

# AIMING HIGHER

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011



**Northwards Housing**  
North Manchester's Council Homes

[www.northwardshousing.co.uk](http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk)

# YOUR ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome to Northwards Housing's Annual Report for 2010/11. For the second year running this report has been compiled with a steering group of tenants.

During our busy summer we held several workshops to share ideas and inspiration. One of the things which excited us the most was that this year, for the first time, the Northwards Annual Report goes to every household with the Northwards Natter!

There are six standards that social landlords must meet to provide a quality service for people living in social housing. This report focuses on the work we have done over the past 12 months to meet these standards and how we compare with other social landlords. You can see for yourself where we are winning and where we need to improve our fitness!

We have used the forthcoming Olympic Games as our theme – a visit to Sportcity by the steering group provided inspiration! The steering group have awarded a gold medal if our quality of service is exceeding the standards.

## Gold medal:

You will see this medal in areas where we have performed very well. We have either been recognised as an example of good practice or we are one of the top performing landlords.



## Special thanks to:

John Biggs; Karen Blakeley; Michelle Blakeley; Jean Crompton, Charlotte Grant, Norman Hart; Sue Ratchford; Colin Smith and David Smith, for being such **'good sports'** and helping us to produce this report.



*The Steering Group*



*Our day at Sportcity*



## Quality of accommodation



**Are you Decent?**  
**99.6% of our homes are!**

By December 2010 we had completed 21,820 improvements to Northwards properties. This marked the end of our five year "Decent Homes Programme", which we delivered on time, within budget and to an extremely high standard.

**21,820**  
Number of improvements



**11,206**  
New kitchens and bathrooms



**10,614**  
New windows



**£192 million**  
Spent on home improvements



**9.7 out of 10**  
Resident satisfaction score



We still have a few more improvements to deliver. These are generally for new tenants who have moved into properties where the improvements were not carried out at the request of the previous resident. We know who still needs the work doing so don't worry – we have plans to do all of these within four years.

## Repairs and maintenance



**Repairs completed right first time – 96.4%**

**People satisfied – 97.6%**

We are up there with the top performing organisations! And we've even beaten our own personal best as we only managed 93% last year. We learned lessons from the harsh winter of 2009/10 – for example, our repairs operatives now keep a ready supply of parts handy to help complete repairs more quickly.



*We're getting it right first time!*



# TENANT EMPOWERMENT

## Customer service, choice and complaints



*We love complaints!*

In September 2010, we compared our average time to respond to **complaints** with 181 housing organisations. We take an average of 9.2 days to examine complaints thoroughly before we respond. This is better than the average time for other landlords and only one day longer than the top performers.

Last year we took 131,545 **phone calls** and answered 86.4% of calls within our service standard of 20 seconds. This is above target for this service and so our Customer Service Centre deserves a gold medal!

We received a total of 230 written complaints in 2010/11 – but we also published a complaints handbook, which has been given to all employees! The handbook is called “We Love Complaints!” because it encourages us to see complaints as valuable feedback; helping us learn lessons to improve services.

In June 2010, we also once again received the **Customer Service Excellence Award**, which is given to organisations that meet strict Government standards for customer service. Assessors particularly praised our complaints handbook and our services for vulnerable tenants.

## Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants



### Master SHEF

In February 2010 we were named as one of just TWO housing organisations in the country to achieve top marks in the **Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF)** assessment. SHEF helps organisations like Northwards to assess diversity and equality performance to make sure our services are fair and equal for everyone. We achieved an “Excellent” rating - the highest level in the framework.

The assessor said: “Northwards Housing puts its tenants at the heart of everything it does and this ethos is understood and implemented at all levels.”

They also praised our “**One 2 One**” **telephone service** for residents who find it difficult to speak to us over the phone. We launched One 2 One in April 2010. It makes it easier for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems to contact us. John and Ben are two of our customers using the service. They said: “**The number is easy to remember and the people on the phone give us time to explain what we need doing in the flat.**”

Just contact us if you’d like to know more about One 2 One.



*One 2 One advisor – Pat*

## Tenant Involvement and Empowerment



Riverdale MUGA

### Making decisions at a local level

Northwards Housing manages 12,500 homes over a wide area. To help us keep strong local connections, three 'Area Panels' make recommendations to the Board. Their local knowledge is invaluable to us. The panels are:

**Wilton:** Higher Blackley; Crumpsall; and Cheetham wards

**Fourways:** Charlestown and Moston wards

**Riverways:** Harpurhey; Newton Heath and Miles Platting and Ancoats and Clayton wards.

Following recommendations from the Wilton Area Panel, we launched a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on Riverdale Estate in October 2010, to give local children a great place to play outdoors. Funding came from the panel's environmental budget and the Council. Tenants had been calling for a recreational space in this area for many years. Anna Trotman (Ward Councillor and Northwards Housing Board Member) said: **"It's great to see additional investment coming into the area to reward tenants and residents for all their involvement."**

### Loud and Proud

In August 2010 we were loud and proud at **Manchester Pride**, which sparked lively debate amongst some of our residents.

**"Why are you wasting money doing that when you should put it back into the area?"**  
a Facebook user posted on our page.

We were pleased to explain ourselves: **"It costs £380 to join the parade, our truck was donated by Wates Living Space. We teamed up with Eastlands Homes to share the cost and volunteers donated their time. Taking part in Manchester Pride gives us a fantastic opportunity to show our support and commitment towards our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees and residents."**

It's fantastic that residents are using Facebook to hold us to account for what we do: it gives us the chance to engage with people who might not normally get in touch.

In the future when taking part in similar events we will make sure our reasons for joining in are made clear from the start.



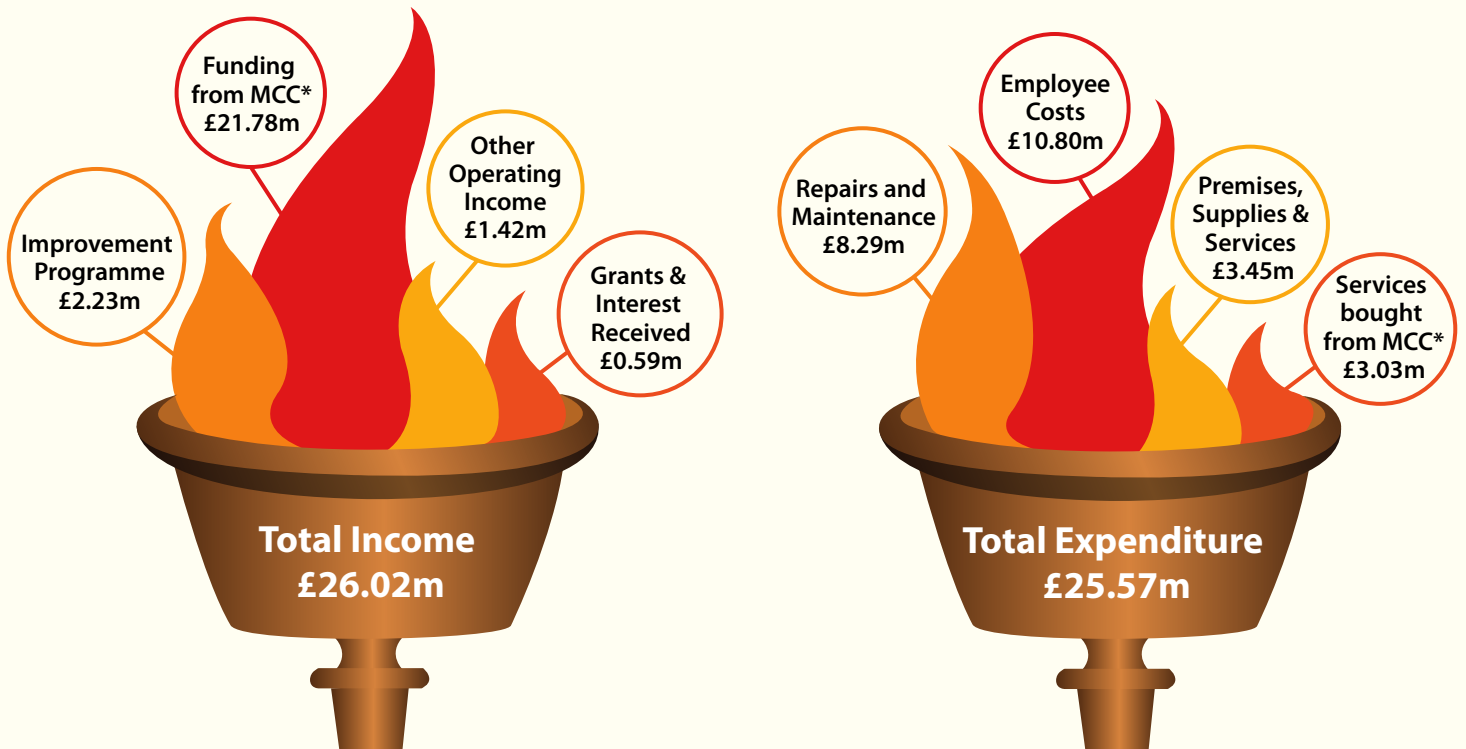
Lady Gaga and Boy George at Pride  
(AKA Chris and Mo!)



# VALUE FOR MONEY

**Here's our finances for 2010 - 2011. As you can see, we gained a little more than we spent: A surplus of £450K. This money has gone to pay back part of the extra money we had to spend during the difficult financial year of 2009 - 2010, mainly on repairing empty homes.**

The financial statements came from our independent auditors Grant Thornton UK LLP. They will be signed off at our Annual General Meeting in October 2011. You can find more information on our accounts by visiting [www.northwardshousing.co.uk](http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk).



\* MCC - Manchester City Council

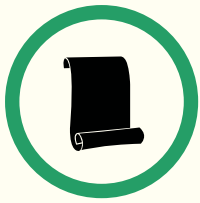


*Sir David Attenborough presented Elliott Simm, Home Improvements Manager with our award*

## **In July 2010 we won an Ashden Award for our work towards making tenants homes more energy efficient.**

We spent the £10,000 prize money on brand new eco-friendly lighting sensor systems for the bin stores in seven of our high rise blocks of flats. The system saves around £2,600 and 11.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. It switches the lights on when the room is occupied, and turns them off after two and-a-half minutes if the store is empty.

Money saved on the electricity bills is ploughed back into the pot to be spent on future energy efficiency schemes to help save residents money.



# TENANCY STANDARD

## Rehousing



We hit the ground running in 2010/11 with our rehousing and tenancy standard. During 2010 we worked with Manchester City Council to develop a new allocations policy to make sure that homes are allocated fairly. We've helped 67 tenants "downsize" from family homes into more manageable properties.

Here's what David and Carole Smith shared about their experience of moving into one of our brand new bungalows: **"We moved in 12 March, the bungalows are like the TARDIS! There have been a few problems with our innovative technology – the rain gatherer needs rain and it didn't rain enough until June, but it now works perfectly.**

**The solar panels that generate our hot water have worked without ever having to resort to the boiler. We have a pleasant view of our 'Florida' style bungalows at the front and lawns and park at the back.**

**After six months of living in our new-build we are pleased and thankful for the opportunity. I'm sure there will be more teething troubles, cracks in plaster and various other niggles – but we wouldn't change it."**



David and Carole outside their new home

## Empty Homes

When somebody moves out of one of our homes it takes time to get that home ready for a new tenant. In 2010/11 our fitness in this area improved. Currently our homes are ready to relet in 36 days, compared to 41 days in 2009/10. But we know we can do better – challenging targets have been set for next year and hopefully we'll earn a gold medal soon.

## Rent

**100.2% of rent collected!** (This figure is above 100% because it includes rent that we collected this year, that had not been paid in previous years.)

In March this year, we compared our rent collection performance with 534 housing organisations. We found that we were in the top 50%.

Our rents team are responsible for collecting rent from people who have fallen behind, but we also offer a dedicated money advice service to our customers. Tracy, our Money Advisor provides a free, confidential non judgemental service. In fact her motto is: **"It's my job to help people, not to judge them."** You can visit her in your local office:

Monday – Cheetham  
Wednesday – White Moss Road  
Thursday – Monsall Street

No appointments needed –  
just drop in between  
10am and 1pm.



Tracy Panesh – Money Advisor



# NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY

## Neighbourhood Management and Local Area Co-operation



Everyone's welcome at the Tea-Mobile!

We like to go out and meet people to get their ideas on improvements for the area, so you can often find us on our Tea Mobile - it's a moving living-room where you can give us your suggestions and opinions for your area.

During November 2010 we used the Tea Mobile to consult tenants on our new **"Local Offer"** which describes the services Northwards provides and the standards our tenants can expect. You can download a copy of this document from our website: [www.northwardshousing.co.uk](http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk) (click the **"Your Northwards"** tab then **"Who we are, what we do"**). If you prefer, contact us and we will send you one for free.

## Working Together

In April 2010 we worked with residents on the Waterloo Road Estate. The estate had suffered from vandalism, joy riding and dumped rubbish, and there was no tenants association in this part of Cheetham Hill. We approached Church Action on Poverty to establish the 'School of Participation', so that residents could gain the skills to get involved.

Activities and events encouraged local people to meet, helping Northwards to listen to issues and concerns. Over a year later, the group is going strong, working hard to bring in funding to improve their local area.



Local events helped bring people together

## Anti-social Behaviour



Northwards Wardens on patrol

We work with other organisations like the police and Manchester City Council to help make our streets safer. Together we took 204 local residents to court during 2010/11 for causing anti-social behaviour.

In March 2011 our Anti-Social Behaviour Case Managers joined our Wardens, to form the brand new **"Community Safety Team"** to crack down on ASB.

We increased the time the Wardens spend patrolling from six to seven days a week, from 11.30am - 10.30pm. This gives them a more visible presence, and tackles ASB at the times it is occurring, giving extra support to those customers who really need it.



# TEAM NORTHWARDS

12 volunteers manage Northwards and make decisions independent of the Council. We believe local people like you are in the best position to shape the housing service. That's why there are four tenant members on the Northwards board. The board makes policies and plans for Northwards, sets our wider aims and objectives and makes sure that the staff working day-to-day are meeting our standards.

## Tenant Board Members



Derek Purnell



Michelle Blakeley



Sue Ratchford - Chair



Vacancy

## Independent Board Members



Basat Mahmood Sheikh



David Leah



Guy Johnson



Hilary Vaughan

## Council Nominated Board Members



Cllr Anna Trotman



Fiona Sharkey



Cllr Mark Hackett



Cllr Naeem UI Hassan JP

The Board has three sub-committees to look at important issues in more detail – each sub committee is made up of some members of the Board and two co-optees (extra people drafted in to help make sure we are running the business properly!)

### Resources sub-committee

Karen Blakeley (Co-optee)  
Mark Leach (Co-optee)

Looks at finance, technology and staffing policies and strategies, annual accounts, pay and health and safety.

### Audit sub-committee

Fatima Adamjee (Co-optee)  
Pat Glazebrook (Co-optee)

Looks at insurance, risk management, health and safety and internal audit.

### Operations sub-committee

Joan FitzGerald (Co-optee)  
Sharon Thomas (Co-optee)

Looks at tenant involvement and satisfaction, local services policies and priorities, access to services, complaints, improvement programme, empty property management, repairs, policies and performance, regeneration and energy efficiency.

# DID WE PASS THE FITNESS TEST?

## What did you think of this annual report?

Fill in this survey and return to us by **31 October 2011** to be in with a chance of winning Asda shopping vouchers.

There are three prizes up for grabs:

**1 x £200 Asda voucher**

**1 x £100 Asda voucher**

**1 x £50 Asda voucher**



*The Steering Group at Sportcity*

### 1 Overall what do you think of this annual report?

Excellent  Good  Ok  Poor

If poor, please tell us why...

### 2 Is there anything you would like to see more information on next time?

Yes  No  If yes, please tell us in the space below:

### 3 Would you like to join other tenants to help with next year's annual report?

Yes  No

Fill in your name and address and post this page to: **FREEPOST Northwards Housing HQ** by 31 October 2011.

Name

Address

The financial information provided in this report came from independent auditors Grant Thornton. We compared our performance information with other housing organisations at: [www.housemark.co.uk](http://www.housemark.co.uk) You can find out more information on our website: [www.northwardshousing.co.uk](http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk)