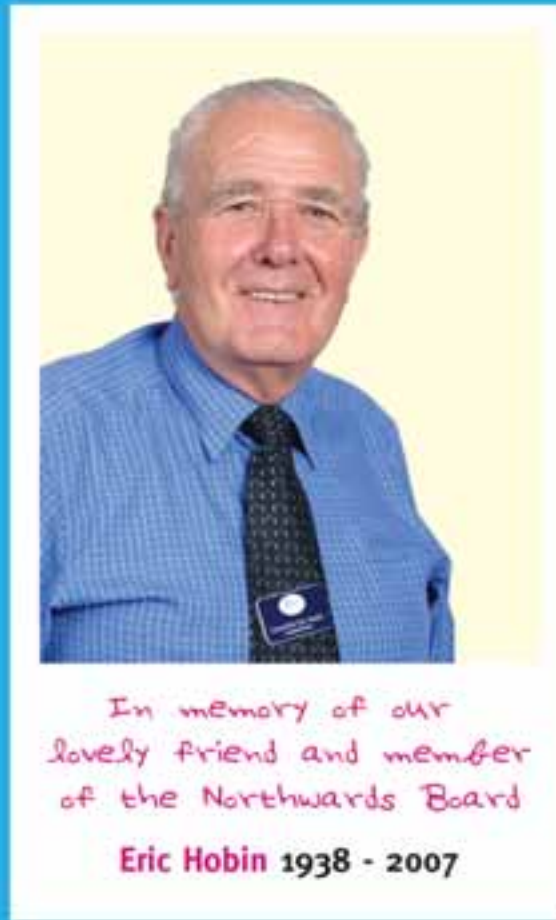




The story so far?...

Northwards Housing's Annual Report 2006-2007





Eric had a real heart for the people of north Manchester. In his name, we have set up the 'Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund' – a project to help fund local community activities and events. If you'd like to find out more, please call Seema Kohli, our Customer Service Manager on 0161 227 3030.



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Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2006 to 2007...
It's a whistle-stop story of what's happened
in the last year at Northwards.
We hope you enjoy it!

In the beginning ...

We started back in December 2005 when over 90 percent of council tenants in the area voted us in to manage their homes.

We're a not-for-profit organisation, created by tenants and the City Council to deliver top-notch housing services and to improve tenants' homes.

We look after tenants' homes and their improvements on behalf of the Council. So even though they still own the homes, we act as the landlord – communicating with residents, working with partner agencies, collecting rent, making repairs, delivering home improvements and working with north Manchester's communities.

In just over a year, we have achieved 'two stars' with 'excellent prospects' in the government's Audit Commission Inspection, which has given us access to £200 million to improve 13,000 tenants' homes.



Once upon a time, there were twelve volunteers ...

We are led by the 'Northwards Board', a group of twelve volunteers who manage and make decisions for our organisation. They say what Northwards is and what Northwards does. There are four tenant members, four Council members and four Independent members.

"It's a highly responsible position... always acting openly as a representative for tenants. I think the two essential qualities needed to be a Board member are a caring attitude and a real interest in other people."

Sue Ratchford, Northwards Tenant Board Member



So ... are you sitting comfortably? **Then we'll begin!**



The objectives of our story

In July 2007, the Northwards Board spent a day reflecting on the last year and looking forward to the future of Northwards.

Our seven company 'objectives' were the main focus of the day. They are...

-  Warm, safe and affordable homes
-  Safer places to live
-  Quality services
-  An attractive environment
-  Successful communities
-  Promote equality and diversity
-  Value for money

These objectives perfectly explain what we all want for Northwards and north Manchester, which is why we're using them to tell our story in this Annual Report.

Robin & Ade ...

Robin

Looking back over the last year, it's been incredibly busy, there's no doubt about that. The thing I'm most impressed with is the way everyone has pulled together to make it happen. Our staff and tenants have truly gone the extra mile this year. I'm so grateful for that!

Ade

I couldn't agree more... It's also been a very successful year, especially for such a new organisation. Getting the two stars with excellent prospects in the Inspection after just six months of starting was the highlight for me.

Robin

And even since the Inspection, our performance and tenant satisfaction levels have been really promising. I think all this shows that we've started to make a difference in north Manchester. That's the main priority, I think – not just fitting new kitchens and collecting rent!

Ade

Definitely... When I look through this report, I'm frequently reminded of all the things that have happened in the local communities in the last year. People putting their time and energy into making a difference is so inspiring.

Robin

Well, it's paid off... and it's definitely inspired us to try even harder this year. It's been a good time for learning too. We've got a whole lot more planned for the next 12 months and I'd like to see more tenants getting involved in the future of Northwards. We need their views and opinions to move onwards and upwards!

Ade

And Northwards!

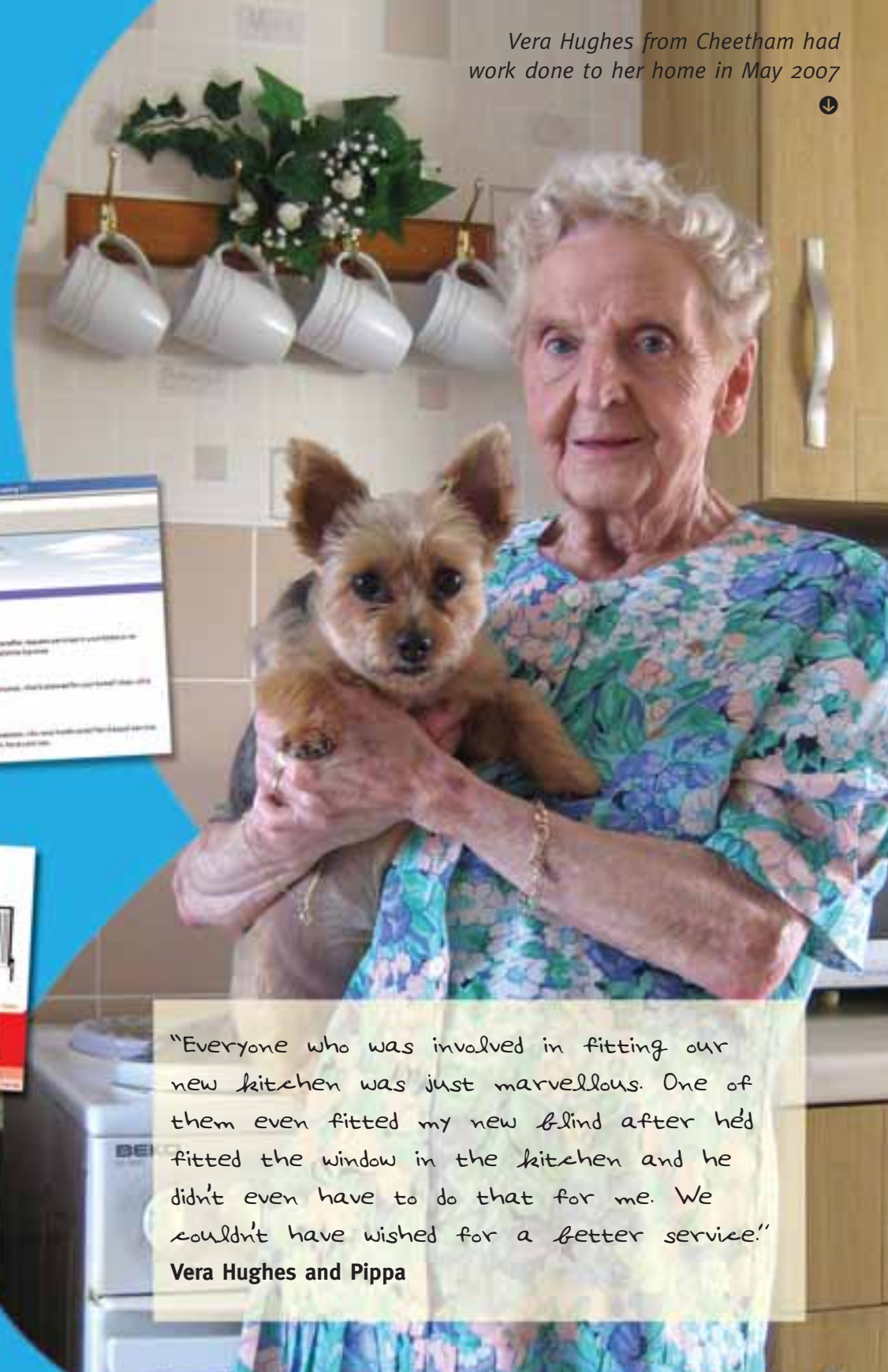


Warm, safe and affordable homes

When we first started, we made some major promises to all our tenants. The main promise was to bring all 13,000 homes up to the government's 'Decent Homes Standard' by 2011. We could only do this as long as we passed the government's strict Audit Commission Inspection last year.

Well, we passed the Inspection with a good result of 'two stars with excellent prospects', giving us access to £200 million to do the job. Here's how we've been getting on in the last year...

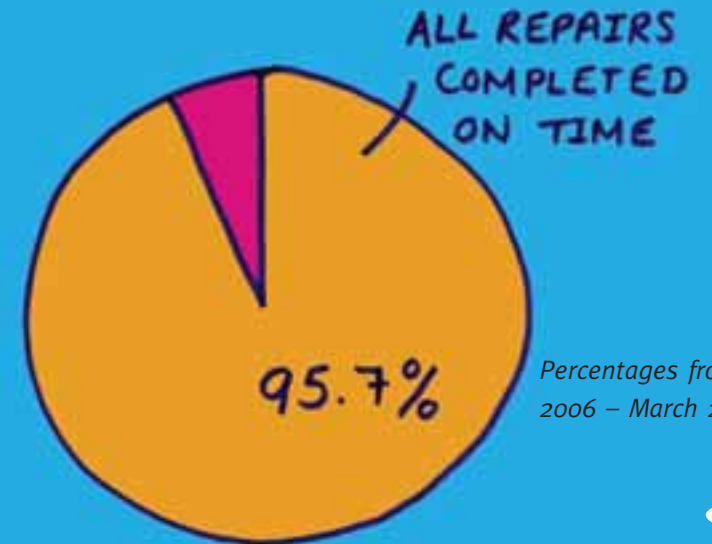
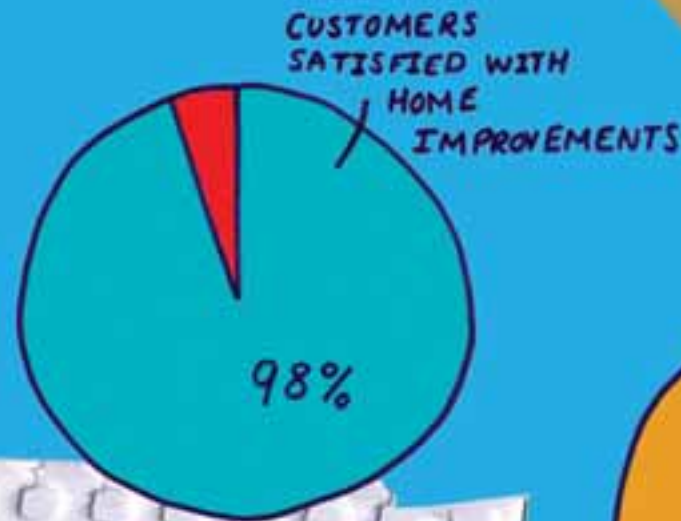
- Tenants want to know when we are going to do their home improvements work, we created an on-line database on our website in February 2007. This means people with access to our website can simply type in their address and see the work timetables for their home for the next four years. All our employees can access this database, so tenants without the internet can visit us to find out.
- In October 2006 we produced a set of six 'home improvements' leaflets – giving important information about kitchen, bathroom, window, heating and external improvements. The leaflets also explain the standards that people can expect with the home improvements. All tenants will receive these leaflets before their home improvements start.
- Tenants now have the choice of nine wall tiles, nine kitchen worktops, six kitchen handles, eight kitchen doors, nine colours of wall paint, four styles of bathroom panels, four toilet seats, ten styles of flooring and three window styles. Compared to other housing organisations, we now offer one of the widest ranges of choice.



"Everyone who was involved in fitting our new kitchen was just marvellous. One of them even fitted my new blind after he'd fitted the window in the kitchen and he didn't even have to do that for me. We couldn't have wished for a better service."

Vera Hughes and Pippa

- In September 2006, we joined forces with 'Manchester Working Ltd'. They now do the majority of the home improvement and repair works on tenants' homes. 'Manchester Working' combines the existing skills of the Council's old 'City Works' team and business knowledge of the 'Morrisons Facilities Services' team – making a bigger and better partnership to deliver the excellent home improvements and repairs service.
- And in October 2006 we signed an agreement with five leading construction companies to deliver the rest of the home improvement works. The five companies are: Bramall, G&J Seddon, Connaught, The Lord Group and Wates Living Space. They all work under the united name of 'IMPACT Manchester', dedicated to making first-rate improvements to tenants' homes.



Percentages from April 2006 – March 2007

"We want residents to receive the best housing service in the country. We look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with the residents, with Northwards Housing and the Council".

Bill Coghill, Managing Director of Manchester Working Ltd

"The lifts are great - we can get wheelchair users down to the community room for bingo now! We're lucky... Who would know we're a stone's throw from the city centre in this little haven? I just can't wait for my new kitchen now..."

Pat Fahey has lived at Victoria Square for five years



Since March 2006, we have fitted and finished approximately:

- ☁ 221 homes with new bathrooms
- ☁ 1384 homes with new kitchens
- ☁ 2552 homes with new double glazing

A quick reminder...

By 2011, all Northwards tenants will be getting:

- Our residents at Victoria Square in Ancoats had cause for celebration in their elevation in December 2006 – all thanks to major improvements and two modern lifts installed in the Grade II listed building. It was originally built in 1894 to house nearly 900 people in a bid to clear slum dwellings in the area. These days, it is home to 166 Northwards residents in their retirement. In the last 18 months it's had major improvement works – like better security, landscaped gardens, gas and electrical work, and two new lifts.

- uPVC double glazing on all single-glazed windows – except in 'listed' buildings, where we will use wooden frames
- a brand new kitchen OR a brand new bathroom (if it's at least five years old)
- repairs and improvements needed to bring homes up to the 'decent homes standard'
- improvements to the local environment – like lighting and security, boundaries around homes, open spaces and the foyers of multi-storey blocks.

Valerie Smith from Cheetham had work done to her home in June 2007 ➡

"We were all on first name terms by the end! The lads were just so good and didn't treat it like any old job; it felt more like a personal service. I'm really happy with the end result."

Valerie Smith



Safer places to live

Right from the very start, we have been determined to help make north Manchester a safe place for residents and visitors. We have great faith in the area and the people who live here and we've spent the last year building on this. Our aim supports the government's 'Respect Agenda' – "...to live and work in a place where we value each other, where anti-social behaviour is rare and dealt with effectively."

- At the start of 2007, we signed up to Manchester City Council's agreement – the 'Respect Standard for Housing'. It's the City's contribution to a government plan, to make sure that we deal with anti-social behaviour effectively. We have committed to these six major promises...

- ➔ Responsibility, guidance and commitment to residents
- ➔ Supporting residents and giving them more power
- ➔ Prevention and early intervention of anti-social behaviour
- ➔ Specific support for residents, victims and witnesses
- ➔ Protecting people by using fast enforcement on anti-social behaviour
- ➔ Support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour

- Pam Greatorex is just one tenant who has stood up to anti-social behaviour this year, winning an award on the way. Pam and her disabled son were trapped at home and seriously harassed by anti-social youths. Our Monsall Neighbourhood Services Officer took on Pam's case and helped her to get ASBOs placed on the youths, and CCTV cameras put in the area. Pam's bravery was recognised at a 'Respect' awards event in May 2007.
- Since July 2006 we have fitted 449 specialised telephone alarms in the homes of our more vulnerable tenants. The alarms are plugged into the telephone socket and on the event of a break-in, they automatically telephone for emergency help. Our Neighbourhood Wardens have been working closely with the police on the scheme, which has seen crime rates fall in the last year, particularly in Newton Heath.



"Without people like Pam, we wouldn't get the evidence to secure ASBOs on these people. All it takes is a few brave souls and we can take control of our neighbourhoods!"
Joanne Kelly, Neighbourhood Services Officer



Mum rewarded for leading fight against thugs

Life's one long party



'Operation Care' started in Newton Heath in October 2006 thanks to our Neighbourhood Wardens. It's a cutting-edge, ten-week course, getting young people off the streets into a place where they can learn the hard facts (and effects) of anti-social behaviour. And for good behaviour, they are rewarded with remote control car racing. They are now on the third run of the course and it's having a positive effect on the neighbourhood.

- In April 2007, the people from 'Charter Mark' came to inspect our services. They work closely with the Prime Minister's Office to set high standards for excellence in customer service. The work our Neighbourhood Wardens do in the community was highlighted as an area of real strength.

Charter Mark Assessor, Nicola Atkin said in the final report: *"The excellent community work of the Neighbourhood Wardens in helping to create safe and secure communities was well demonstrated and is an example of Best Practice."*

- Teenage school children in north Manchester have been learning about the serious dangers of off-road bikes this year. Our Youth Strategy Officer teamed up with the local Fire Service in October 2006 to run the 'Too Young to Die' project. The interactive sessions feature road safety films, group workshops and open discussions.

"It's all about letting young people know what can happen when things go wrong with these awful bikes. We adopted the no-nonsense approach and the response has been great."

Ian Gillett, our Youth Strategy Officer

- We've been working with the Police and other crime prevention agencies at the 'Crime Caravans' this year. The caravans pull up at points across north Manchester, giving the local community advice on how to deal with crime and prevent it in the future. Our Neighbourhood Services Officers and Wardens have been involved from the start.
- Since November 2006, tenants in the warden patrolled areas of north Manchester have had the opportunity to get free 'Property Marking', helping to prevent the resale of stolen items. Tenants call the Wardens and arrange a home visit to have their valuable personal property marked with invisible pens and engraving pens for all kinds of surfaces. So far, over 414 tenants have taken advantage of the free service.
- Some of our more vulnerable tenants receive daily 'reassurance visits' from our Neighbourhood Wardens.

Tony Dalton, Neighbourhood Warden Manager: *"These visits are a lifeline for many tenants who may have been burgled or attacked. We reassure them that we're keeping an eye out for them and advise on how they can better protect themselves in the future."*



"Operation Care has been running outside my shop and it's had a very, very positive impact on the community!"

Carmine Grimshaw, shop owner in Newton Heath

Quality Services

Our services are what most people know us for – so it's really important to us that they are top-notch and tailored to tenants' needs. Over the last year, we have listened to what tenants really want. And on their advice, we have made some important changes in the services we offer and the way we deliver them to tenants.

- The biggest achievement we've had this year is probably our Inspection result. The promises we made to tenants could only happen if we passed the government's tough 'Audit Commission' Inspection of our services. Within six months of starting up, we passed with a great 'two stars and excellent prospects' – and this released over £200 million to improve nearly 13,000 homes and neighbourhoods in the area.
- Before we started Northwards, tenants could only ever visit their local housing office by appointment on Tuesday and Friday mornings. One of the first things we did to improve this service was to open each office from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. We've also employed more front-line staff which means we can deal far quicker with customer enquiries, as and when they happen – and with a stronger focus on dealing with neighbourhood issues.
- We were awarded 'Charter Mark' status for the first time, in April 2007. Charter Mark work with the government to set high standards for excellence in customer service. They picked up on three areas of 'best practice' – things they think we do really well – including the 'Northwards Natter' newsletter, the work of the Neighbourhood Wardens and the new 'tenant friendly' stamp.

- It's important to us that the services we offer are shaped by the tenants we serve. Since we started, we have set up nine tenant 'focus groups' to do just that. The diverse groups give tenants a direct and personal chance to say what we should be doing to improve our services. The groups look at a broad range of issues like resident involvement, BME and disability, repairs, retirement housing, communications and general housing management.

"Being in the disability focus group gives me the chance to tell Northwards how they can reach and communicate better with people with disabilities."

Mark Burke, Northwards tenant

- In October 2006, we welcomed Claire Sweeney, our first ever money advisor, dedicated to helping tenants with all kinds of debt or money concerns. In the last year, over 270 tenants have used the service and over £700,000 of debts have been rearranged!



"I'm not here to judge. I'm here to listen and really help people who are having trouble with money. There are loads of options that I can look into – I just want to get people back on track."

Claire Sweeney, Northwards Money Advisor



Reception



- Rehousing services have changed massively over the last 12 months across England and Wales. To help us deal with these changes, we set-up a brand new 'Rehousing Team' in May 2006. The team are dedicated to giving a complete rehousing service to current tenants and people wanting to become Northwards tenants. In the last 12 months, they have rehoused over 1,700 people.
- In April 2006 we recruited and trained six sharp-eyed 'Tenant Inspectors' to prepare us for the main government inspection. It's been such a great way to keep track of our services; we've kept the scheme running. They scrutinise our services every month, looking at things like... the quality of empty homes, standards of repairs, the website, the standard of our estates and communal blocks, how long it takes us to respond to complaints and much more besides.
- In June 2006, we invited a random selection of 300 tenants to become 'Mystery Shoppers' – to test the quality of our services and keep us on our toes! The 'Mystery Shopper' has to have a

genuine reason for contacting us and fills in a questionnaire about how good the service was, how long they had to wait for help, if we dealt with the problem well and other similar questions. We now do this every six months and use the results to keep improving our service.

- Six months after we started, we sent every tenant a 'Customer Satisfaction Survey', asking what they thought of us. The results have helped us make changes to the way we deliver our services.
- Visitors to our website in the last year will have seen huge improvements in the way we offer our services. Tenants can now go online to do loads of things – like order a repair, report any problems, pay rent, make a complaint, check when they'll get home improvements, get leaflets in other languages, look for a new home... and much, much more. And by May 2007, over 80% of the website had passed the strict 'AAA' standard for top web accessibility.



"It works well. We tell Northwards what needs to be done to meet our standards - then we're invited back to see the improvements we've asked for have been done."

Charlotte Grant, one of the first Tenant Inspectors

Some of the answers that tenants gave told us...

- 76%** were satisfied with the repairs service
- 41%** consider themselves to be disabled
- 97%** usually contact us by telephone
- 84%** said our telephone service was good or excellent
- 74%** said our local area office service was good or excellent

The top two things they value the most in the local community are – living in a peaceful neighbourhood and living in a safe area.

We are using this information to really improve things further.

An attractive environment

We firmly believe that the local environment is just as important as the homes we look after. And in the last year, we've been blessed to work with tenants and residents who are just as keen to make north Manchester look its best. We've got lots more planned in the future to make the area a really attractive place where people are proud to live. Here's what's been going on so far...

- Last year, our Youth Strategy Officer spoke to primary school children to encourage them to keep their local environment clean and safe. They were hooked on the idea and by April 2007, the 'Junior Wardens' were born! Eight pupils from each of the seven primary schools taking part have had special training to teach them the rules of being a good warden. The 'Junior Wardens' are environmental champions for their schools making sure that everyone keeps them clean, safe and tidy.
- In August 2006, our Neighbourhood Wardens took over the garden tools loan scheme, offering the free service to all Northwards tenants. Residents can now borrow all kinds of gardening tools and machinery to help them keep their gardens looking good – absolutely free!
- A dedicated group of our home improvement contractors from 'IMPACT Manchester' took an unpaid break from their usual kitchen fitting in July 2007 setting their sights on Newton Heath's Brookdale Park. They restored the old Victorian bandstand back to its beautiful former glory and re-painted the boundary gates of the park. Our own staff also helped them out, landscaping the steps and pathways, and picking litter.
- Our Neighbourhood Wardens received specialist training at the start of the year, giving them the right to give 'Fixed Penalty Notices' (FPNs) to people who drop litter, dump rubbish and allow dog fouling. It's a £50 on-the-spot fine for the people who commit these crimes and since March 2007, they have handed out 54 FPNs.
- Hundreds of local primary school children in the area have been given the grubby facts about litter over the last six months. Our Youth Strategy Officer devised and delivered the interactive presentations, where the children discover the true horrors and consequences of dropping litter and dumping rubbish.

"It's so important to talk to children about dropping litter at this age. If they grow up knowing that it's bad, it will go a long way in keeping our streets and neighbourhoods clean and attractive."

Ian Gillett, Northwards Youth Strategy Officer



"I can't wait to start being a Junior Warden after the summer holidays. I've never done anything like this before. I'm going to be fair, but firm."

"We want to show our dedication to the environment of the local community. Some of the teenagers in the park promised they would look after the new bandstand and make sure it stays looking lovely. We'll definitely be having more days like this in the future!"

Carla White, Senior Tenant Liaison Officer for 'Wates Construction'



"The courts look so nice with the flower beds and shrubs, especially in the summer. The residents who are able to get out and tend to the gardens really love it and it benefits all of us."

**Wendy Theaker, Sheltered Warden,
Sir Robert Thomas Court**



- Our 'Environment Officers' (EOs) have been working closely with tenants this year to improve the look and feel of local neighbourhoods. They have supported many projects this year including new brick walls on the Jolly Miller estate in Harpurhey, and the new rockery on Acre Top Road in Higher Blackley.

"The best part of my job is working with local tenants. Most people have a genuine desire to live in a nice area, and it's my job to encourage that and help it happen."

**Michael Tetteh-Lartey, Northwards'
Environment Officer**

- It's no surprise to us that our tenants always come up smelling of roses in the two major city-wide gardening contests – the annual 'In Bloom' competition and the 'Manchester Gardening Competition'. Six of our tenants won 1st and 2nd prizes for their efforts in the 'Manchester Gardening Competition 2006'. And in the 'Northwest in Bloom 2006'

competition, our tenants won seven prizes out of a possible ten, competing against the whole of the city.

- In April 2006 we gave each of our three 'Area Panels' a pot of cash to spend on making improvements to the local environment. The Wilton panel created raised flower beds and new steel fencing in various parts of Cheetham Hill. The Riverways panel built secure fencing and improved parking in Newton Heath and play facilities in Moston. The Fourways panel installed new fencing in Dam Head Park, extra parking in Crosslee and road surfacing at Somerton Court in Blackley.
- The staff and tenants at our 'Retirement Housing' schemes have really gone the extra mile with their green-fingers this year, giving the gardens and entrances to the courts a full floral face-lift. And throughout 2006, some of the schemes started working closely with the

Council's ASBAT team (Anti Social Behaviour Action Team) – giving some of the lads on 'community service' the chance to paint the exterior railings and have a general tidy-up.

- There are now over 30 'Tenant and Resident Associations' running across the Northwards area, with hundreds of tenants and residents running environmental projects in their own neighbourhoods. The Dam Head and Crosslee associations in Higher Blackley are a great example of how this has worked in the last year... In September 2006 they set up the 'Friends of Dam Head Park' group together and have already fundraised over £50,000 to transform the park from a muddy wasteland to a family-friendly park.



Successful Communities

Managing and improving homes in north Manchester isn't the only thing we do. We've known from the very start that dynamic people and active communities are at the heart of thriving areas. Without this, it really is just bricks and mortar. Over the last year, our tenants and staff have teamed up with even more people, organisations and charities - all helping to keep north Manchester alive and kicking!

- Before we teamed up with JobCentrePlus in January 2007, residents in Monsall, Harpurhey and Blackley had a fairly long journey to their nearest job centre. We now have a part-time advisor based in the Monsall and White Moss offices, dedicated to giving personal advice on jobs and training opportunities.

"I went to see Mike the advisor on the Wednesday and after less than two days he found me a job doing just what I'd asked for. I'm really enjoying it."

Honey Tun, Northwards resident from Monsall

- Our 'Resident Involvement Officers' have become close partners with the staff and visitors at the 'Cheetham Hill Welcome Centre' in the last year. Newcomers to north Manchester go to the centre to meet new friends, enjoy free food and get advice and support from people like us.



"I'm glad to have Northwards at the centre. Their knowledge on housing and other things going on in the area is invaluable."

Teamirat Seyoum, Centre Co-ordinator

- In the last 12 months, older residents at our Retirement Housing schemes have never had it so good... Our 'Retirement Housing and Caretaking' staff have teamed up with even more people, ready to give our residents a really rockin' retirement. The 'Ageing Well North' people now come in to do various activities, the north Manchester ZEST team run exercise and art classes, pupils from North Manchester High School for Boys organise seasonal events and the people at Merci have started to run the 'Herbie fruit and veg' round for many of our schemes.
- Many Northwards Tenant Associations have set up their own community partnerships in the last year. Here's just two great examples...

In June 2006, the 'Croyden Drive Tenants Association' in Newton Heath got in touch with 'Business in the Community', a national charity that encourages successful businesses to help local communities. Employees of Manchester's Co-op Bank soon swapped their suits for wellies, getting their hands dirty sorting out the huge bog garden near the neighbourhood.



"It was brilliant. They worked so hard! The bog garden looks the best it ever has done and we're really grateful to them for helping us."

Vera Salvatore, Croyden Drive Tenants Association





"We can't say how thrilled we were! We had a lovely day out and came back to a fabulous new kitchen. We cooked the lads a big slap-up breakfast the next day to say thank you."

Dobson Court residents

"We'll do anything in our power to make north Manchester healthy! The party was really good fun and gave us a chance to get to know more Northwards residents."

Shirley from the ZEST team



- Broadmoss Tenant's Association struck up a fruity deal with north Manchester's ZEST team for 'National Neighbours Day' in May 2007. The group had a big party at their community centre, with the folks from ZEST laying on huge seasonal fruit platters and health advice for all to enjoy.
- Since summer 2006, the quarterly tenants' newsletter 'Northwards Natter' has signposted readers to over 130 organisations, events and charities – all geared up to help, advise and empower tenants in north Manchester.

"We're keen to promote as many events and useful organisations as we can. Northwards Natter will always be community focused, not just housing focused."

Louise Mitchell, Editor of Northwards Natter

- The fire service, the police, youth involvement workers and drugs agencies have all helped our Youth Strategy Officer and Neighbourhood Wardens with our various youth programmes in the last year – things like 'Operation Care', 'Too Young to Die', 'Stranger Danger' and the 'Crucial Crew' wouldn't have happened without their help.

"Our growing relationship with these services has really strengthened the messages that we give to young people about keeping safe and out of trouble."

Ian Gillet, Northwards Youth Strategy Officer

- Our Monsall office staff joined forces with Newton Heath Police Station in July 2007 giving them a huge helping hand by sponsoring a special patrol car. The car is being used by us and the police especially for anti-social behaviour visits and patrols in Newton Heath.

"We work closely with the staff at Monsall and rely heavily on them for all kinds of things. This car is like the icing on the cake."

Inspector Steve McFarlane, Greater Manchester Police

- Staff from 'Wates' (one of our building contractors), treated residents from Dobson Court in Newton Heath to a day at Stapley Water Gardens in May 2007 – and fitted a surprise new kitchen in their community room while they were out for the day.
- In September 2006, we got together with Manchester Working to recruit and train 12 new apprentices, including some Northwards tenants. The young trainees have spent the last year learning valuable skills in painting and decorating, plumbing and general building work.

Promoting equality and diversity

Since the mid 1800s, when Irish settlers came to Manchester to escape the hardships of famine, north Manchester has become a popular home to thousands of people seeking a fresh start. It still proves to be one of the most diverse areas of the northwest – with large communities representing different ethnic groups, faiths, ages, abilities and persuasions. We're proud to work alongside such a wide variety of people and we're always improving the way we do this.

So, what have we done in the last year to improve the way we embrace equality and diversity?

- Every Northwards employee has completed Equality and Diversity training, using our 'Respect for People' work book. It covers a whole range of diversity issues on age, gender, race, sexuality, faith, disability and key legislation. After the study, every employee completed a time-controlled computerised knowledge test – within two months, all staff had passed the test.

"Some of the facts astounded me. Things like, ten percent of UK companies have no staff over the age of 50, and one in four people will have a mental health condition in their lifetime. It was much more than a test for me – it's essential knowledge..."

Northwards Resident Involvement Officer, Rhonda Finlayson.



- Since April 2007, all new Northwards' employees have been lucky enough to get personalised workshop training – looking how equality and diversity issues will impact on their work and how to improve tenant relations.
- Our 'Multi-Faith Calendar 2007' focused on twelve different faiths popular in the area. We wanted to keep it real and local, so most places and people in the calendar are from north Manchester. We've also been told that the calendar is being used in local schools as a way to learn about different faiths – even reaching a school in West Sussex!



"What I love the most about the job is the freedom to get stuck in and work creatively with tenants and colleagues. We're making a real difference and not just ticking boxes – which is what it's all about!"

Tara Kelly, Northwards Equality & Diversity Officer



- We reached Level 2 of the 'Equality Standard for Local Government' in May 2007. The 'Equality Standard' is an effective way to make sure we consider age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation in all our policies and services.
- With the help of our tenants, we set up two specific tenant 'focus groups' at the beginning of 2007. The 'BME focus group' looks at our services and sees how they can be improved, especially for people from minority backgrounds. The 'Disability focus group' looks at how we can improve access and inclusion for people with physical and learning disabilities. There have been several guest speakers to these monthly meetings and both groups advised us on our Equality and Diversity Action Plan. Because of the success of these groups, we are starting a 'Refugee focus group' later in the year.
- We translated every leaflet in the tenants' handbook into ten community languages in May 2007. All these can now be found easily by calling us, by going into our local offices or visiting our website. Tenants can also get all our publications in large print, Braille and Audio CD. All of the details of how to get these are on the back of this booklet.
- Some of our front-line staff spent quality time learning about the Jewish and Muslim faiths in our 'Cultural Awareness' training this year. The training took place in local mosques and synagogues and was led by professional Jewish and Muslim people working in education and local government.

"The talks gave us fascinating and valuable insights into traditions that could help in our day-to-day dealings with customers who are Jewish or Muslim."

Seema Kohli, Customer Services Manager

- Staff in our retirement housing schemes have successfully made it their mission to improve the opportunities of our older tenants this year. Our joint working with Ageing Well North, ZEST, Merci, PACE and the NHS have allowed our tenants the freedom to learn new skills, meet new friends and enjoy varied activities.

"Oh, it's great having so many different things to do during the week. There's a crowd of us in our place who always meet in the community room, ready for our next activity or get-together."

Sheila Chubbsy, resident at Apprentice Court, Harpurhey

- Our Resident Involvement Officers (RIOs) have spent the last 12 months working closely with the people at the 'Cheetham Hill Welcome Centre' on Cheetham Hill Road. The centre is a place where refugees and people new to the area can meet others in a friendly and supportive environment. Visitors there can also get advice and support on things like housing and job opportunities.



"It's the best part of my job. The centres got a really good feel to it, with such diverse people with all kinds of histories. And they always have great food there too!"

Nicola Holmes, Resident Involvement Officer



Value for money

We believe there is a big difference between saving money and value for money. Our aim will always be to get the best possible services for customers, at the best possible price – without cutting corners.

- Some of our tenants joined us on our 'Business Planning Day' in February 2007. It was a chance for us to see where we were headed for the next few years, including how and where we spend money. We also wanted to find out what tenants thought we should spend most money on.

We gave each tenant fifty 10p coins and a list of different things that we need to spend money on – things like 'Managing the Environment' and 'Repairs and Maintenance'. Each tenant had to place their coins next to the areas they thought were most and least important.

On average, the tenants thought that we should spend more money on.... improving the local environment, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and investing more in resident involvement.

We've used this information to help us with our budget for the next year.

- At the beginning of 2006, we decided to bring in Manchester Working and IMPACT Manchester to do all the home improvements and repairs. By taking on the two together, we saved nearly 15% in our overall costs. We put that saving right back into the improvements programme – letting us achieve much more than the government's 'Decent Homes' standard.

The savings we made allowed us to deliver the 'Decent Homes Plus' standard... which means that as well as the choice of a new kitchen or bathroom – tenants will get insulation and heating upgrades, uPVC double glazing on all single-glazed windows and various improvements to the local environment.

- We have a close working relationship with Manchester City Council and we still use their services for many things, including the On Call phone service and the production of our leaflets. We do this by paying them through a 'Service Level Agreement' (SLA) every year. We were able to save nearly £1 million when we reviewed all of our SLAs with the Council early in 2007 – keeping the same high-quality services, but making them more relevant to our changing needs.



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

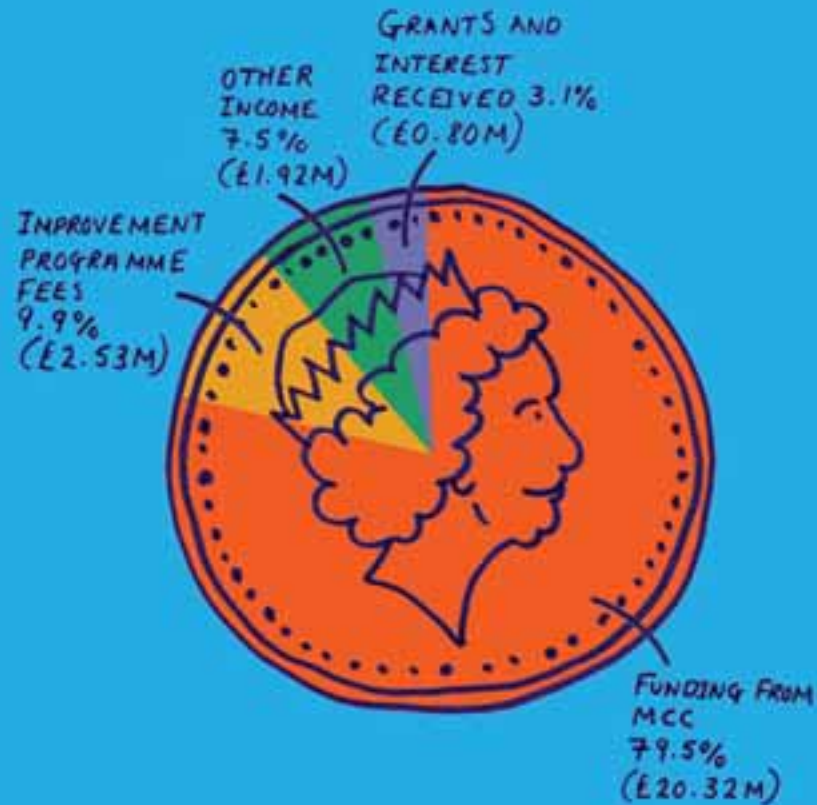


Northwards Housing
North Manchester's Council Homes

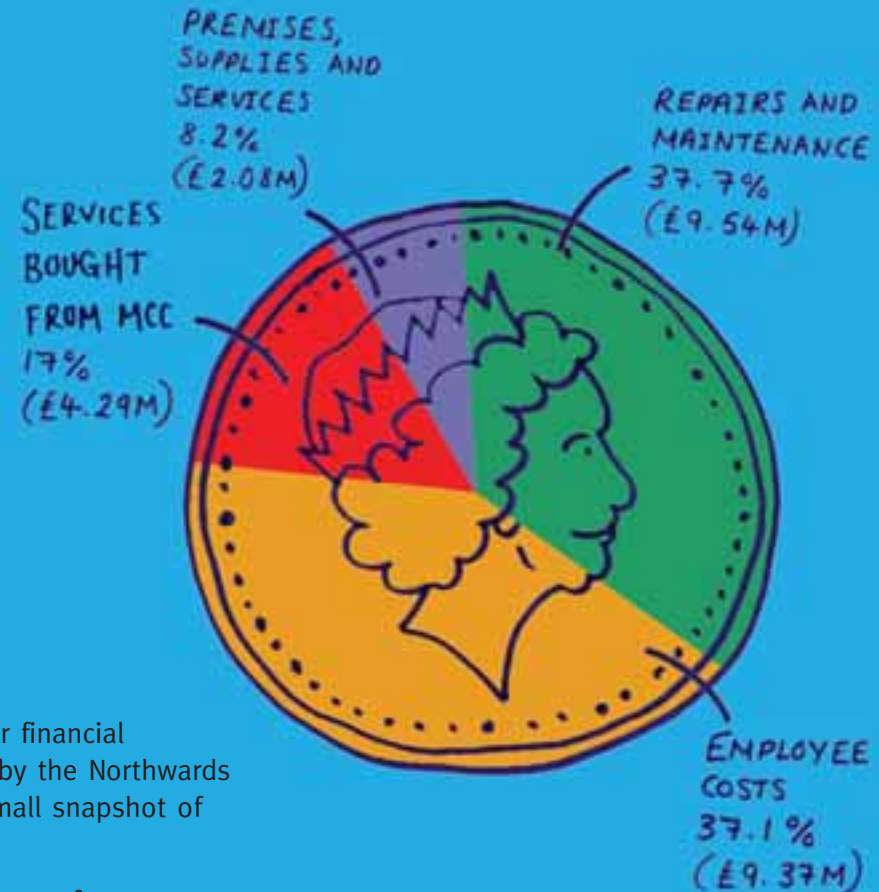


How we've spent our money...

Total income for the year = £25.57M



Total expenditure for the year = £25.28M



The small amount left over (nearly £300,000) is money that we've saved this year by spending wisely and efficiently. It's gone straight into our new 'Resource Pool', which will be spent on providing extra services and improving existing ones.

The financial statements were audited by 'Grant Thornton UK LLP' and received an unqualified opinion.

These figures are taken from our financial statements, which were agreed by the Northwards Board in July 2007. It's just a small snapshot of our finances...

If you would like to see the full set of financial statements, you can visit www.northwardshousing.co.uk or write to The Secretary, Floor 6, Hexagon Tower, Crumpsall Vale, Blackley, Manchester M9 8ZS.

Ways to get in touch

- Drop us a line (no stamp needed) – Customer Services, FREEPOST Northwards Housing HQ
- Visit our website – www.northwardshousing.co.uk
- Give us a call – 0161 953 2662
- Textphone for deaf or hard of hearing – 0161 953 2526
- Send an email – info@northwardshousing.co.uk
- Send a text message – 07786200334 (make sure you give your house/flat number and postcode)
- Fill in the praise and complaint forms at the back of the tenant handbook
- Visit your local housing office. They're open Monday to Friday from 9am-4pm





Mike Stevens
Director of
Neighbourhood Services



Steve Wood
Director of
Business Services



Larry Patrick
Director of
Property Services



Ade Alao
Chair of
Northwards Board



Robin Lawler
Chief Executive



Sue Ratchford
Board Member



Joan FitzGerald
Board Member

The End



Richard Lockwood
Vice Chair of Board



Michelle Blakeley
Board Member



Councillor
Anna Trotman
Board Member



Councillor
June Hitchen
Board Member



Rachel Christie
Board Member



Martin McKeivitt
Board Member



Harvey Norton
Board Member



Fatima Adamjee
Board Member



Mark Hackett
Board Member

Extra services for customers with reduced hearing or vision

To get this newsletter in Braille, large print, on CD, or on tape:

Call: 0161 953 2662

E-mail: info@northwardshousing.co.uk

Fax: 0161 953 2660

Text phone: 0161 953 2526



معلومات اضافی کے لیے براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبروں پر رابطہ کریں۔

Arabic

معلومات اضافی کے لیے براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبروں پر رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese

لطفاً برای دریافت این اطلاعات به زبان های دیگر، به خط بزرگ (خط ویژه افراد نابینا)، چاپ برجسته و یا بر روی نوار یا شصت در ثانیه تلفن زیر تماس بگیرید.

Farsi

Pour recevoir ces informations dans d'autres langues, en Braille, en gros caractères, ou sur bande sonore, prière d'appeler le numéro de téléphone ci-dessous.

French

यदि आप यह जानकारी किसी दूसरी भाषा में, बड़े फ़ॉन्ट या टेप में चाहते हैं तो कृपया नीचे दिये गये नम्बर पर फोन कीजिए।

Hindi

بۆ بەدەست هێنایی ئەمەڕاتبێزانە بە هەر زمانێک یان بە بریل، پێشێ گەورە یان لەسەر شریفت، ئەمەڕاتبێزانە تەلەفۆن بکە بۆ ئەمەڕاتبێزانە خوارەوە.

Kurdish

Si aad u hesho macluumaadkaani oo ku qoran luqad kasta, tan indhoolaha, daabacaad balaaran ama cajal ku duuban fadlan telefoonka hoos ku qoran:

Somali

یہ معلومات کسی بھی زبان، بریل، بڑے فونٹ، ڈیپ پریس یا ہلکے کے لیے براہ کرم ذیل کے نمبر پر فون کیجئے۔

Urdu

Nếu cần bản tin này bằng ngôn ngữ khác, bằng chữ nổi cho người mù, chữ in lớn hay băng ghi âm, xin vui lòng gọi điện thoại số dưới đây:

Vietnamese

0161 953 2662