



# The Gateshead Housing Company Customers and Communities Committee

Thursday, 26 February 2015 at 10am  
Room S21, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead Council  
*Agenda*

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Item	Business
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
	<b><u><a href="#">ITEMS FOR DECISION</a></u></b>
3.	<b>Minutes (Pages 3-6)</b> To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 6 November 2014
4.	<b>Matters Arising</b>
5.	<b>TALISMAN – Progress Report (Pages 7-28)</b> Report of Involvement and Diversity Manager
6.	<b>Safe Places Scheme (Pages 29-32)</b> Report of Involvement and Diversity Manager
7.	<b>Customer Inspections: Multi – Storey blocks (Pages 33-36)</b> Report of Director Customers and Communities

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Contact: Stuart Gibson Tel: (0191) 433 5308 Date: 19 February 2015

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Item Business

8. **Date and Time of Meetings 2015/16**

The committee is asked to approve the following schedule of meetings in 2015/16: -

- Wednesday, 6 May 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 10 September 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 5 November 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 11 February 2016 at 10am

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

9. **Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership Update: April to December 2014 (Pages 37-53)**

Report of Director of Customers and Communities

10. **Customer Service Excellence (Pages 54-57)**

Report of Involvement and Diversity Manager

11. **Customer Involvement Activity – Update (Pages 58-69)**

Report of Involvement and Diversity Manager

12. **Forward Plan (Pages 70-72)**

Report of Director of Customers and Communities

13. **Items for Future Agendas**



**CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**6 November 2014**

**PRESENT:**

**Directors**

Robert Buckley (Chair)  
Elizabeth Bird  
Sheila Bouitieh  
Joanne Carr  
Pauline Dillon  
Kathryn Ferdinand  
John Hamilton

**Advisers**

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Kevin Johnson	Head of Customer Services
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

**Apologies**

Eileen Gill

**25 MEMBERSHIP**

The membership of the committee was noted.

**26 MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 11 September 2014 were approved as a correct record.

**27 MATTERS ARISING – TALISMAN REVIEW OF VOIDS**

The Committee received an assurance that both TGHC and Mears would aim to adhere to timescales set for future reviews.

**28 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE UPDATE: APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Committee received a performance update for the period April to September 2014.

During the period, 936 new cases were opened, a decrease of 17% compared to the same period last year. There were 481 cases currently being

investigated across the borough, a decrease of 3% compared to the same period last year.

The top three types of anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues recorded during the period were noise nuisance (245), domestic abuse (137) and animal nuisance (137).

300 formal and Legal Actions were taken, which equates to two actions being taken each working day. There were 742 referrals to other agencies in relation to supporting customers during the investigation of ASB cases.

The Committee also received an update on the following ASB procedure developments: -

- Customer satisfaction
- Hate Crime incidents
- Domestic Abuse
- Events
- Customer Assessment Tool
- Vetting and Exclusions
- Legal Tools and Powers
- Fire Safety Initiative

The Committee asked if there were any clear reasons why the number of new cases had reduced. It was noted that there could be a number of reasons such as staff training and demolitions, however the Company still needed to complete detailed analysis to be absolutely clear.

The Committee noted that there had been a lot change in commissioned services from the voluntary sector. The Company couldn't tap into these as early as it used to be able to and as a consequence was taking legal action earlier. These were incurring additional costs which the Company will need to keep an eye on. The Committee felt that the Company should look at modelling when it was not taking action earlier and the impact of this. The Committee was informed that this and access to support when cases are more complex would be fed into the 5-year business plan.

RESOLVED – That the performance update on tackling anti-social behaviour be noted, subject to some changes being made to the presentation of the bar and pie charts in the Appendices to the report to make them easier to read.

(Joanne Carr declared an interest in this matter due to being a volunteer at Mental Health North East)

## **29 RESPONSE TO TALISMAN REVIEW OF VOIDS SERVICE**

The Committee received a formal response to the recommendations made in the TALISMAN review of the voids service which was presented to the Committee on 11 September 2014.

Officers met with representatives of TALISMAN on 21 October 2014 to discuss the recommendations. At that meeting, the representatives from TALISMAN

said that they were satisfied with the draft response and the Company's approach to the recommendations.

The wider implications of the Company's approach to tenancy management are already in discussion as part of objective setting and planning for the next business plan. This work is focused on the strategic objective of sustaining tenancies and will be informed by the recommendations identified by TALISMAN.

The Committee felt that this was an indication of the good work that TALISMAN were doing though it was also felt that some of the detail in the recommendations were too operational for Board.

The Committee was informed that any changes to the rechargeable repairs process resulting in changes to policy would require Council agreement.

The Committee was also informed that any additional decoration would be more costly and the Company would need to be able to present a business case to the Council that the benefits outweighed any additional costs.

RESOLVED – That the response to the TALISMAN review of the voids service be noted.

### **30 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2014/15**

The Committee received an update on complaints and compliments performance over the first two quarters of 2014/15.

Details of the number of complaints recorded, responding within 10 working days, customer satisfaction with complaints management, compliments, service improvements, the Complaints Scrutiny Panel and progress against the complaints review recommendations were reported.

RESOLVED – (i) That the update on complaints and compliments performance be noted.

(ii) That employees who have been complimented by customers on three or more occasions receive a letter of congratulations from the Chair on behalf of the Committee.

### **31 MOVING FORWARD CUSTOMER TRAINING PROGRAMME 2014/15 – UPDATE**

The Committee received a six month update on the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme for 2014/15.

Details of the current position, feedback from attendees, Lets Get Digital, external training and future plans were reported.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **32 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE**

The committee received an update on customer involvement activity for the second quarter of 2014/15.

During the period, 64 involvement activities took place. Customers have been involved in activities on over 2,830 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during the period and details of these were reported.

Details of Opportunities Knocks, Service Improvement Groups, external recognition and future activity were also reported.

Mears have been involved in a number of community activities during the quarter. In particular, Mears worked with a range of partners including the Company to hold the Local Employment Advisory Forum (Leaf) at Gateshead College's Campus at Gateshead Stadium. An evaluation of the event was submitted.

The Committee expressed its disappointed that no residents attended the afternoon session. However, it was also pointed out that the poster and appendix only referred to a morning session. It was suggested that when planning next year's event Mears should consider this. It was also felt that Mears should reconsider the name as it wasn't advisory.

RESOLVED – That the update on customer involvement activity be noted.

## **33 FORWARD PLAN**

A forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year was submitted.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

## **34 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 26 February 2015 at 10am in Room S21, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** TALISMAN – Progress Report

**Report of:** Involvement and Diversity Manager

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on progress against actions identified in TALISMAN reviews completed to date and provide a general update on the Panel.

### Background

2. TALISMAN (Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Management Panel) was established in October 2011.
3. The purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart of how housing services are developed and delivered by The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council.
4. The first review of anti-social behaviour took place between January and June 2012. The Panel's recommendations were presented to this committee in July 2012 and the action plan to address the recommendations was presented to this committee in November 2012. The committee also received a progress report in May 2013 where it was noted that the majority of actions were complete.
5. The second review of rent and income took place between March and September 2013. The Panel's recommendations were presented to this committee in September 2013 and the action plan to address the recommendations was presented to this committee in November 2013.
6. The third review of void management took place between October 2013 and June 2014. The Panel's recommendations were presented to this committee in September 2014 and the action plan to address the recommendations were presented to this committee in November 2014.
7. The committee was informed in its last progress report in September 2014 that the Panel had agreed that its next area of scrutiny would focus on customer service. It had received an initial presentation giving an overview of customer service but was still to decide specific areas it would like to focus this review around.

## Scrutiny Reviews - Progress completing actions

8. At its meeting in September 2014, the committee was informed that most of the actions following the review of anti-social behaviour had already been completed and update was provided of three actions that were still outstanding. The following progress has been made since the last update. Updates are highlighted in red.
- Surveys/sample sizes – A review of our current approach to surveys was provided in a previous report to committee. This included looking at best practice from other organisations around sample sizes and methods of satisfaction collection. In 2013/14, it has been noted that response rates to a number of surveys has fallen. As a result, we will be revisiting this issue in the next financial year to determine if the approach of themed and service specific surveys continues to be the most appropriate way of collecting customer satisfaction information.
  - Collect and report data to SIG for monitoring on length of time taken to resolve ASB cases – This action requires ICT development within our ASB case management system. This is an outstanding action from 2013/14 service plan which will transfer to the 2014/15 service plan. This item is also on the SIG workplan for 2014/15. *Information and findings related to length of time taken to resolve ASB cases was shared with the SIG group at their January meeting and has been added to their March agenda to allow further time for discussion.*
  - Share Housemark data and work with SIG to benchmark – This was discussed with SIG initially as part of 2013/14 workplan, and included performance, satisfaction and costs. *A further update on benchmarking and performance was provided at the November and January ASB SIG. This can now be signed off as complete.*
9. The committee received, at its meeting in September 2014, an updated action plan following the review of rent and income which showed that all the actions had been completed with the exception of the review of the Tenancy Agreement needing to reflect Welfare Reform and its impact on tenants. The Company is looking at mitigating the impacts of Welfare Reform but not specifically through the Tenancy Agreement as it is merely a legal document outlining tenant/landlord rights and responsibilities. The Board has previously received reports around measures the Company is taking to mitigate Welfare Reform and will bring further reports to the Board around its wider approach. This action plan can now be signed off as complete.
10. The committee received, at its meeting in November 2014, an action plan following the review of voids. An updated action plan that shows those that have now been completed and progress with those that are still outstanding is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

## Other Updates

### *Membership*

11. The Committee was informed in September 2014 that there were currently six members on the Panel.



12. In September 2014, Elizabeth Bird was appointed onto the Board as a Tenant Director and as a consequence had to resign from the Panel.
13. In October 2014, another member also left the Panel reducing the membership to four.
14. In December 2014, Hazel Hitchen, who resigned from the Panel in January 2014, expressed an interest to re-join the Panel. There is nothing in the terms of reference that excludes a former member of TALISMAN from re-joining the Panel if they haven't completed their full term of office. The current members of the Panel approved the decision for Hazel to re-join and she was reappointed to the Panel in January.
15. An expression of interest was received in January from Chris Sleight, a tenant who lives in Chopwell to join the Panel. Following an interview with three members of the Panel, including the Chair on 13 February 2014, Chris was appointed onto the Panel, increasing the current membership back to six.
16. Although there are now six members on the Panel, four of these are from the West of the Borough. The Company recognises this imbalance in representation from across the Borough and will be carrying out a targeted recruitment campaign during the next couple of months at those areas where it is under-represented. This will include promoting the work of the Panel specifically to the Multi-Storey and Leaseholder Service Improvement Groups and the BME Forum.
17. As part of this process, the Company is also looking to produce a more user-friendly leaflet and to generally look at better ways of raising the profile of TALISMAN.

### ***Review of Customer Service***

18. The Panel is currently undertaking its fifth review, which is of customer service. Following an initial presentation giving an overview of customer service in the Company, the Panel agreed to specifically focus its review on the local housing office network.
19. As part of this review, the Panel has been looking at various information including the following: -
  - Position statement for Neighbourhood Services
  - Organisation chart for local offices
  - Job Profiles
  - Board reports from previous housing office reviews
  - Complaints
  - Website
20. The Panel produced a satisfaction survey which was sent to all members of the Service Improvement Groups, BME and Disabled Forums. The results of these are being collated.
21. The Panel has completed a visit to each of the local offices to observe customer service. As well as observing customer service between tenants and staff on the reception, they also had an opportunity to inspect the office, sit in the back office

and observe a sign up with a new tenant. During one of the visits, the Panel member was also able to observe an interview with a tenant.

22. Focus groups with housing management assistants and housing managers are currently being organised as the next stage of this review.
23. The Panel is aiming to complete this review and present its findings to the meeting of this committee in May 2015.

### ***Terms of Reference***

24. The Panel has reviewed and made some suggested changes to its terms of reference. These include reducing the number of scrutiny reviews they will aim to complete each year from four to one or two and increasing the maximum term of office from six years to 10 years. This reflects the learning of the panel and organisation since it was originally established.
25. The amended terms of reference are attached at Appendix 2 to this report. The amendments are highlighted in blue.

### **External Events**

26. Members of the Panel attended the fourth Northern Housing Consortium Annual Tenant Panel Conference in November 2014 at York Racecourse. The Panel facilitated one of the workshops at the Conference with David Hewitson, Chair of TALISMAN and the Company's Governance and Risk Officer presenting its review of voids.
27. Some members of the Panel are attending Scrutiny: A Deeper Involvement on 23-25 February 2015 at Trafford Hall. At the same time, another member of the Panel, the Mentor and the Governance and Risk Officer are attending a networking event in Darlington on 24 February 2015.

### **Link to values**

28. This report relates to the following company values: -
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Being a listening and learning organisation
  - Being honest, accountable and transparent
  - Embracing equality

### **Impact on tenants**

29. The overall aim of the TALISMAN is to ensure that the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart at how housing services are delivered.
30. The outcomes of the TALISMAN reviews to date have identified areas for improvement which will benefit tenants and leaseholders as a whole.

## **Risk Management Implications**

31. Failure to engage with tenants has been identified as an overall strategic risk for the company. The TALISMAN builds on the existing structures in place for tenants and leaseholders to shape services and influence our delivery.
32. Feedback and monitoring of responses to recommendations following a review by the TALISMAN is fundamental to ensuring that tenants feel they are being listened to, encouraging their ongoing engagement.
33. The TALISMAN supports the company's overall approach to co-regulation as set out in the Homes and Community Agency's regulatory framework.

## **Financial Implications**

34. There is a budget in place to support the operation of TALISMAN. Where recommendations are made which have budgetary implications they would be considered on a case by case basis.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

35. TALISMAN's code of conduct includes specific expectations relating to equality and diversity. All new members of the panel will either attend a full day training session or undertake the company's e-learning course to give them a level of understanding.
36. In addition, the framework for each review includes consideration as to whether the service is inclusive.

## **Value for Money Implications**

37. The TALISMAN's framework for reviews includes a remit to consider value for money within the services they inspect.

## **Health Implications**

38. The reviews undertaken by the TALISMAN will ultimately result in positive health implications for tenants and leaseholders accessing the service. The TALISMAN have recognised that where it is difficult to use a service, or the information provided is unclear, this can lead to undue stress and concern for a customer.

## **Environmental Implications**

39. There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report.

## **Consultation carried out**

40. Each review will involve significant consultation with the service manager, service users, employees and possibly partners to determine how well the service is performing.
41. In addition, the TALISMAN is consulted on the proposed responses to recommendations by the service area to allow negotiations where necessary.

## **Recommendation**

42. The committee is recommended to

- approve the updated TALISMAN terms of reference;
- comment on the progress made since the last six monthly update in September 2014.



## Service Feedback to committee on TALISMAN recommendations



Service Area	Void Service				
Date of response to committee	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2014				
Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
<b>Recommendation already implemented</b>					
Position statements should be written for every service area as soon as possible at the start of the financial year.	The "Void" service area is part of the overall Repair Management Service and a position statement for this is produced at the start of each year as part of the preparation for the annual report. For this review, a statement focusing just on voids was also requested and was provided  (For any service, if TALISMAN requires a bespoke statement then this will be produced by the Service Manager at the commencement of any future review.)	Phil Hogg / Russell Urwin	Complete	Used to formulate the Annual Report. Annual report sent to all tenants.	
The term voids be replaced, suggest 'Empty or vacated property'. This may clarify the term for tenants.	Communications team have used the term empty property or vacant property on Housing Company website and will consider for future publications.	Mark Charlton / Ian Clarkin	Complete	Visible on the website and available to all tenants	

Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
First visit to all vacated properties by both TGHC and Mears representatives and a relet category agreed.	<p>Joint inspections have been in place since 19 May 2014. We will continue to monitor the number of category variations after initial inspection to see if this change has been successful.</p> <p>Findings to date show an improvement in the accuracy of the first variation.</p>	Mark Charlton	Complete	Performance monitored by Company/Council Core Group and reported to Committee	
Aim to visit all outgoing tenants' homes before the end of their tenancy to encourage them to leave the property in a reasonable condition in accordance with the tenancy agreement, to leave it in a good decorative order, clean and safe conditions.	<p>We currently aim to complete visits to all tenants before tenancies end.</p> <p>Visits are completed on 100% of transfers, however, abandoned properties, evictions and deaths are not visited prior to tenancy end.</p>	Jackie Armstrong	Complete	Ending your tenancy leaflet and termination procedure	
Collect and collate failure information over areas of dispute e.g washing machine plumbing holes. Look at reasons for failing lettable standard as this leads to delay and loss of income –identify if there could be a case for more flexibility such as doing	<p>Lettable Standard “fails” have been added to the set weekly agenda for the operational meeting between TGHC and Mears. Fails will therefore be discussed on a weekly basis with trend information collated on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Mears have implemented a new procedure in which all fails are to be discussed between area Supervisor and Mears Responsive Maintenance and Void Manager.</p>	Mark Charlton	Complete	<p>Operational / Partnership meetings</p> <p>Performance monitored by Company/Council Core Group and reported to Committee</p>	

## Appendix 1

Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
some remedial work after tenant has moved in.	<p>A review of tenant satisfaction is completed on a quarterly basis. Satisfaction remains above 95%, we continue to monitor dissatisfaction.</p> <p>Joint handovers have been introduced during October. We will continue to further monitor fails and ensure learning.</p> <p>A review of the current performance indicators will be reviewed by March 2015 in line with any future contract extensions or tender exercises.</p>				
TGHC and Mears void officers to have regular joint meetings. A list of priority jobs to be shared weekly between TGHC and Mears.	<p>Systems are in place to monitor properties undergoing work with Mears. A report is shared between the partnership on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Properties are discussed on a weekly basis with attendance required according to discussions.</p>	Mark Charlton	Complete	Company/Council Core Group in contract review	
The Panel had noted that as a result of Welfare Reform, some property types were not being advertised due to their current difficulty to let, for example 2-bed flats.	<p>All available properties are being actively advertised, but we limit the number of adverts of the same type in each block in any week</p> <p>Where there are high levels of empty properties in one location, we may defer the relet process until other similar properties have</p>	Jackie Armstrong	Initial actions Completed	Company/Council and reported to Customers and Communities Committee	When action plan was previously presented vacant properties stood at 507 with 39 held. Vacant properties are

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<p>Produce regular updates around properties which are taking longer to let and what the company is doing to tackle this issue.</p>	<p>been let.</p> <p>A warning marker is built into Northgate showing properties defined as difficult to let. This is monitored and reported to Gateshead Council.</p> <p>Internally we are piloting new techniques to encourage lettings to inform future approaches to marketing. For example, open house viewings, additional décor or carpets and improvements in social media.</p> <p>In September 2014 flats with 2 bedrooms at Redheugh and Eslington Court were redesignated.</p>				<p>now down to 435 with 27 held due to low demand. The redesignation of properties in Redheugh and Eslington Courts was implemented in September 2014 and has had a positive impact on the number of lets.</p> <p>The assessment of demand undertaken in February/March 2015 will be updated and reported to Board.</p>
<p>Collection of keys to be centralised and limited to two collections per day. Suggest that this should be linked to delivery of internal post.</p>	<p>Upon ending of a tenancy a customer has the right to hand keys in at all offices across the Borough. Using the internal post would cause delays in the void process.</p>	<p>Mark Charlton</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Operational / Partnership meetings</p>	



Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
	Discussions have led to process changes which have been implemented. Mears aim to collect keys in a structured way to ensure efficient use of resources. We continue to monitor any delays and will amend processes accordingly in the future.				
<b>For future implementation</b>					
Redecoration voucher scheme to be reviewed and alternatives considered to see if it could offer better value for money for the company and tenants. Currently relies of the tenants' DIY skills being adequate.	<p>Agree we should review the décor voucher scheme.</p> <p>We have a number of procurement exercises that will be commenced in this financial year including Décor vouchers, security and Energy Performance Certificates.</p>	Simon Chrisp	April 2015	Home SIG, Resources and Customers and Communities Committee on policy changes	To be commenced upon completion of decoration cost analysis work.
<p>Suggest that would be more cost effective if Mears could apply one coat of emulsion in one colour to all walls and one coat of undercoat and gloss to all woodwork. This would ensure a good visual effect.</p> <p>Consider that Mears</p>	<p>Cost analysis exercise to be completed to assess the value of the vouchers per empty property (given out to customers) against the cost of actual redecoration in properties.</p> <p>Costing information and analysis will be required before any changes could be made to the current process.</p> <p>An evaluation of the results will be required in line with current available budgets.</p>	Mark Charlton / Shaun Rowell	Jan 2015	Home SIG	We have started decorating void properties in some localities. We are evaluating the impact of this work and will implement in 2015/16 a targeted

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<p>should decorate all sheltered, elderly and vulnerable tenants properties and consider redecorating all relet, not least to set the standard showing how properties should be left by tenants.</p>					<p>approach to decoration to increase lettability This work will be linked to the updated assessment of demand.</p>
<p>To review the Lettable Standard leaflet every two years.</p>	<p>Agreed that the leaflet should be reviewed on a more regular basis. Lettable Standard review to be added to the Home SIG agendas.</p>	<p>Mark Charlton</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Home SIG, Customers and Communities Committee on policy changes</p>	<p>Review of the Lettable Standard booklet is scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> April with the Home SIG.</p>
<p>A request for further information regarding one of the empty properties visited identified that the local housing offices do not keep copies of references given to other housing providers when a former tenant moves out of the borough.</p> <p>The former tenant had been recharged for poor quality DIY work carried</p>	<p>A copy of all future references will be stored electronically in Northgate against the individual.</p>	<p>Craig Gandy</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>All offices now store references electronically between the main server and the Northgate Document Management System (DMS). By June 2015 all offices will operate with DMS.</p>

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<p>out to the property, however it was not possible to check whether the housing provider had requested this information as part of the reference.</p> <p>All requests for references from other housing providers be recorded by a Senior Lettings Officer and details be held on file.</p>					
<p>It needed to be made clear to tenants the standard of property expected when tenant leaves the property. Produce a property standard leaflet for new and transferring residents. To be drawn up, monitored and reviewed with residents. To be issued to a tenant when they put in their four weeks notice.</p>	<p>Review the “ending your tenancy” booklet in line with the rechargeable repairs review with consultation from customers. Clarity to be given with regards to the expectation on customers in terms of final property condition.</p>	<p>Jonathan Graham</p>	<p>April 2015</p>	<p>Home SIG consultation and feedback</p>	<p>Due to the close relationship between the condition of a property at the end of the tenancy and the Lettable Standard we have linked the two reviews. Both will be presented to the Home SIG 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015</p>

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<b>Future Consideration</b>					
The Company currently doesn't always post inspect work where a tenant has had permission for improvements or alterations. Ensure that inspections are carried out to make sure work has been done correctly to avoid remedial works when the property becomes empty.	We currently inspect all high risk permission requests. Items such as gas, electric or structural changes would be inspected. Lower level permissions are inspected on a risk based approach, for example permission for fences or built in wardrobes.	Andrew Mason / Ian Burton	TBC	Home SIG, Customers and Communities Committee on policy changes	We continue to inspect high risk permission requests and any amendments to policies and procedures will be considered in the future.
All residents to receive an annual visit to check on the state and upkeep of the property. This is a fundamental requirement of asset management, both TGHC and Mears officers agreed with this approach. Identify and prioritise visits to at risk tenants, e.g young and first time tenants, single parents and residents	<p>A range of tenancy visits are currently carried out in properties to enable us to identify any property or tenancy issues.</p> <p>External learning is underway to inform how others manage such aspects. Findings will form the basis of a review to develop a risk based tenancy visit programme. Potential to explore opportunities around working with external partners.</p>	Julie McCartney	TBC	SIG consultation and Committee	We are collating information that will inform our future approach to carrying out an annual programme of risk based customer contact visits.

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from out of the area without references.					
Rechargeable work agreed and invoiced before tenant vacates the property and photographic evidence to be taken.	<p>Rechargeable repairs are currently applied via repairs in line with the repair policy. We will undertake discussions with Home SIG and present options to Gateshead Council for review.</p> <p>We are introducing mobile technology to Void Officers which will allow a potentially simplified process to be adopted. For example, photographic evidence collection and sharing.</p>	Jonathan Graham	TBC	<p>Home SIG for consultation</p> <p>Report to Committee</p>	<p>Mobile technology has been implemented in the void service. We are in the process of developing procedures appropriate for mobile working.</p>
<b>Not to be implemented</b>					
Review the definition for Void relet times and consider some exclusions from this calculation e.g renewal of kitchens where parts take 10 days or more to come into stock, or properties with damp issues requiring remedial works. There is a case for looking at problems caused by dampness and old heating systems on a larger scale as this comes	<p>Exclusion from the Repair Partner working period is not viable as it would fail to show the true reflection of performance. The Key Performance Indicator showing time taken from void to let includes properties where exclusion (exclusion based on benchmarking guideline definition) has been made.</p> <p>Performance is calculated on the average time taken to complete all raised jobs. Fails against target information is used to ensure learning.</p> <p>Clarity around procedures and categories has explained the increase in timescales for</p>	Mark Charlton		<p>Performance monitored by Company/Council Core Group and reported to Committee</p>	

Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
<p>up frequently as the cause of most work required bringing property up to lettable standard.</p>	<p>dampness during winter months to allow sufficient drying out time.</p> <p>Trend information around stock availability and delays is tabled at the Partnership Value Engineering Group with efficiencies and VFM savings being identified.</p> <p>Stock condition surveys are to be commissioned by TGHC to provide accurate information on stock. Issues identified may inform future investment.</p>				
<p>Local performance targets for time taken to make property ready to let and to let property once it is handed over.</p>	<p>(Partially already implemented)</p> <p>We have a suite of Key Performance Indicators (PIs) with targets that are agreed with Gateshead Council and that can be benchmarked with other organisations.</p> <p>The key PI for letting properties is “Average number of calendar days taken to let a property” (i.e. from when one tenancy ends, until the next one begins)</p> <p>We break this down into smaller elements and measure performance against each element (so we are always aware of the average time to make ready to let, and then to let).</p>			<p>Performance monitored by Company/Council Core Group and reported to Committee</p>	

Recommendation	How is this to be implemented? (or if it can't be explain the reasons for this including any further discussions with TALISMAN)	Lead service	Target date for completion	Where will progress be reported? (e.g. committee, relevant SIG etc)	Progress Update
	<p>There are targets for the time to prepare the property to the lettable standard for each category of work, but we do not have local targets for the time taken to then let, as this is subject to patterns of demand for properties.</p> <p>We do however set targets for each small step in the process in order to avoid delays (e.g. time to inspect property once keys available; time taken to shortlist bidders after advert closes).</p>				

# TALISMAN

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Introduction

The purpose of **TALISMAN** is to ensure the needs and views of Gateshead residents are at the heart of how services are developed and delivered by The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council.

The three primary aims of the group are to:

- Act as an independent driver for continuous improvement in performance and value for money.
- Ensure that customer views and aspirations are central to improving performance and service delivery.
- To contribute to local and national consultations on policy and strategy issues affecting Gateshead

These three aims should be achieved by working together with The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council in a constructive and positive partnership.

### Remit

The remit of **TALISMAN** is to scrutinise services and approaches to ensure that The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council housing services are providing the best possible products and services to customers and to ensure that decisions have been made with customer needs at heart.

The scope of this scrutiny activity will be limited to the delivery of services provided by The Gateshead Housing Company and housing services at Gateshead Council in relation to the regulatory framework for social housing, covering:

- **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment** (customer service, tenant involvement, accessing services and responding to people's individual needs)
- **Home** (maintaining properties, repairs and maintenance and the health and safety of tenants and leaseholders)
- **Tenancy** (how properties are allocated and tenancy agreements, but not how rents are set)
- **Neighbourhood and Community** (keeping neighbourhoods clean and safe and addressing antisocial behaviour)
- **Value for Money** (how resources are managed and services being delivered in a cost effective but high quality way)

The remit is galvanised around a number core standards:

- To engage and communicate with the wider customer body
- To act with transparency
- To reflect the needs and aspirations of the customer body



- To respect the primacy of The Gateshead Housing Company Board and the Gateshead Council Cabinet
- To make recommendations based on robust evidence, in a constructive and non-confrontational manner
- To highlight good practice

## Safeguards

Given the status, strategic importance and profile of **TALISMAN** it requires a high degree of probity. Safeguards to ensure this is maintained include:

- The development of a team and person specifications and sets of standard competencies.
- Adoption of an enforceable Code of Conduct.
- Use of a suitably qualified mentor to assist operations and assess collective and individual competence.
- A requirement for members to commit to undergoing training and ongoing personal development.
- Regular personal development reviews for members carried out by the Chair and or mentor, with time bound personal development action plans as required.
- A requirement that individual members declare any conflicts of interest in particular scrutiny reviews and agree to be excluded when any conflict of interest occurs.
- A requirement that the group publishes details of its scrutiny activities along with an explanation for the choice of topics, the priority allocated to them, the findings and resulting outcomes.
- A [periodic](#) review of the group's effectiveness carried out by another customer group or staff [and for this to be reported to Customers and Communities Committee](#).
- Ability for The Gateshead Housing Company Board to initiate a full external scrutiny of the **TALISMAN** and instigate appropriate sanctions such as issue of a 'Notice to Improve'.

## Scope

**TALISMAN** will be furnished with a range of powers and responsibilities, on the following basis:

- Full and unfettered access to internal performance data, comparative benchmarking data and customer feedback by submission of a 'Request for Information'.
- Commercially sensitive and personal data will not be shared with the group but the group can expect a full explanation of the reasons for confidentiality.
- Ability to commission independent evidence gathering activities through utilisation of the Service Improvement Groups, Mystery Shoppers and other sources.
- Ability to hear evidence from officers and customers on request.
- Ability to shadow officers in their duties on request (where there are no health and safety implications preventing this).
- Requirement to report on activities and account for prioritising, methods and recommendations.

- The power to report findings and recommendations directly to Boards without staff intervention.
- A formal duty on the Customer and Communities Committee and Executive Team to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to the group's requests and recommendations.
- A requirement that the Customer and Communities Committee and Executive Team develop and implement an Improvement Plan agreed jointly with **TALISMAN**.
- A formal 'Notice to Act' served on The Gateshead Housing Company Board where the Board or a subsidiary Committee has not responded within agreed timescales.
- Request for intervention by Gateshead Council where internal negotiations have broken down and The Gateshead Housing Company Board has not responded to the 'Notice to Act'.
- Request for intervention by the housing regulator where internal negotiations have broken down and The Gateshead Housing Company Board and Gateshead Council has not responded to the 'Notice to Act'.

## Communication and Engagement

A key objective of **TALISMAN** is to ensure it achieves a high degree of communication to the wider customer body. This is facilitated by adoption of the following measures:

- A requirement that **TALISMAN** publishes an annual report of activity and findings (as described earlier), including resulting outcomes.
- A requirement that **TALISMAN** publishes interim updates on its activity.
- ~~■ A requirement that the results of **TALISMAN**'s annual health check is published to demonstrate that it is operating effectively.~~

This may be done through existing communication tools from The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council, or local community publications and websites.

## Scheduling Activities

- The Gateshead Housing Company will provide regular updates to the group to assist them in picking scrutiny topics. This will include performance indicators, customer feedback trends, and schedules of [internal service reviews key activities within the Company](#).
- The group will aim to complete between 1 and 2 scrutiny reviews per year and may do these as a full team or in smaller working parties, taking into account any potential conflicts of interest.

## Membership

- The group will [aim to be](#) made up of a team of up to 11 volunteers who are selected based on an agreed competency framework and using a transparent recruitment structure.
- ~~■ Up to 5 of those posts will come from the 5 neighbourhood management areas in the Borough, 1 from each area.~~
- ~~■ The remaining posts will come from members of the Service Improvement Groups.~~

- To qualify for selection an applicant would need to be either a tenant, living with a tenant, or a leaseholder, and must be motivated in improving housing and neighbourhood services for the good of all and not for personal gain.
- Members will be recruited using a 3 stage recruitment process including a self-selection questionnaire, assessment activities, and an interview by existing members of the Panel and one member of staff in an advisory capacity. ~~a panel which includes at least one person who isn't a member of staff from The Gateshead Housing Company or Gateshead Council.~~
- The group will have the power to co-opt an additional 3 members as and when required for short periods to assist with particular scrutiny reviews or under-representation.
- The group will elect a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson on an annual basis. ~~with a Chairperson able to stand for a maximum of 2 years.~~
- Members will be able to remain as a member of the group for an initial period of up to 5 years. A rolling cycle of retirement and recruitment will be carried out to enable continuity. This may include a voluntary or random selection to step down from the role. To facilitate this, members will be able to stand for a period of an additional 5 years if required to maintain this continuity.
- A member who has served for a full 10 year period must step down for at least 12 months before re-applying.
- Individuals who are currently serving as, or have been a Councillor or Board or Committee Member in the last 2 years, will not be eligible for TALISMAN.
- Individuals who are currently, or have in the last 2 years, been an employee of The Gateshead Housing Company, will not be eligible.
- Individuals who are currently, or have in the last 2 years, been an employee of Gateshead Council within a service covered under the remit of TALISMAN, will not be eligible.

## Resignations from TALISMAN

- Resignations from the Panel must be made in writing to the Chair (by letter or email) who will then inform the rest of the Panel. The Panel will then consider the resignation at the next ordinary meeting of the Panel.

## Support from The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council

The Gateshead Housing Company and Gateshead Council will provide TALISMAN with range of resources and support to enable them to carry out their role. This will include:

- Access to training and networking events to support personal development action plans
- Space to meet together individually and as a team
- ICT resources to carry out scrutiny work independently, including access to laptops and the internet
- Reasonable personal expenses to cover travel and consumables required as part of conducting scrutiny activities
- Access to customer involvement mechanisms to conduct research and gather supporting evidence
- Full access to information to carry out thorough scrutiny reviews within the timescales outlined in the request for information procedure.

- A budget to ~~cover the operational costs~~ support the work and development of the scrutiny group which will be administered by staff but ~~shared transparently with the group~~ reviewed and managed by the group.



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Safe Places Scheme

**Report of:** Involvement and Diversity Manager

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a proposal for TGHC to adopt the Safe Places initiative to support our approach to supporting customers through the housing office network.

### Background

2. The Safe Place Scheme is a national initiative whereby organisations and venues identify themselves as a Safe Place for people with a learning disability to access in their local community. The scheme uses a nationally recognised sticker displayed in the window of the premises so that people can clearly identify the venue as a Safe Place.
3. The scheme is aimed to provide somewhere that people can go to get help if they are
  - Lost
  - Have lost a bus pass, wallet or purse
  - Had something stolen
  - Are being bullied
  - Are upset about something
4. A local scheme was developed by Gateshead People, who are a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, run by people with learning disabilities. The Safe Places scheme has been supported by the Police and Crime Commissioners Unit and the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.
5. The scheme was launched in March 2014 and over 60 places have now been registered as a safe place.
6. A report was presented at the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 January to encourage take up of the scheme by partners.

## **TGHC Role**

7. It is proposed that the housing company sign up to the scheme and that all housing offices are registered as a safe place.
8. Training will be provided by Gateshead People to understand the Safe Places scheme and our role and establish the support needs a person with learning disabilities may have.
9. It is proposed that this training and approach goes beyond the Safe Places theme of venues being a safe place for people, and to include other front line officers in the briefings to be able to respond effectively if they come into contact with someone with learning disabilities whilst visiting people's homes.
10. People with learning disabilities can be issued with a card as part of the Safe Places scheme which indicates any support or key workers that can be contacted as necessary. Officers will record any instances of people with these cards coming into the office and requiring assistance and this will be sent back to Gateshead People for monitoring purposes. This information is also being reviewed by the Safer Community Team to highlight any issues regarding learning disability related hate crime.
11. Housing offices will display a Safe Places sticker so that they are easily recognisable to people. They will also be included in Gateshead People's register of Safe Places. In addition we will carry out some additional publicity to raise awareness of the scheme.
12. This will enhance our current approach to dealing with potentially vulnerable customers both through the office network and in any contact employees have with residents.
13. By way of example all housing offices are Hate Crime reporting centres which means that someone can report an incident they believe to be hate crime at any office and this will be logged on Arch and actioned appropriately. In addition employees follow our safeguarding approach of 'If Something Doesn't Look Right' which supports the work to support vulnerable customers and identify potential safeguarding issues and address issues as they arise.
14. The Safe Places initiative will be incorporated into a review of the procedures developed to identify potential safeguarding issues.

## **Link to values**

15. This report links to the following values:
  - Being Caring and respecting
  - Embracing Equality
  - Being customer focussed, innovative

## **Impact on tenants**

16. The aim of this approach is to ensure that people with learning disabilities feel reassured that they have somewhere they can go and someone to speak to if they feel anxious or distressed whilst out and about.

17. This is part of our wider approach to supporting tenants and leaseholders and providing a responsive service to their needs.
18. Our customer profile information shows that around 100 of our main tenants have told us they have a learning disability. However it is anticipated that there will be a significantly higher number of people living in with family who may benefit from our approach.

### **Risk Management Implications**

19. There are no direct risk implications resulting from this report.

### **Financial Implications**

20. There are no financial implications to this report. This approach is on the whole providing a more formal name to something that we already do. As part of signing up to be a safe place, Gateshead People will provide the training and guidance free of charge.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

21. This approach supports the objectives of the Single Equality Scheme and ensures that we are supporting our tenants and leaseholders with learning disabilities effectively. The briefing provided to employees will be delivered by people with learning disabilities directly to ensure that the message is clear and employees can understand some of the potential barriers for people in accessing services or communicating, particularly when they are anxious or concerned.

### **Value for Money Implications**

22. There are no direct value for money implications arising from this report.

### **Health Implications**

23. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

24. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

25. We will promote our role in Safe Places through our Service Improvement Groups and our customer forums to raise awareness of the scheme among our tenants and leaseholders.

## **Recommendations**

26. The committee is recommended to

- approve the company to sign up all housing offices as Safe Places;
- note the resulting actions that we will do to continue to respond effectively and support vulnerable tenants and leaseholders.

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Contact: Louise Taylor, Involvement and Diversity Manager      Tel No: (0191) 433 5380

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## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Customer Inspections: Multi – Storey blocks

**Report of:** Director of Customers and Communities

### Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide committee with an update on the introduction of customer inspections in multi storey blocks and approve a revised estate tour programme in multi storey blocks from April 2015.

### Background

2. There are currently a number of different types of inspections of the communal areas within the 25 multi storey blocks across Gateshead. These include the Estate Tours programme, inspections of the Caretaker cleaning standards and Health and Safety inspections.
3. All multi storey blocks have a residential Caretaker and part of their role is to provide a cleaning service to the communal areas. They work to very specific and defined service standards that have been developed with customers who attend the Multi Storey Service Improvement Group.
4. The monitoring of performance against the cleaning service standards has previously been carried out via monthly inspections by the Caretaker Supervisors. The dates of the inspections were not published and the Caretaker not warned in advance. The results of the inspections were published on the noticeboard as a pass or fail, detailing any remedial action required.
5. Estate Tours are carried out on a quarterly basis by the Estate Officer with a customer. The dates of Estate Tours are published on the website and on the notice board in the block. They involve a similar process to the inspection of cleaning standards but rather than a pass or fail the block is awarded a score against a matrix and the block is awarded a grade, Gold, Silver or Bronze. After the Estate Tour is completed the results are published on the web site and block notice board.
6. Results of the estate tour programme are reported annually to committee. The results of the 13/14 estate tour programme were reported to this committee on 11 September 2014.

7. Health and Safety inspections are carried out on a monthly basis by Caretakers and any issues identified are reported and actioned to ensure that we maintain in a safe and secure environment for our customers.

### **Customer Inspection Pilot**

8. Customers who attend the Multi Storey Service Improvement group requested the opportunity to become more actively involved in the monitoring and “testing” of the specific cleaning standards, outside of the Estate Tour programme.
9. During 2013/14 a customer inspection pilot was developed with customers from the SIG. They were provided with training by the Caretaker Supervisors and following a period of shadowing started carrying out the inspections on their own.
10. Feedback from the customer’s involved in the pilot was very positive and included: -
  - That the inspections were an important tool in achieving and maintaining high cleaning standards.
  - That they enjoyed carrying out the inspections and feeding results back including positives.
  - They can see a clear link between raising issues following an inspection and improvements in performance
  - Provides an opportunity to compare different blocks and feedback on issues such as the condition of the communal areas etc. to the SIG group.
  - Whilst the inspections are a check on cleaning standards they also provide an opportunity to focus on the customer’s perspective and their experience of living in the block.
  - Liked the flexibility in terms of choosing to inspect their own block or not and carrying out inspections either solo or jointly with other customers. They can also choose the dates of the inspections to fit with their own commitments.
11. The customer inspections effectively replaced the inspections previously carried out by the Caretaker Supervisors. Their feedback was also very positive and they reported that after initial pilot the inspections were working very well.
12. This also provided the Supervisors with the opportunity to focus more on the blocks where issues have been highlighted, working more intensively with the Caretaker.
13. Following completion of the pilot it was reviewed by the SIG and agreed to adopt in all 25 blocks. This has now been fully rolled out and involves a team of seven Customer Inspectors.
14. The results of the inspections are displayed in each block including any remedial work required to maintain the service standard.

### **Proposals**

15. The customer inspections have been operating in parallel with Estate Tours but there is an opportunity to align both programmes to provide a streamlined inspection regime. Customers from the SIG value and wish to maintain the link with the Estate Officer that the Estate Tour provides.

16. The group have suggested that customer inspections and Estate Tours are aligned so that each multi storey block receives an inspection every three months, alternating between an Estate Tour and a customer inspection i.e. one of each every six months.
17. This approach will help inform a wider review of Estate Tours to be delivered in 2015/16.

#### **Link to values**

18. The report relates to the following values of the company:
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Being motivated, trained and committed across the company
  - Being a listening and learning organisation

#### **Impact on tenants**

19. The Customer inspectors have fed back that they have seen improvements to the quality of the service as a direct result of issues they have raised.

#### **Risk Management Implications**

20. The approach to inspections and Estate Tours will inform and support a review of the Estate Tour programme in 2015/16. Alongside the frequency of inspections and information recorded the wider review of the estate tour programme will consider the opportunities to build on the approach adopted in multi storeys that aims to minimise the health and safety risks.

#### **Financial Implications**

21. The Head of Corporate Services has confirmed that there are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

#### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

22. We encourage a range of customers to take part and make every attempt to tailor the customer inspections to take individual needs into account.

#### **Value for Money Implications**

23. The inspections support our drive for value for money by providing a more efficient use of the Caretaker Supervisors time. By reducing the need for Supervisors to carry out routine inspections of all blocks every month they can focus more time on the blocks where issues have been identified, working more intensively with the caretakers to tackle any underlying issues.
24. The proposed alignment of inspections will enable Estate Officers to focus time on the marketing and letting of void properties in multi storeys as well as supporting vulnerable tenants.
25. Value for Money is also a standard agenda item at the Multi storey SIG.

### **Health Implications**

26. There are no direct health implications arising from the report.

### **Environmental Implications**

27. The Caretaker's duties help to maintain the environment both inside and around the external areas of multi-story blocks.

### **Consultation carried out**

28. Customer inspections have been developed in consultation with the Multi Storey SIG, and we will continue to use this approach to review and improve the services we provide.

### **Recommendations**

29. The committee are asked to:
- comment on the development of customer inspections and the pilot work undertaken
  - approve the proposed frequency of Estate Tours and Customer Inspections in multi storey blocks from April 2015;
  - note the proposed review of the wider Estate Tour programme in 2015/16.



## Report to Customer and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

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**Title:** Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership Update – April to December 2014

**Report of:** Director of Customer and Communities

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) partnership work and neighbourhood activity.

### **Background**

2. The report provides details of the partnership work undertaken between April and December 2014.
3. This includes updates on work undertaken to tackle hate crime, domestic abuse, supporting victims, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
4. Progress against the Safer Gateshead strategic priorities across all neighbourhoods is reported within Appendix 1.

### **Domestic Abuse Cases**

5. During this period a total of 197 new cases were reported, as compared to 212 for this period in 2013/2014. This is a decrease of 8%. These reports can come from a variety of sources (see Appendix 2).

### **Sub Categories**

6. To help us to effectively address domestic abuse and identify trends, investigating officers now record the specific sub category of behaviour towards victims. For this period these are:

120 Physical  
64 Emotional  
7 Psychological  
4 Financial  
2 Sexual Abuse

7. Cases reported during this period can be broken down by gender, age and neighbourhood area (see Appendix 2).

## Closed Cases

8. This period 211 cases were closed or resolved; a breakdown of the standard closure reasons are included in Appendix 3.

## Current Open Cases

9. There are currently 55 open cases of domestic violence as at 31st December 2014. This is an increase of 16% compared with the same period last year whereby 39 cases were open. Current cases are broken down by neighbourhood as follows:

Neighbourhood Area					
Central	Inner West	West	East	South	Total
10	6	10	8	21	55

## Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

10. During April and December 2014, NRT attended 19 MARAC meetings and have completed 386 research forms. The information provided on these forms includes information relating to tenancy details, rent arrears, anti-social behaviour cases, any outstanding or upcoming legal actions that TGHC may be pursuing, as well as any local knowledge or intelligence.
11. Of the 386 research forms that were completed, 170 (44%) victims lived in council tenancies and 111 (29%) perpetrators were council tenants, or were living-in with a Council tenant.
12. A breakdown of the perpetrator and victim relationship is included in Appendix 3.

## Repairs & Security Measures

13. 130 repairs have been completed during the period April – December 2014. This has benefited 87 customers.
14. The total cost of this is £12,072.93 and provides an average cost per repair of £92.86.

(See Appendix 4 for breakdown of year to date repairs and security measures).

## Domestic Abuse Development and Training

15. During November 2014, two Neighbourhood Relations Officers (NRO's) supported the White Ribbon Campaign, an initiative by Tyneside Women's Health, in partnership with Gateshead Council. The campaign actively ran for 15 days and began on 25 November 2014, which coincided with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women. An online pledge was also publicised and employees were encouraged to sign up to the pledge to end violence against women and girls.
16. Further to previous updates provided, we now have 10 domestic abuse workplace champions who have been trained to support employees who are the

victims of domestic or sexual abuse. In addition, 25 managers have also attended domestic abuse awareness raising sessions during January 2015.

### **Hate Incident Cases**

17. During this period 35 new Hate Incident cases were reported. This is a decrease compared to the same period last year where 43 were reported. Of the 35 new reports: 18 - racial, 2 – homophobic, 13 – disability and 2 – religion.
18. All cases reported during this period resulted in further action being taken.

### **Closed Cases**

19. During this period, we closed 13 cases relating to hate incidents. The reasons for closure are identified in Appendix 4.

### **Open Cases**

20. There were 15 ongoing cases in relation to Hate Incidents as at 31st December 2014. This is an increase compared to the same period last year where 13 Hate Crime cases were open.

### **Repairs & Security Measures**

21. There were 6 security measures completed for victims of Hate Incidents during April to December 2014 (see Appendix 4 for further details).

### **Hate Crime Policy & Training**

22. Northumbria Police have confirmed an increase in hate crime incidents during this quarter. However this can be partly attributed to the formation of a specialist team of neighbourhood police officers, this team now proactively makes contact with any victim of crime where it is identified they are from black or minority ethnic communities. We are currently working with our partners at the Hate Crime & Tension Monitoring Group on an Engagement Framework, in order to increase confidence and reporting with a number of different communities.
23. Updates in relation to trends in hate crime reporting and partnership working will be included within the next committee report.
24. During November 2014, two training sessions were jointly delivered with Community Safety to 36 employees from the multi-storey team.
25. The objectives of the training were; identify different examples of hate crime and behaviours; how to report and signpost victims to relevant agencies; increase awareness of procedures once a report has been received, including actions which can be taken by partners.
26. Awareness was also raised in relation to the signs and symbols linked to extremist groups and how employees can report these to the relevant agencies.

## **Mental Health Link Worker (MHLW)**

27. During September 2014, the current post holder left their position with South Tyneside Foundation Trust. Regrettably they have been unable to commit to providing us with an alternative link worker at this stage. Should there be any relevant developments or changes to this position an update will be provided to committee.

## **Non Attendance Panel**

28. 66 cases for young people have been discussed during this period. 35 of the cases related to young persons living in council tenancies. Of these cases, three had a current open anti-social behaviour case. Of these cases, one was open due to a neighbour dispute, one due to an unruly child and the remainder due to unauthorised business activity. In the case involving unruly children the parent refused to accept their child was the cause of any disorder locally and no evidence was found during the investigation to support the allegations received.

## **Victim Support**

29. During this period, we made seven referrals to the Victim Support Champion which equates to 17.5% of the 40 referrals made by all agencies.
30. Responsibility for commissioning victim services transferred to the Police and Crime Commissioner on 1 October 2014. Victim Support has now been commissioned to provide services to vulnerable victims of ASB and hate crime or victims of crime.

## **Customer Involvement**

31. The ASB Service Improvement Group (SIG) has met on four occasions during this period. Following a request to be provided with more detail regarding what support could be provided to families whose children are causing ASB problems, a presentation was delivered to the group by a Children's Commissioning team manager. This covered the progress to date of the Families Gateshead initiative and how TGHC contribute to this.
32. As the support provided is not mandatory, the group were interested to know how workers were able to engage with dysfunctional and socially excluded families. Further they were keen to know how the initiative measured successful outcomes. In particular could successful outcomes be measured in terms of value for money. It was agreed that the manager would attend a further meeting to share more performance data and information on value for money savings which have been delivered.
33. The group also received a presentation by an NRO on our approach to tackling domestic abuse, including our employee procedure and domestic abuse workplace champion role and training.
34. Discussions have also taken place with the group about their objectives for 2015/16 and a draft workplan has been shared. Once this has been agreed an update will be provided within the next committee report.



## **Legal Tools and Powers**

35. Further to our previous update, the Government has announced a further delay in the implementation of the new injunction, which is now expected to be available from 30 March 2015. A further update will be provided within further reports.
36. In partnership with the council we have continued to meet with the ASB leads from across the Northumbria region to ensure a joint approach to the new tools and powers is being developed and to share best practice and learning within the group.

## **Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

37. During this period 8 MAPPA panels were attended which involved undertaking research from TGHC records on 12 cases which were discussed within subsequent meetings. Further updates on MAPPA meetings will be provided with future partnership reports.

## **Northern Engagement into Recover from Addiction (NERAF)**

38. During November, NERAF, an independent charity, was established to help individuals recovering from substance misuse. An NRO attended the launch event to gain further awareness on how this service may benefit our customers. Appropriate referrals will be made to the service.

## **Illegal Money Lending**

39. A campaign was run in November, with partners, to raise awareness of Illegal Money lending. Two NRO's were involved in a week of planned activity, which included a door knocking exercise.

## **Anti-Money Laundering**

40. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 as amended by the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 and the Terrorism Act 2000 as amended by the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, which broaden the definition of money laundering and increase the range of activities caught by the statutory control framework, imposed new obligations in respect of money laundering. As a result, the new obligations now impact on certain areas of local authority business and require local authorities to establish internal procedures to prevent the use of their services for money laundering.
41. In October, two NRO's attended training to support the Council's responsibility for internal control and reduce the potential of money laundering.
42. A Team Brief was also circulated to all staff and a reminder included in the Weekly Homework. In addition, an Anti-Money laundering Policy has now been developed and is available on the TGHC Intranet.

## **Safeguarding Adults**

43. During April to December 2014, 18 referrals have been made. Referrals were made from the following areas;

East	1
West	2
South	10
Central	3
Inner West	2

44. The following outcomes were reached: -

- 5 Referral accepted and support put in place
- 8 Investigated and no further action required
- 2 Tenants re-housed (One tenant moved to a nursing home due to care needs and the other tenant re-housed as required larger property due to change in family circumstances.
- 2 Referred but did not meet criteria
- 1 Referral accepted by Safeguarding Team. Contact established with tenant, however he declined a service.

45. Officers have been working within a multi-agency group to establish and look at areas of self-neglect. Procedures are now being developed to support this area of work, which also includes an approach to managing hoarding cases.

### **Safeguarding Children**

46. During April to December 2014, 7 referrals have been made. Referrals were made from the following areas;

East	0
West	0
South	5
Central	1
Inner West	1

47. The following outcomes were reached;

- 2 Did not meet the criteria
- 5 Cases were investigated by Social Services but no further action is required.

### **Social Services child protection checks**

48. Neighbourhood Relations have been providing information to Social Services in relation to child protection cases since June 2013. The information provided includes ASB case information and tenancy details.

49. From April 2014 to December 2014 we have carried out 143 child protection checks.

### **Families Gateshead Council**

50. Partnership procedures between NRT and Families Gateshead were introduced in June 2013; this involves the appropriate sharing of information around these cases to ensure a holistic approach is provided to supporting the families and addressing their needs.

51. During this period there were 224 Families Gateshead checks completed. Of these 127 were in relation to Council Properties and 97 were non-council.

### **Missing and Exploited Group**

52. Further to discussion with Safeguarding Children, we have been invited to attend and contribute towards monthly meetings to discuss young persons who are missing from home or care and are at risk from sexual exploitation. An update on our attendance will be provided in future reports.

### **Link to Values**

53. The report relates to the following values of the company:-

- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Being motivated, trained and committed across the company
- Embracing equality
- Being a listening and learning organisation

### **Risk Management Implications**

54. Tackling anti-social behaviour effectively has continued to be a key priority both nationally and locally for tenants in Gateshead. The company's Commitment to addressing ASB and supporting vulnerable customers remains a priority.

### **Financial Implications**

55. The Head of Corporate Services confirms there are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

### **Value for Money implications**

56. There is no additional value for money implications.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

57. Ensuring we can access specialist services and resources to support the most vulnerable residents, regardless of what diverse needs they may have is crucial in tackling ASB and the underlying causes. .

### **Health Implications**

58. Through promptly identifying Safeguarding issues and high risk vulnerable customers we seek to promote the health and wellbeing of our customers and further work with partners to remove customers from serious risk of harm.

### **Environmental Implications**

59. There are no environmental implications as a result of this report.

## **Recommendation**

60. The views of the committee are sought on how satisfied it is with the performance update on tackling anti-social behaviour.

## Central Neighbourhood update

### Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities

#### **Crime, ASB & Confidence**

- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant at Coatsworth Court in October 2014 following reports of noise nuisance including shouting, swearing and arguing inside and outside of the property. Complaints have continued and Legal Services have been advised to obtain possession of the property.
- In December 2014 a Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant of Cotswold Gardens due to the condition of the garden.
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant of Sunderland Road in December 2014 following complaints of loud music, shouting, swearing and criminal damage. Complaints have continued and Legal Services have been asked to obtain possession of the property.
- A Notice of seeking Possession was served in November 2014 on a tenant in Avenue Road for noise nuisance. The tenant is currently working with support agencies to assist them to manage their tenancy.
- In October a 12 month Suspended Possession Order was granted against a tenant of Priory Court, due to poor property condition. The tenant has failed to comply with the terms of the order and Legal Services have been asked to obtain an eviction warrant.
- A 12 months Suspended Possession Order was granted due to noise nuisance and was breached in October by a tenant in Sydney Court. Legal Services have been asked to obtain a warrant for eviction.
- An Introductory tenant was evicted from St Cuthbert's Court, in October 2014, due to noise nuisance.
- An Introductory tenant at Carr Hill Road was served with a Notice of Termination due to criminal convictions and poor condition of property. Legal Services have been asked to progress with obtaining possession of the property.
- **Protecting & Supporting vulnerable victims and Communities**
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant at Romford Place in November 2014 following reports of noise nuisance and antisocial behaviour, from visitors to the property. This impacted on a number of residents within the community. The tenant is currently engaging with the NRO and improvements to their behaviour have been noted.
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant of Priory Court following reports from a number of customers within the block. Legal Services have been asked to proceed with obtaining possession of the property.

- Operation WAYS took place in the Town Centre in December. This was a Police lead initiative to assess the public perception of crime and disorder, following students moving into the new accommodation at Trinity Square.

## **East Neighbourhood Update**

### **Crime, ASB and Confidence**

- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant of Leamside, in October 2014, as a result of their criminal convictions.
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served in December, on a tenant of Sheraton, after a prosecution for animal cruelty. Legal Services have been instructed to obtain possession of the property.
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served in December, on a tenant of Coverdale, after they failed to maintain their garden to a satisfactory standard.
- In December, a tenant of Ridley Terrace was served with a Notice of Seeking Possession, after they failed to keep their garden area clear of dog faeces and rubbish.
- In November, a 12 month Suspended Possession Order was granted against a tenant of Redemmarsh due to their conviction for a criminal offence
- In December, a 12 month Suspended Possession Order was granted against a tenant of Woodwynd due to the condition of their garden.
- A tenant of Pattinson Gardens had their eviction suspended in November after they improved the condition of the garden.

### **Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities**

- In December, two individuals who breached their Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction orders (ASBI), within Felling, were sentenced to 13 weeks each, in prison.
- The Injunction Orders are due to expire in March and meetings have been held with Legal Services, Police and Community Safety with regard to extending the Injunction Orders and seeking a wider exclusion zone.
- An NRO and officers from Community Safety have attended coffee mornings and to engage with local residents in Pelaw around perceptions of ASB and their own personal safety. This led to follow up visits from police officers from the East NPT who provided three tenants with padlocks for their gates and sheds
- Further discussions with customers, identified issues in relation to a vulnerable customer of domestic abuse. TGHC and Safer Families worked closely together with several agencies to ensure the victim was safe in their home

- Following an increase in reports of damage to motor vehicles on Leam Lane, we undertook a joint letter drop and door knocking with Northumbria Police to reassure residents and seek to identify any possible perpetrators. Police also carried out a number of additional patrols in the area and agreed in line with the graded response to forward us details of any person identified as causing the damage. Regrettably no person was subsequently identified, however the problems have stopped and it is hoped that our actions in promoting awareness has helped towards the problem stopping.

## **West Neighbourhood Update**

### **Crime, ASB and Confidence**

- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant in Winlaton following a conviction of a criminal offence. Legal Services have been asked to obtain possession of the tenancy.
- Property investment work was suspended for a tenant at Tynebank following their threats towards employees and contractors. A Notice of Seeking Possession was served, which modified the tenants behaviour and the work was carried out successfully, without further issue.
- A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant in Highfield due to the condition of their home. The tenant has been unwilling to engage with support and Legal Services have been asked to obtain possession of the property.
- A warning was issued to a tenant from Hardman Gardens, following complaints of loud music. The tenant has modified their behaviour and no further complaints have been received.
- A tenant, who was convicted of shoplifting, was given a written warning against his tenancy in the Ryton area. The tenant is now working with support agencies to improve their behaviour.
- Legal Services were asked to obtain possession of a property where a tenant of Rowlands Gill has continued to cause nuisance and harassment.
- In October, a 16 month Suspended Possession Order was granted against a tenant of Springwell Close due to their son's criminal behaviour.
- In October a Notice of Seeking Possession was served against a tenant from Crookhill, Ryton, due to criminal activity and not allowing access to carry out essential maintenance to the property. The tenant has accepted support and is engaging with support services.
- Burglary of dwellings has reduced within the neighbourhood by a total of 50%, where criminal damage has increased by 18%.

## **Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities**

- A vulnerable couple living in William Morris Avenue in Highfield were given advice and support after they received threats and harassment.
- Joint work with the police lead to resolution of a neighbourhood dispute in the Winlaton and Crawcrook area. A number of joint home visits were carried and an amicable solution was agreed by the parties concerned.
- Officers have worked with Northumbria Police in relation to youth disorder on Pipebridge Estate. A number of tenants were visited, to discuss the issues and the impact their children's behaviour was having on the community. There has been a reduction in complaints and where tenants have not modified the behaviour, legal action is being considered.
- Residents in Tynebank, suffering from animal nuisance, have benefited from additional fencing, funded by the Designing out Crime budget.
- Officers have worked in Partnership with officers of Tyne and Wear Fire Service at two properties in the neighbourhood. Tenants have been given safety advice and additional smoke alarms have been provided.
- Additional security measures have been installed for 5 domestic abuse victims and 1 vulnerable victim, at their home. This has included lock changes, additional external lighting and the installation of reinforced glass installation for example.

## **Inner West Neighbourhood Update**

### **Crime, ASB and Confidence**

- In October 2014, a Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant in Dunston following numerous complaints of noise and a large number of police attendances at the property. A 14 day possession order was granted in November and the tenant was evicted in January 2015.
- As the nuisance behaviour continued despite the ongoing possession action, an interim injunction order was also sought and granted in November preventing the tenant from shouting, swearing, arguing, fighting, playing loud music, making other loud noise, threatening violence towards people or property so as to cause nuisance and annoyance.
- A Notice of Termination was served on a tenant in Teams following incidents of fighting and noise at her property. Following the Notice being served, the tenant subsequently terminated her tenancy and has left the property.

## **Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities**

- During October, Operation Shield was carried out which was a partnership initiative led by Northumbria Police, designed to tackle an increase in crime in the Swalwell area. This operation involved police executing a number of search



warrants, and carrying out intensive foot and mobile patrols to seek to combat the increase in crime and anti-social behaviour and reassure communities and help improve confidence. Test purchases were also carried out in an effort to identify premises that provide alcohol to under-age drinkers. Joint work was also carried out in relation to a number of targets identified by police who were linked to Council tenancies.

- In October excessive timber was located in the demolition area at Clasper Village, which was a potential risk on the approach for bonfire night. The timber was removed and security patrols were increased.

### **Harm caused by Substance Misuse**

- In November partners met to discuss increased reports of anti-social behaviour, linked to residents from Eslington House; where there were concerns the residents were using legal highs. A number of joint initiatives have been agreed, including reparation work via Community payback and Youth Services who will provide outreach work.

### **South Neighbourhood Update**

#### **Crime, ASB & Confidence**

- In October, A Notice of Seeking Possession was served on a tenant in Willerby Court due to poor property condition, Immediate Possession was granted in November and the tenant was subsequently evicted.
- An Extension of Introductory tenancy was served on an introductory tenant in Gainford, in October 2014 following reports of noise nuisance including shouting, swearing and arguing inside and outside of the property by the tenant and her children. The introductory tenancy has been extended by 6 months and the complaints have now ceased.
- An Extension of Introductory tenancy was served on a tenant in Appleby Gardens, following reports of noise nuisance including shouting, swearing and arguing inside and outside of the property. The tenant was evicted on October 2014.
- A 12 month Suspended Possession Order was granted by Gateshead County Court due to the poor condition of the garden and failure to allow officer's access to a property in Bramblelaw. The tenant failed to improve the condition and Legal Services have been instructed to apply for a warrant for eviction.

### **Protecting & Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities**

- During this period two vulnerable witnesses were provided with support following allegations that they had been subjected to intimidation, violence and blackmail.

- These victims have been rehoused for their safety and through the joint partnership working with Northumbria Police, the Gateshead Housing Company were able to obtain an interim injunction order against the alleged perpetrator, excluding them from the Wrekenton and Springwell areas of Gateshead where the victims reside.
- The order was obtained to try and prevent further incidents and safeguard the victims and their properties and the community.
- An application for funding from the Designing out Crime Budget has been submitted to install fencing, which will protect residents who have suffered from Hate Crime at Highlaws Gardens.

### **Harm Caused by Substance Misuse**

- The Safer Neighbourhoods Group will be focusing on youth disorder, linked to alcohol, identified at the play area at Walldridge Gardens. Youth Services, Tyne and Wear Fire Service and the Police have visited the area to offer appropriate advice and support. The issues will be monitored through the local tasking and coordination meetings.

**Source of Domestic Abuse Cases Reported to TGHC:**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Number</b>
Tag & Flag referrals	85
Self-Referral	32
Safer Families referral	32
Housing & Independent Living Outreach service (Housing Options)	10
Neighbour complaint	9
MARAC actions to contact customer	17
Police	7
Fire Service	2
Information from Caretaker	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>

**Breakdown of domestic abuse cases reported this period:**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Female victim</b>	<b>Male victim</b>	<b>Total</b>
16 – 24	32	2	34
25 - 40	101	3	104
41 - 59	40	4	44
60 +	5	2	7
Unknown	8	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>197</b>

<b>Neighbourhood Area</b>					
<b>Central</b>	<b>Inner West</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Total</b>
37	17	34	39	70	<b>197</b>

**Case Closure Reasons**

- 97 Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC - recorded for partnership arrangements) Cases
- 79 Resolved without the need for legal action
- 11 Customer Re-housed
- 11 Non-engagement from Customer
- 4 Customer ended their tenancy
- 3 Perpetrator ended their tenancy
- 3 Legal Action 'Other' Taken
- 2 Written warning issued
- 1 Referred to other Agency (Barnardos are supporting the family)

**211 Total**

In two cases the perpetrator of Domestic Abuse received a written warning on their tenancy.

The cases that were researched involved different perpetrator/victims of domestic abuse. See below for details:

Male perpetrator to female victim	317
Male perpetrator to male victim	1
Female perpetrator to female victim	6
Female perpetrator to male victim	17
Family violence	36
Honour Based Violence	3
Under 18 victim and perpetrator	6

**Breakdown of Repairs and Security Measures Year to Date:**

<b>Security Measure</b>	<b>Number of Repairs</b>
External Lighting	37
Supply & Fit Door Chain	15
Door Viewer	13
Lock Change	22
Fit Alarm	7
Repair Gate	5
Repair Security Light	5
Repair Fencing	4
Reglaze Window	4
Repair to Door	4
Protective Window Coatings	3
Window Locks	2
Fit Mortice lock	2
Repair brick work	2
Letterbox Restrictor Fitted	2
Re-set house alarm	1
Fit Gate	1
Ease window	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>

**Closure Reasons for Hate Crime Cases:**

- 8 Resolved without the need for legal action
- 2 Customers Re-housed
- 1 Non-engagement from Customer
- 1 Duplicate Case
- 1 Referred to other Agency

**Breakdown of Security Measures for Victims of Hate Crime:**

The total cost of this is **£255.04** and provides an average cost per repair of **£42.50**

<b>Security Measure</b>	<b>Number of Repairs</b>
External Lighting	3
Supply & Fit Door Chain	1
Repair Gate & Add Bolts	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Customer Service Excellence

**Report of:** Involvement and Diversity Manager

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on the recent Customer Service Excellence assessment.

### Background

2. Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a standard which was introduced by the government in order to ensure that services are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering. Fundamentally they expect organisations to put customers at the heart of service provision.
3. The company was first accredited with the CSE Standard in March 2011, and subsequently was subject to further visits for the following 2 years to ensure that we had continued to maintain this standard. In our last assessment the company was found to be fully compliant in all areas.
4. Achieving Customer Service Excellence was identified as a key action for the company in 2014/15 and a report was presented to committee in May 2014 outlining our plans for reaccreditation.

### Summary

#### Assessment process

5. The assessment was carried out in three parts:
  - Self-assessment, which involved collecting a range of evidence against the various criteria for us to demonstrate how we met the different requirements. This was submitted to the assessor in September 2014.
  - A mock assessment with the assessor was carried out in October 2014 to identify if there were any significant gaps or areas for concern carried out
  - A two-day onsite assessment with the assessor took place in November involving a range of employees (selected by the assessor) and customers.

6. In order to prepare for the assessment, working groups of officers and customers were set up.

### **Outcome of the assessment**

7. The company was assessed as meeting the standard in all areas of the assessment. In particular, five areas were highlighted as positive practice (compliance plus).
8. The assessor highlighted in the report that, while the organisation has faced significant changes and budget restrictions since the last full assessment, we continue to deliver high-quality services.
9. The full report has been provided on the Board Members website.
10. The particular areas of strength highlighted were:

### **Customer insight**

- The assessor found that the company uses the range of information we know about our customers and potential customers to understand their needs and deliver services to meet these.
- In particular they mentioned the work carried out before the welfare reform changes, using the information to understand who would be affected to target support and advice.
- They found there to be a strong structure of involving and consulting customers, ranging from tenants being on the Board, and TALISMAN, through to attending Estate Tours or carrying out inspections in multi-storey blocks.
- In particular, the work carried out through our forums (including the Disabled Persons Forum, BME Forum and LGBT forum) help to make sure we are considering any barriers to people accessing our services.

### **Information and access**

- Our approach to ensuring that people receive and understand information was highlighted, in particular noting the pre-sale interviews carried out for people considering buying the Leasehold to their property to fully understand what they are undertaking and the Home**Welcome** visits carried out for new tenants
- Our work with partners was identified as an area of “compliance plus”, with the assessor recognising the way the company works with organisations in the wider community to help us sustain our neighbourhoods.

### **Next Steps**

11. Following this accreditation, we now follow a three-year cycle to maintain the standard.

This involves:

- **2016** - Check against all elements of the standard and full assessment against any areas of partial compliance (one-day visit)

- **2017** – Light-touch assessment to look at any changes in the company and check on any areas of partial compliance
- **2018** – Full reassessment.

### **Link to values**

12. This report links to the following values:

- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Caring and respecting

### **Impact on tenants**

13. The aim of maintaining the company's accreditation of CSE is to ensure that we continue to provide excellent customer service to our tenants and leaseholders. The criteria within the assessment provides a clear framework for ensuring that we continue to provide timely and effective services.

### **Risk Management Implications**

14. Failure to focus on the customer has been identified as a strategic risk for the company. Maintaining Customer Service Excellence accreditation and committing to the framework associated with this ensures that we continue to work to ensure we provide good quality, timely services.

### **Financial Implications**

15. The Head of Corporate Services confirms a budget to meet the cost of the ongoing assessment process for Customer Service Excellence. Any other costs arising during this process would be reported back to this committee.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

16. The first criteria of the framework is Customer Insight and expects organisations to have an understanding of who their customers are to be able to demonstrate that the services being provided meet their needs. This is part of our overall approach to collecting and reporting profile information.

### **Value for Money Implications**

17. There are no direct value for money implications arising from this report.

### **Health Implications**

18. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

19. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.



### **Consultation carried out**

20. A working group of tenants and leaseholders supported the company through the assessment process reviewing the evidence being provided and also being interviewed directly by the assessor.

### **Recommendation**

21. The committee is recommended to note the findings of the assessment.



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Customer Involvement Activity – Update

**Report of:** Involvement and Diversity Manager

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a summary of involvement activity across the company for the third quarter of 2014/15.

### Background

2. All housing company customers are encouraged to get involved in ways that suit them, based on the time they have available and the level of commitment they wish to make. Customer involvement is central to the way we deliver our services.
3. The Involvement and Empowerment standard of the HCA's Regulatory Framework places a requirement on landlords to ensure that tenants are given a range of opportunities to influence and shape policies and scrutinise our services.
4. The Delivery Plan 2013-15 includes an objective to support and fully embed co-regulation. This is carried out through a range of ways including the TALISMAN, Complaints Scrutiny Panel, Service Improvement Groups and through the development of an annual report for tenants and leaseholders each year, which is designed, developed and written by our customers.

### Summary

5. During the period, 1 October 2014 to 31 December 2014, 79 involvement activities took place. Customers were involved in various activities including; meetings, Service Improvement Groups, community events, drop ins, forums, surveys and customer training.
6. Customers have been involved in our activities on over 3,950 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.
7. Appendix 1 to this report shows a summary of activities undertaken during this period and demonstrates the variety of ways customers have been involved. This information is broken down by the two broad service areas, Corporate Services and Customers and Communities, to highlight the different forms of activities that have taken place across the company.

8. Appendix 2 to this report shows the venues where activities have taken place during this period.

### **Key outcomes of involvement**

9. There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during this period which are highlighted below;
  - Event held in support of National Older Person's Day where existing teams held a Rookie Golf tournament to promote the benefits to other sheltered scheme residents and encourage take-up of the sport. The event was also used as an opportunity to launch the CHS accreditation scheme
  - Held a number of Eagles Basketball Hoops for Health workshops across primary schools to promote health and wellbeing and the dangers of stereotyping, supporting our work on community cohesion and hate crime
  - TALISMAN received a presentation from service managers with an update on the action plan following the Voids scrutiny exercise
  - The LGBT network met to address issues particularly faced by LGBT tenants and leaseholders. Agreed name and logo for group, it is now called Gateshead Rainbow Forum
  - Complaints Scrutiny Panel elected a tenant Chair to stand for 12 months and reviewed performance for quarter 3, and highlighted areas they would like further information on based on the number of complaints received
  - Bulb planting carried out in Wrekenton and Beacon Lough area to improve the appearance of the estates
  - Warwick Court lunch club was launched in December, for residents of this and nearby multi storey blocks to encourage community engagement and support cohesion in the local area
  - 'Let's Get Digital' survey carried out to gain an understanding of how many of our customers are online or have access to the internet. This initial research has led to the company commissioning a customer insight project to conduct wider research into where we need to focus more specific digital inclusion work, with the ultimate aim of increasing online skills of our tenants and leaseholders and assist people with Universal Credit
  - Quarterly Grounds Maintenance meeting held with tenants which focused on Neighbourhood Pride schemes, estate grading performance and Local Environmental Services enforcement performance
  - Inspections of multi storey blocks undertaken by members of the Multi Storey Service Improvement Group to check service standards are being achieved.

### **Young People**

10. In December 2014 we supported the Prince's Trust 'Team Programme' by facilitating a session on living independently. This also helped us to support our company priority of increasing sustained tenancies.
11. The session focussed on budgeting advice and anti-social behaviour (ASB), as well as gaining generic information about being a tenant with the housing company.
12. This was an interactive two hour session which aimed to raise awareness of what we regard as ASB and the consequences faced by tenants and leaseholders who

cause this. There was also a session around budgeting, particularly looking at food items and where money can be saved.

13. An income and expenditure task was used to encourage the young people to consider how much money they would be left with a week based on the typical amount they would receive if they were claiming benefits. This helped them to see the reality of them living independently.
14. Feedback about the session from participants and lead officer was very positive, and we have been asked to deliver a further session in March 2015.

### **Illegal Money Lending**

15. As a result of intelligence received about loan shark activity taking place, a door knocking exercise was carried out in the Carr Hill area in partnership with the Illegal Money Lending Team and Gateshead Council. This helped to raise awareness of the dangers of illegal money lending and try to prevent customers falling victim to loan sharks.
16. In conjunction with the Bite Back campaign, several streets were targeted in the area, which saw employees from the Rent and Income Team, Housing Office and Involvement Teams raise awareness among residents of this issue and try to gather further information to help tackle illegal money lenders in the area.
17. All properties received an information leaflet with contact details should they wish to raise awareness in confidence at a later date. As a result of the exercise, over 500 customers were reached.

### **Performance against service standards**

18. There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. They are as follows;
  - Number of involved customers (previously titled Representation of involved customers)
  - Annual training programme course attendance
  - Satisfaction with feedback following involvement
  - % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account
    - Number of events attended.
19. At the end of the period 1 October 2014 – 31 December 2014, performance was as follows;
  - There were 949 involved customers on our database, exceeding the target of 890 for the year.
  - There have been 107 attendees on customer training courses, on course to meet to the target of 180 by the end of the year. This also includes customers attending external training sessions.
  - Satisfaction with feedback from involvement is reported six monthly, the next update will be at year end.
  - We have attended 31 events at the end of the third quarter, achieving our target to increase the number of events attended.

## **Mears Community Initiatives**

20. During this quarter Mears have attended various Service Improvement Groups to liaise with residents and respond directly to any queries that customers had. The Customer Service Manager also attended the LGBT network meeting.

## **Involvement database**

21. There has been an increase of 53 involved customers to the database since June 2014 totalling 949 members.
22. The number of white British involved customers has risen by 40 people and BME customers have increased by 9 people. In comparison with the overall customer profile, there is a significantly higher representation of involved BME customers (7.68%) compared to our overall profile (2.86%).
23. Representation of involved males have increased by 19 and females have increased by 34 since June 2014. The age group of our involved 25-39 year olds has also significantly increased by 15 people.
24. Appendix 3 to this report displays profile information of our involved tenants and leaseholders compared with our overall customer profile.

## **Future activity**

25. The following activities are planned, although there will also be a range of additional activities likely to take place;
  - Warwick Court open day to be held in partnership with UNISON, promoting involvement opportunities with the company and to find out from residents how they would like to use the communal lounge
  - Digital drop ins to continue to be held with customers across Gateshead to teach them basic online skills and increase their understanding of how to use the internet and help prepare them for Universal Credit if required
  - Understanding Differences in People course to be held in February to improve awareness and understanding of different cultures and community groups, and to aid community cohesion
  - Continue to deliver Newcastle Eagles Hoops for Health project across primary schools in Gateshead to promote the importance of health and wellbeing and to increase understanding of the dangers of stereotyping
  - Supporting delivery of a breakfast club in Brandling Primary school and will subsequently be engaging with parents and guardians of the pupils to promote involvement opportunities with the company, particularly at their parent's evening in March
  - Work in partnership with Gem Arts to deliver a project with senior school children linked to hate crime, particularly focusing on race due to increasing reports of this nature
  - Deliver a pilot session of the Made of Money training programme to tenants and leaseholders following Involvement and Rent and Income team staff being trained to deliver.

## **Link to values**

26. This report relates to the following company values;

- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Embracing Equality
- Being open, honest and transparent.

### **Impact on tenants**

27. We continue to work extensively with tenants, leaseholders and the wider community, to get views and opinions to identify priorities and inform services.
28. The information gained from these involvement activities helps inform service improvement and delivery, to make sure that the services we are providing to our customers meet their needs.

### **Risk Management Implications**

29. Failure to engage with customers was identified as a key strategic risk for the company.
30. The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA's) Involvement and Empowerment standard requires us to demonstrate that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing and are provided with the support they need to take part in this. The activities outlined within this report demonstrate our compliance with this standard.

### **Financial Implications**

31. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that a budget is available to support customer involvement, and resources have been made available to support the activities outlined in this report.
32. Individual service managers have the opportunity to request funding from this budget to support involvement activities where they can demonstrate the potential outcomes for housing company tenants and leaseholders.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

33. TGHC is committed to involving people from diverse communities to ensure everyone's views, needs and aspirations are considered in the decision making process.
34. Support is available to assist people with additional needs to access involvement opportunities and this is regularly promoted.
35. Every effort is made to ensure we do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any individual or group and to provide equal access to this service and the representation of involved tenants is regularly monitored and acted upon.

### **Value for Money implications**

36. The involvement of tenants and the wider community can result in value for money savings as service managers can gain an insight into what tenants want and need. This can result in resolving the issues first time and delivering something that works for all parties.

37. All Service Improvement Groups now have Value for Money as a regular agenda item in addition to the specific Value for Money group.

### **Environmental implications**

38. The environmental impact of involvement is considered when conducting activities across the company and addressed wherever possible, for example, customers sharing taxis where possible when attending events and holding events near to where the majority of attendees live, wherever possible.

### **Consultation carried out**

39. Regular updates are shared with the Involvement Service Improvement Group to advise of progress of involvement across all services and the outcomes which result.
40. The Involvement Service Improvement Group are satisfied with the involvement activity and resulting outcomes that have taken place during the third quarter.

### **Health Implications**

41. There are no direct health implications arising from this report although the successful implementation of the recommendations would have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Gateshead residents.

### **Recommendation**

42. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the involvement activities undertaken during this quarter.

## Appendix 1: Summary of involvement activities across the company

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Drop in sessions	5	89
Forum	1	10
Focus group	2	5
Service Improvement Group	7	44
Questionnaire/survey	5	1,650
Event	10	1,123
Training course	4	36
Workshop	7	391
Mystery shopping/inspections	23	30
Meeting	13	75
Choices event	1	3
Other	1	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>3,956</b>



## Summary of involvement activity – Corporate services

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Forum	1	10
Focus group	1	2
Service Improvement Group	5	33
Training course	4	36
Event	6	838
Meeting	10	55
Questionnaire/survey	4	1,335
Workshop	7	391
Drop In	4	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>2,776</b>

## Summary of outcomes – Corporate Services

- Workshops held in primary schools across Gateshead in partnership with Newcastle Eagles to promote the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and to raise awareness of the dangers of stereotyping, to improve community cohesion
- Tenant Chair appointed to the Complaints Scrutiny Panel for 12 months
- Leasehold Service Improvement Group members agreed on initiatives that will help to increase income collection
- Let's Get Digital survey carried out to establish initial understanding of how many customers have access to the internet, and to help inform future work around the development of digital inclusion work across the borough.

## Summary of involvement activity - Customers and Communities

Title of Activity	Number of Events	Number of Customers Involved
Mystery shopping/inspections	23	30
Drop in	1	13
Meeting	3	20
Focus Group	1	3
Event	4	285
Service Improvement Group	2	11
Choices event	1	3
Questionnaire/survey	1	315
Other	1	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1,180</b>

## Summary of outcomes – Customers and Communities

- Rookie Golf tournament held in support of National Older Persons' Day to promote the sport to other sheltered housing residents and encourage improved health and wellbeing among older people
- Door knocking exercise took place in Carr Hill following intelligence received regarding illegal money lending in the area. This was in conjunction with the Bite Back campaign which aims to raise awareness and understanding of the dangers of illegal money lending
- Bulb planting and litter picking taken place on estates in Wrekenton and Beacon Lough to improve the appearance of the local area
- Launched Warwick Court lunch club the help encourage community engagement among local residents and improve usage of the communal lounge.

## Appendix 2: Location of involvement activities

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Civic Centre	22
Central	25
Inner West	1
West	3
South	16
East	5
External (Newcastle)	2
Other (survey)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>

### Appendix 3: Profile information of involved customers

#### Gender:

	Involvement Database December 2014		Involvement Database June 2014		Customer profile December 2014	
Female	596	62.80%	562	62.72%	11,291	59.0%
Male	353	37.20%	334	37.28%	7,855	41.0%
Blank	-	-	-	-	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,147</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Ethnicity:

	Involvement Database December 2014		Involvement Database June 2014		Customer profile December 2014	
Asian Or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	14	0.07%
Asian Or Asian British Indian	3	0.32%	2	0.22%	9	0.05%
Asian Or Asian British Other	10	1.05%	10	1.12%	105	0.55%
Asian Or Asian British Pakistan	13	1.37%	13	1.45%	14	0.07%
Black Or Black British African	35	3.69%	30	3.35%	208	1.09%
Black Or Black British Caribbean	-	-	-	-	3	0.02%
Black Or Black British Other	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	26	0.14%
Chinese	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	21	0.11%
Mixed Other	4	0.42%	3	0.33%	26	0.14%
Mixed White & Asian	-	-	-	-	18	0.09%
Mixed White & Black African	2	0.21%	2	0.22%	15	0.08%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	-	-	-	-	6	0.03%
Other	3	0.32%	1	0.11%	80	0.42%
<b>Total BME</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>7.68%</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>7.14%</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>2.86%</b>
Refused	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	47	0.25%
White British	781	82.31%	741	82.70%	18,104	94.55%
White Irish	1	0.10%	1	0.11%	34	0.18%
White Other	13	1.37%	11	1.23%	335	1.75%
(blank)	80	8.44%	78	8.72%	14	0.07%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,147</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Disability:**

Does the tenant have a disability?	Involvement Database December 2014		Involvement Database June 2014		Customer Profile December 2014	
N	647	68.18%	612	68.31%	13,458	70.28%
<b>Y</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>31.61%</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>31.36%</b>	<b>5,480</b>	<b>28.6%</b>
Yes. But type not disclosed	-	-	-	-	98	0.50%
Refused	-	-	1	0.11%	35	0.2%
(blank)	2	0.21%	2	0.22%	72	0.4%
Not disclosed	-	-	-	-	4	0.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,147</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Age:**

	Involvement Database December 2014		Involvement Database June 2014		Customer Profile December 2014	
No date of birth	114	12.01%	113	12.61%	3	0.0%
Under 25	19	2.00%	20	2.23%	630	3.3%
25-39	132	13.91%	117	13.06%	4008	20.9%
40-49	121	12.75%	112	12.50%	3236	16.9%
50-59	136	14.33%	123	13.73%	3415	17.8%
60-74	262	27.61%	256	28.57%	4528	23.6%
75 and over	165	17.39%	155	17.30%	3327	17.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,147</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Forward Plan

**Report of:** Director of Customers and Communities

### **Purpose of report**

1. To note the forward plan of reports which will be presented to Customers and Communities Committee during the next year.

### **Background**

2. The committee agreed, at its meeting held on 2 February 2011 that a forward plan of reports it will receive at future meetings become a standing item on every committee agenda.
3. Attached as an Appendix to this report is a forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year. This will not be an exhaustive list of reports and there will clearly be a number of other items of business that the committee will be required to consider during the course of the next year. It will however give the committee an idea of forthcoming business. It will also assist officers when planning in business and meetings to avoid when there is a lot of business.

### **Link to Values**

4. This report relates to the following company value of being honest, accountable and transparent.

### **Risk Management Implications**

5. The forward plan will mitigate the risk of reports not being planned into the committee cycle.

### **Value for Money Implications**

6. There are no value for money implications directly arising from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

7. Equality and diversity implications will be addressed separately in future reports.

### **Financial Implications**

8. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

### **Health Implications**

9. There are no health implications directly arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

10. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

11. Lead officers within the company have identified reports for future meetings of this committee.

### **Impact on Customers**

12. There is no impact on customers as a result of compiling this report.

### **Recommendation**

13. It is recommended that the forward plan be noted.

## Customers and Communities Committee Forward Plan

<b>Customers and Communities Committee</b>	<b>Issues to be discussed</b>
May 2015 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement 2015-16</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Performance – End of Year Report 2014-15</li> <li>• Moving Forward Training Programme</li> <li>• Mystery Shopping 2014-15</li> </ul>
September 2015 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy Management Activity – 2014/15 Sheltered Housing Service – Year End Update 2014/15</li> <li>• Estate activity 2014/15</li> <li>• Lettings Report 2014/15</li> <li>• Rent Arrears Monitoring 2014/15</li> </ul>
November 2015 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving Forward Training Programme – Six Monthly Update</li> <li>• Complaints and Compliments Performance Update 2015/16</li> </ul>
February 2016 (date still to be agreed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>The following reports are taken to every meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-Social Behaviour Progress Report</li> <li>• Customer Involvement Activity</li> </ul>	