced and sustainable communities.
- We promote Mutual Exchanges via [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) to help residents to move home.
- We publicise leasehold and shared ownership homes for sale via open days and our website.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We will seek to reduce the number of days it takes us to re-let our empty homes.
- We will introduce a new lettings standard setting out the level of work we will do in empty homes.

### Tenancies and leases

We want residents to have the most secure form of tenancy and lease agreement available and to be clear on their rights and obligations as tenants and leaseholders.

#### **What we do now**

- Most residents in our rented homes have an Assured (lifetime) tenancy.
- Most new tenants are given a Starter Tenancy that later converts to an Assured tenancy if there are no serious tenancy-related problems during their first 12 months at the property.

- **What we will do in future**
- We propose to update our handbooks for residents, explaining rights and responsibilities.

### **Rents and service charges**

We're committed to charging fair and affordable rents and service charges and we'll make sure that any increases are in line with legislation and are explained fully to residents.

#### **What we do now**

- Our typical weekly rents are approx £90 for one-bed, £110 for two-bed & £125 for three-bed homes.
- Our rents are increased each April in line with the September Retail Price Index, plus ½%. We may also add a maximum of £2.00 to this amount, so long as we do not exceed national rent limits.
- We seek to keep rent arrears as low as possible. At 31 March 2011 our current arrears stood at 3.12% of rental income compared to the national average of 4.0% for housing associations.
- We hold service meetings with leaseholders twice a year, usually in February and September.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We will keep our rents and service charges under review to ensure they are fair and affordable.
- If you live in a rented home, we propose to consult further with you about service charges.

## **Standard 4: Looking after neighbourhoods and communal areas**

We want the neighbourhood and communal areas where you live to be clean, safe and attractive and we aim to deal effectively and quickly with any anti-social behaviour problems reported to us.

#### **How you rate us**

86% of tenants and 94% of homeowners are satisfied with their neighbourhood.

#### **What we do now**

- We publish specifications for residents regarding local gardening and cleaning contracts.
- We work closely with the Police and other agencies to try to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- We support victims and will offer to provide an independent mediation service.
- New residents have Starter Tenancies to allow us to address any problems during their first year.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We intend to introduce a new Anti-Social Behaviour policy to more clearly explain and set down for residents what action can be taken by RSMHA if problems arise and the support victims will receive.

## **Standard 5: Providing value for money**

We want to deliver cost-effective services and ensure that service charges are fair and reasonable.

#### **How you rate us**

90% of tenants and 62% of homeowners say their rent & service charge is value for money.

#### **What we do now**

- We regularly review the cost and quality of the services we provide, including cleaning and gardening services, our scheme manager service, and buildings insurance.
- We consult widely with residents about the level and cost of service they want at their own scheme.
- We undertake competitive tendering for all large repair and service contracts.
- We install energy efficient heating and power systems in the new homes we build.

#### **What we will do in future**

- We will shortly conduct a resident satisfaction survey about our current gardening and cleaning services and the views of residents will direct influence the services we provide in future.
- We'll keep working with our suppliers to keep costs and service charges as low as possible.

## **Standard 6: How we run things and our financial health**

RSMHA performance, strategic objectives and finances are overseen by a Board of Management whose members are drawn from a range of financial, legal and housing-related backgrounds.

**What we do now**

- Our Board meets every 3 months to review performance and identify priorities for the association.
- We ensure that we meet the financial covenants set by the banks which have lent RSMHA money.
- Every year our finances are checked and approved by an independent firm of auditors.
- We annually supply detailed information to our regulators, local councils and the Charity Commission.

**What we will do in future**

- We will implement a new risk management system to ensure that the association continues to flourish and grow without taking undue risks.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report for residents.

We would welcome any comments or suggestions you might wish to make, either about the report itself or about the services we provide.

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