

What is the Board?

Charlie Hughes explains...

With all the growth and change we have seen, a number of people have said they aren't clear what the role of the Board is. This article attempts to answer that question.



BOARD MEMBERS

The Board's perspective has become more "big picture" than it was a few years back, they have a lot more of us – effectively been learning a new role.

Each Board has a wide range of skills and experience – tenants, lawyers, bankers, and more. There is real value in this balance of perspectives.

They experience our work in different ways; many have long term involvement in the many areas we work in. The three organisations set up as a group are Endeavour, Teesdale and North Star.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD

Each is registered separately as a housing association. This structure enables the subsidiaries to respond appropriately to the needs of their own tenants – they operate in very different environments.

The Board brings an independent perspective, checking it makes sense and is consistent, and questioning our assumptions. They have the final responsibility of agreeing or not the proposed way forward.

Thank you for your views, they really do count!

In September last year the Northern Housing Consortium carried out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey on our behalf.

This is the first survey carried out by Teesdale Housing Association. Housing Associations are obliged by the Housing Corporation to carry out a survey every three years.

All in all, a survey of 839 tenants was carried out and 557 questionnaires were returned, which gives a response rate of 67.7%. We are told by the Northern Housing Consortium that this is one of the highest return rates. Thank you all for helping us achieve this. Here are some of the key findings of the survey:

85.3%

of tenants reported that they were very satisfied or fully satisfied with their homes.

86.2%

of tenants said they were very or fairly satisfied with the area they live in. Though 76.3% were very or fairly satisfied with the area.

79.81%

of tenants expressed satisfaction with the overall service provided by the Teesdale Housing Association.

79.5%

of tenants expressed satisfaction with the repairs service. Over half of respondents had had repairs carried out in the last 12 months.

1.9%

of tenants reported that they were very dissatisfied or fully dissatisfied with their homes.

83.9%

of tenants said they were very or fairly good value for money. 83.3% thought the rent charged was very or fairly good value for money.

85.2%

of respondents thought we were good at keeping you informed and 91.2% said they felt this newsletter was easy to read and useful.

12.3%

of tenants reported a crime in the last 2 years.

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What does it take to be a Board Member?

Kedri Stanfield, Chair of the Board of North Star Housing Group gives us an insight into his working day...

"I am fortunate that I do not have a typical day. Before taking early retirement from my full-time career my day usually started at around 6am. I worked as a front line production manager first in the motor manufacturing industry and later in the commercial lighting business. Thankfully now my day starts quite a bit later as I was never an "early bird".

Since my retirement I have taken on a variety of roles as a volunteer. I am currently a Board member at Endeavour, a Director at District Council, Parish Council and a Magistrate. I also work on mental health

review boards for the NHS and for a private health company. All of these positions are in a by capacity and totally different to what I did when earning a living. I do not have an "energy" or equal time split between my day. The worst part of my day is in keeping some order in my diary. Because the work is so varied, different and enjoyable I find it does not feel like work and the pressures that I was accustomed to are no longer there.

In my spare time I watch sports on television which I find difficult to do as I have to be in bed by 10pm. I also enjoy reading but I'm now well past my "sell by date".

keep up with world affairs through the news papers and I read my wife, Elaine's, I have two Border Terriers which we enjoy walking and they go everywhere with us. We take holidays throughout the year and spend most of them at the Lakes.

I do as little gardening, DIY or household duties as I can get away with. I'm sure that some of our younger readers will think I'm a bit of a "CHINING" in that bit of "CHINING" is no bad thing."

When asked about their concerns for their area tenants listed the following as major problems:

1.9% Dogs

15.8% Litter and rubbish

14.2% Vandalism

83.9% When asked about whether tenants felt their rent represented value for money, 83.3% thought the rent charged was very or fairly good value for money.

85.2% On tenant consultation 85.2% of respondents thought we were good at keeping you informed and 91.2% said they felt this newsletter was easy to read and useful.

12.3% One in ten households had reported a crime in the last 2 years.

1.9% The satisfaction survey has given us an excellent tool to measure any improvements or areas of concern when we carry out the next survey in 2010.

1.9% If you would like to know more about the survey or would like a copy of the executive summary, please contact Geoff Proudlock, Housing Manager on (01833) 694400.



Competition Time!

Can you spot the difference?

Spot 8 differences in the photograph and be entered into our prize draw to win £50.



Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel No.:

Congratulations Keziah!



THE Christmas card competition which we ran in our Autumn newsletter, was won by Keziah from Burnham Road, Hambleton, Leamington Spa, CV32 9JN.

Keziah's design showed a robin sitting on a festive version of our Association's logo. She was presented with gift vouchers to the value of £75 by Pauline Charlton, Chair of Teesdale Housing Association.

Congratulations to the winners of our Survey prize draw.

The winners are: Mr & Mrs Studholme from Etherley and Miss Pipe from Eveswood.

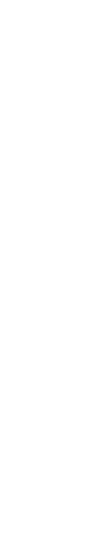
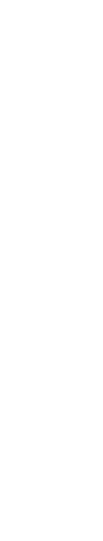
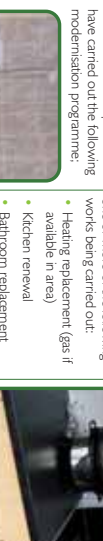
Each received shopping vouchers valued at £50!

Do you want to be part of our next Newsletter?

If you would like to include any stories please contact: Geoff Proudlock on (01833) 694400 or via email: geoff.proudlock@teesdaleha.co.uk

Teesdale

YOUR NEWS, YOUR VIEWS, YOUR NEWSLETTER...



DELIVERING OUR PROMISES TO YOU

SINCE Teesdale Housing Association was formed there have been a number of improvements made to your homes.

We believe it is important to keep customers up to date with our progress on these improvements. A mini-refurbishment consists of one or more of the following works being carried out:

- Heating replacement (gas if available in area)
- Kitchen renewal
- Bathroom replacement
- Electrical upgrade

What our customers say

We often receive a variety of feedback from our customers, one tenant whose refurbishment works were completed recently said:

"Excellent team, well done, wonderful work from all parties concerned" Our customer then went on to thank all the contractors and THA staff who had helped modernise their home. This particular work consisted of a full mini-refurbishment including windows and doors.

Another tenant whose home was also modernised told us their thoughts: **"I am satisfied and very happy with the refurbishment of my home, Thank You."**

This year's work is now well underway and detailed surveys are being done for the next phase of the refurbishment works, these are being carried out in Shirley Close, Eveswood and Garden View, Battershowe.

The properties specified in year two of the new year plan will follow on from this, with a proposed completion before end March 2008.

The proposed works are as follows:

- 24 properties will have PVCU double glazed windows installed.
- 40 bathrooms will have front & rear double glazed doors installed.
- 79 properties will have mini-refurbishment schemes incorporating new kitchens and bathrooms and central heating and electrical upgrades.

If you have any queries relating to the modernisation programme please do not hesitate to contact Ben Elliott - Contracts Manager - Tel: (01833) 694405 or Phil Wright - Clerk of Works - Tel: (01833) 694414, who will be happy to assist you.



Facts and figures

IT is important for us at Teesdale Housing to keep our customers up to date with how we are performing.

In this section you will find information about rent levels, rent collection, arrears, repairs and investment. As we have only been in operation since 31st July 2006 these figures cover the period 31/07 - 31/07/07.

Average Weekly rents as at 31 March 2006

| Property Type | Assured |
|------------------------|------------|
| Bedst/1 Bedroom | £43.91 |
| 2 Bedroom | £47.47 |
| 3 + Bedroom | £55.14 |
| Total Tenancies | 892 |

| Property Type | Target |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Losses from Empty Properties | 4.34% |
| Rent Arrears | 2.44% |
| Rent Collected | 102.35% |

| Property Type | Completed on time | Number of jobs |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Emergency Repairs | 95% | 65 |
| Urgent Repairs | 94% | 179 |
| Routine Repairs | 95% | 1209 |

Investment in Properties

| Year | £ | Number of Homes |
|------|-----------|-----------------|
| 2006 | 500,000 | 88 |
| 2007 | 800,000 | 87 |
| 2008 | 1,300,000 | 73 |
| 2009 | 1,400,000 | 56 |
| 2010 | 1,700,000 | 31 |

Hello to everyone



ON 3 July 2007 Teesdale Housing Association celebrated its first birthday and it is now time to look back over the year and take stock of our achievements. To say it has been a hectic year is an understatement!

As we promised in our Offer Document we have introduced a number of new services and improved others for the benefit of our customers.

We have completed improvement works to 88 properties at a cost of £500,000 and are planning major works this year to over 80 properties at a cost of £800,000.

New measures have been introduced to ensure that these works will be completed without unnecessary disruption to tenants.

In the autumn of last year we introduced the Alloy rent collection system which allows our customers to pay rent at an increased number of outlets and to pay by direct debit for the first time.

“Reduced response times”
We have reduced our response time to complete your repairs and now acknowledge all repair requests and indicate the target time for completion. In addition, we have introduced a new out of hours repair reporting system in partnership with Sedgfield Borough Council so that we can receive repair requests 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We have increased employment in the area by recruiting our new members of staff including a Clerk of Works, whose job is to ensure that improvement work contracts run as smoothly as possible. Housing Management staff have also been trained to verify housing benefit claims so

that these can be processed more quickly for the benefit of our customers.

As promised, we have introduced the handy van service which undertakes jobs for vulnerable tenants which a landlord would not normally do. You told us during the consultation period that this was a service you wanted and, as expected, it has been well received by customers who have used the service.

“Tenants Forum active across the district”
Our Tenants Forum has been active in the district and has held events across a number of villages to encourage attendance and increase membership.

You have shown us you care about the way your homes are managed. In September, we recruited a new Tenant Board Member and, in the election, 45% of tenants voted, which was a significantly higher than the turnout for the District Council elections.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and board members for the commitment they have all given over the last 12 months and to confirm that the welfare of our tenants is always central to our thoughts.
Good health to all tenants.
Pauline Charlton
Chair

citizens advice bureau

THE Citizens Advice Bureau in Barnard Castle offers advice by caseworkers who can help you with advice about all kinds of life problems.

Most of their work is dealing with benefit claims, debt problems and housing issues. They can answer queries about problems with buying and selling things and employment problems too. They offer customers advice and can put them in the right direction.

Nowadays more and more people have problems with debt and it can make life a misery. You see so many ads on the radio offering to help people with their debt problems.

This can be a costly road to go down. Why not try the Citizens Advice Bureau first? All their help is free and their advice is tailored to meet clients' needs and not to earning money.

You can call 01833 631486 and simple queries can be answered straight away but they find that anything complex is better dealt with face to face.

You can drop in for a chat between 10am and 4pm Monday or Wednesday at 21, Galtgate, Barnard Castle, entrance next to Louis Smith's Motors, opposite the Post Office. If you are unable to travel into our catchment areas at Barnard Castle there are outreach sessions at:
Evenwood and Middleton in these sessions call us on 01833 631486.
The service is completely free and confidential and we aim to help anyone, whatever their age, sex or colour.

SOME TEESDALE PROPERTIES WITH AN UNUSUAL HISTORY

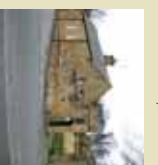
When Teesdale Housing Association bought its stock from Teesdale District Council it acquired some lovely and interesting properties. We thought you might be interested to know more about a few of them and share their history...



7 STRATMORE COURT, BARNARD CASTLE

This property was originally part of the railway goods station and was built in approximately the 1850's. Its initial use would not have been as residential accommodation. This and two neighbouring buildings were purchased by Barnard Castle Urban District Council in 1963 from the British Railways Board and turned into three residential properties. Numbers 8 and 9 were sold by Teesdale District Council in the early 1970's.

1 DUNELM COURT, BARNARD CASTLE



This two bedroom bungalow began life as a store room for the first Durham Regiment of Mills in 1863 when the area now known as Dunelm Court was purchased from the Healdham Estate for the price sum of £256 and 5 shillings! The whole of the area was used as barracks for the Durham Regiment of Mills (later the Durham Light Infantry) and was sold to the Urban District Council of Barnard Castle in 1930. Over a number of years the land was sold to North East Housing Association (now Home Housing) who developed the current Bowes Lyon House and Dunelm Court. No. 1 Dunelm Court was retained by the Council and is situated next to the entrance to the old barracks, which are situated off Birch Road.

MARWOOD COTTAGES, BARNARD CASTLE

These two properties situated off Flatts Road have stunning views across the valley. It is believed that the Barnard Castle Urban District Council purchased the properties from Lord Barnard, although records do not indicate when this took place. Originally two cottages and an outbuilding, the outbuilding was sold on the private market in 1995 and converted into a residential property.

If you have any interesting historic facts about the houses in Teesdale then contact **Johnathan Carver on 01833 694408.**

Teesdale Housing's Commitment to Diversity

OUR commitment to diversity is evident in everything we do, not least our commitment to a diverse workforce. Our Management Team and HR Department are keen to publish our work, values and our organisation as an employer of choice.

We are a member of the Housing Diversity Network, COPEM provides this organisation is a not for profit business that provides or minority ethnic people who advice to the Social Housing sector to support their quest to achieve excellence in respect of diversity.

We are also a member of COPEM - Careers Housing Diversity Website for our customers and tenants. If you are looking for employment in Housing and are from a minority group then our website is the place to look. www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk

What our Customers think of the New Handyman Service



The Handyman service has been running for some time now and is being well received by its users, amongst them is Mrs Davies of 1 Just thought I would drop you a line to tell you about your very helpful, long may he continue. We could have done very difficult to get jobs in the better late than never, I do appreciate it."

P Davies
I happened across the Handyman service, I have no problems getting you up and explaining what I need doing.

If wish to use this service please contact **Rodger (01833 694404) or Elspeth (01833 694409)**

A week in the life of a housing options officer

JONATHAN CARVER gives us an insight into what it is like being a housing options officer at Teesdale Housing.



Although Teesdale is a rural district with a small population it still has its fair share of housing problems - evictions from landlords, family disputes and bailiffs, mortgage and rent arrears to name just a few.

People have the perception that because Teesdale doesn't have people sleeping rough that it doesn't have a homelessness problem. Fortunately, we don't have the problems that big cities do but homelessness does occur in Teesdale although it is largely hidden.

The role is varied and I enjoy it a lot, but when I was asked to write about my typical week I want sure what to write as I've yet to have a typical week! But anyway this is a whistle stop tour of last week...

Monday
I like a quick cup of coffee whilst I check and reply to my emails. I spend a lot of time talking with other agencies that work with Teesdale and beyond, today I've had an email from Disc a local agency that works with young people, and the Police (and one from the boss to check up on me!) Then there a few calls to make. In the afternoon I have an interview with a couple (Mr and Mrs T) whose private landlord wants to evict them.

Tuesday
I contact the landlord of Mr and Mrs T who informs me that although they are good tenants they are in rent arrears. I explain the legal rights of both landlord and tenant, and try to negotiate with him on the tenants behalf. The landlord agrees that if the rent arrears are paid and rent is kept up to date he would be more than happy for them to stay.

Wednesday
I have a meeting in the morning at Durham with other local authorities to discuss the new Homeless Action Partnership, (this is one of the key existing, but important parts of my job). Teesdale and County Durham believe in a preventative approach to homelessness and so are continually striving to do this.

Thursday
I contact the Housing Benefit department at the new shared services department in Crook (0945 3370227), to ensure that they have the correct details for Mr and Mrs T, it turns out that they don't. Mr and Mrs T are eligible for extra Housing Benefit payments.

I then refer Mr and Mrs T to Citizens advice, they offer debt advice and help them budget so they can pay their rent and arrange a repayment schedule of the arrears, and he agrees to let Mr and Mrs T stay - result! - I love it!

That afternoon however, a customer, Mrs H comes into the office. She has been experiencing domestic violence from her partner. Her and her 2 children have left and have nowhere to go.

This is one of the more difficult parts of my job. She is very upset and very frightened, and the first thing I do is try to reassure her. I carry out a homeless interview and, as she has nowhere to go I organise some temporary accommodation for them, whilst I carry out a homeless investigation. I also refer her to Women's Aid who will offer her emotional support, and help with legalities such as child custody.

The weekend... housing options can be stressful at times and I use the weekend to relax and recharge my batteries (I have found that my batteries respond very well to Guinness), ready for work again on Monday...

Most of my day is spent carrying out a homeless investigation regarding Mrs H. Although it's still the early stages of the investigation it looks like we will be able to organise a safe and secure home for Mrs H and her children, although not in an area that she has stated she would like. Unfortunately, due to the shortage of available housing this does happen, but Mrs H's safety is my main concern.

Friday
The weekend... housing options can be stressful at times and I use the weekend to relax and recharge my batteries (I have found that my batteries respond very well to Guinness), ready for work again on Monday...

REPAIRS FREEPHONE 0800 652 2264