

news link

special edition

Social Responsibility and Business Excellence - making a positive difference to people's lives

"...retirement review is progressing very well.."

It gives me great pleasure to write the introduction to the Retirement Review as the new Chair of "Johnnie" Johnson Housing Trust.

It is now two years since the Board agreed to major changes to the way the Trust provides services to its tenants. Those changes were difficult decisions for the Board to make but they did so knowing that they were really needed.

I am very pleased to be able to report that the retirement review is progressing very well and I know that Mel Hill, as the retiring Chair, is equally proud that the decisions he saw

through are proving of benefit.

It is never easy to make such hard decisions as ceasing to have regional committees and changing tenants' panels, especially when so many people had made such a valuable contribution that way.

However, the new Tenant Involvement Groups and Board link members have improved communication and helped improve the role of our tenants within "Johnnie" Johnson.



From left, Mel Hill, former Chair JJHT, Kath Lavery, Chair JJHT and Jim Lunney, Chief Executive JJHT

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It is great to see front line staff taking on more responsibility for their own work and the Tenant Involvement Groups are proving to be good platforms for debate. This makes the Trust much more effective and efficient.

As I start my term of office as

Chair of the Trust, the impact our tenants have in improving the way we operate is something I want to see get even better.

I want to build on the good work that has already begun and, with the support of Board members and staff, continue to improve the way

we work as we commit to being the best possible landlord we can be.

I hope you enjoy reading this review and look forward to working with you all in the future.

Kath Lavery,
Chair, "Johnnie" Johnson
Housing Trust

Area Managers Update

Our Area Managers were appointed between 12 and 18 months ago and have been working closely as a team over the past year to develop their own knowledge with a training course in supervisory skills and improving services to tenants.

You will already have seen the familiar faces of Carole Williams and Jill Young, who worked for the Trust as Housing Managers for a number of years. Gail Bouskill, Georgina Tang and Nick Jones have all joined us recently with many years of experience in retirement and supported housing gained in other organisations.

"I have found the change in role rewarding and enjoyed the challenge of the new Area Manager duties such as the management of Supporting People contracts and the development of new services with local authorities," says Carole, former Housing

Manager with the Trust since 2001.

One of the key roles of the Area Manager is to ensure the smooth running of each scheme including the finances, Supporting People contracts and service charge budgets and to ensure tenants are involved as much as they want in the running of their scheme.

One method is through the Annual Scheme Meetings which took place this year between May and July. These events are an opportunity to discuss what has been achieved over the past year and:

- ❖ confirm the rent and service charges for the coming year
- ❖ plan future changes and improvements
- ❖ agree what level of service such as gardening, window cleaning etc the scheme needs so that the Area Managers can plan and set budgets for the following year.

Retirement Review



Retirement & Supported Housing Team

Two years ago we presented our plans for delivering our retirement service in a different way.

We needed to prepare for the future and make sure we improved the support and customer service we provide for you; provide a service that meets the needs of local authorities so that they continue to fund support services in retirement housing; invest in our properties and improve homes to maintain standards and expectations; and anticipate your changing needs by responding to an increasing expectation for involvement and healthy living.

We established new teams to deliver this service with

considerable changes in roles:

- ❖ **Scheme Managers** to have more responsibility for day-to-day issues such as repairs, rent account advice and community activities
- ❖ **Area Managers** to train and support Scheme Managers, manage Supporting People contracts, develop good working relationships with local authorities and identify new business opportunities
- ❖ **Administrative Officers** to support Scheme and Area Managers and ensure the

smooth running of our lettings, purchasing and Supporting People Systems

The Head of the Retirement and Supported Housing Team, Tricia Grierson, says: "I have been in post now for approximately 15 months and I have seen massive changes over such a short period of time. I am very proud of the team efforts in working towards achieving the aims of the review. I hope this supplement demonstrates how far we have come in improving our service, our links with local authorities, developing the skills of our staff and widening opportunities for involvement and healthy activities."

Scheme Managers Working Party



To co-ordinate the development of Scheme Manager training and service delivery, we needed a method of bringing together representatives from across the different regions in which the Trust operates.

The Scheme Managers' Working Party was established at the end of 2005 and has been meeting at Astra House every couple of months. This working party consists of Area Managers, Scheme Managers and other staff. We link up with our colleagues in the North East

by video conference to ensure that we work closely together but don't waste time on travel away from our schemes.

Scheme Manager Karen Skelton says: *"I really feel that our views are being listened to and admin/management staff have a greater understanding*

of our role as a result of this group."

Area Manager Jill Young says: *"I have worked with Scheme Managers for many years and have really noticed how hard they have worked together to develop their skills and knowledge over the past 18 months. We have agreed a common job description, person specification and performance management system to ensure we continue to deliver an excellent service and consistent approach to all our tenants across the Trust."*

Scheme Staff Role Changes

Handypersons, gardeners, cleaners and caretakers provide vital work in our retirement schemes and they have a significant impact on the smooth running and appearance of them.

We haven't looked at their roles in a long time so we have recently set up a working group of office and scheme based staff, tenants and residents whose responsibility is to challenge the service that we are currently providing. The group will compare our service with that of other organisations;

consider the external competition providing similar services; consult with a range of staff and tenants, including those in the Review Group, and consult more widely on interim progress via the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG), bulletins, and liaison with North East staff.

The group has met once and already agreed a list of suitable tasks for the handyperson to carry out.

We will now consult with tenants and residents at the next TIG meeting.

"We are really keen to develop our handyperson service to create a friendly and efficient local service that provides value for money for our tenants," says Cameron Shenton, Asset Manager.

Supporting People Links

Our Area Managers are developing good working relationships with the many Supporting People teams that provide vital funding in the area where our schemes are located.

Below are some great examples where these links have already benefited some of our schemes.

Active in Age

The Rotherham Scheme Managers have been trained and are now qualified to deliver light exercise classes which will help to maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of our service users.

The training has been funded through Supporting People and the equipment has been provided by the Rotherham Primary Care Trust. This is also an excellent example of multi-agency working.



Committed to quality, inclusion and innovation

The Rotherham Retirement Service has had a recent Supporting People quality review. In the review process, the Trust identified an unmet need, which led to an extension of the support service and an increase in funding.

The Supporting People team have recognised that the Trust is one of their top five providers and we have worked with them to design a DVD to promote Rotherham Support Services, which was shown for a number of weeks on the town centre's 'Big Screen'.

When the going gets Tough!

A major part of the restructure was to enhance the role of Scheme Managers, allowing them to take more responsibility for day-to-day issues such as lettings, consultation, repairs ordering, rent queries and community activities.

"It was envisaged that they should be able to provide a frontline service to their tenants without the need to look beyond the scheme for answers to most of their queries," says Tricia Grierson. "But we knew this would involve a huge amount of training for Scheme Managers to develop their skills and knowledge, particularly in the area of information technology."

All the Scheme Managers went through a rigorous training programme through Learn Direct to bring them up to the same standard of computer literacy. Some managers were already familiar with IT and for them it wasn't too difficult, but others, starting completely from scratch, found the going very tough.

The second stage of the IT training was to ensure that Scheme Managers were familiar with "Johnnie" Johnson systems. We approached this in a very different way, delivering the training for rents, repairs, void management etc in small workshops.

Says a tenant from Coltishall House: *"We think our Scheme Manager now provides a*



better service since she has completed all her training, especially as she is now able to access the rents information on her computer. It has been a great help not only to me but also to other tenants. The repairs procedure also seems more efficient since becoming computerised."

IT is not the only training Scheme Managers have received this year. They have also been trained to deal with more personal and support aspects of their role such as support planning, marketing, adult protection, disability discrimination and health and safety.

We also encourage our Scheme Managers to study for their professional examinations and four (Caroline Chappell, Lesley Grew, Janice Crick and Jo Wilson) have recently been

awarded their Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies (CSHS) certificates.

We realise that so many training sessions has meant



Pictured above, Scheme managers receive their certificates

that your Scheme Manager may have been away from your scheme more often than you would have liked. We do apologise for this but feel sure that you will now be feeling the benefit from their additional skills and knowledge.

Tenant Involvement Group



Prior to the review in 2005, we had three regional committees and tenant panels. Having changed to a specialist service we felt that the regional committees no longer reflected the needs of our tenants and that we needed to change the structure of the tenant panels.

We therefore established a Tenant Involvement Group for the retirement housing service and retained the group in the North East region to ensure tenants could continue to be involved locally. The two TIG's share many agenda items so there is feedback from tenants across the Trust.

The Retirement and Supported Housing TIG has now met on seven occasions and has had a considerable impact on

decisions made by the Trust; for example, amending rent statements and direct debit payment times, allocations policy - especially transfer conditions, a local call rate for the customer service centre and setting new service standards.

The TIG was initially chaired by tenant John Kelly from Portland House, who has since left the Trust. Until recently the group was chaired by Board

member Derek Ankers who has since handed over to Morris Globe who is a tenant and Board member.

Tenant representatives come from all over the North of England and we are always keen to have new members.

Until recently we had no representatives from our Liverpool schemes, but a tenant from Montrose Court who has just joined us, says:

"I found my last meeting really interesting. I felt I understand better how the Trust operates. It was worth the long journey over."

New Service Standards

When we carried out the review, Peter Daly, Director of Housing, said:

"This is an excellent opportunity to look again at our service standards and create a separate standard for retirement and general family housing which reflects the type of service received."

We drafted a series of initial ideas for new standards and presented them to tenant representatives at the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) last year. The ideas discussed were then drawn up into a provisional set of service standards and were reviewed again by the TIG in April 2007.

The standards cover:

- ❖ **Services relating to your home**
 - Repairs, cleaning, gardening etc
 - Security issues
- ❖ **Services provided by the Scheme Manager**
 - Ordering repairs, lettings, welcoming new tenants, rent account advice
 - Support plans
- ❖ **Other areas include**
 - Affordable housing, consultation and communication links

- Valuing diversity, respect and confidentiality
- How we will deliver our promises
- How we will keep you informed

If you would like to know more about our standards and influence the final draft before we print and distribute them, please contact Tricia Grierson, Head of Retirement and Supported Housing, via the Customer Service Centre on **0845 6014 1095**.



Leaving Home!

Many of our Scheme Managers now live 'off-site'. Our tenants' panels supported the idea as they felt there was a reduced need now that Scheme Managers are not on call during evenings and weekends.

Most, but not all of the Scheme Managers we have recently recruited, live off-site and many of our long standing managers have moved out over the past 12 months.

Pictured are three Scheme Managers who have done just that, Vikki Bateson, Derwent Court, Deirdre Moore, Trenchard Court, and Gary Reed, Northolt Court.

Deirdre says: *"I am happy to be living away from my scheme. Initially I understand my tenants were worried that the social life of the scheme might disappear when I moved away, but we had a recent meeting when the Area Managers asked about the changes and all the tenants said they were happy and the social life is still as active as ever at Trenchard Court."*



Pictured left to right, Deirdre, Gary and Vikki

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Somali

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Bengali

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Gujarati

Jeżeli potrzebujesz usługi tłumaczenia prosimy o kontaktowanie się z Centrum Obsługi Klienta pod 0845 604 1095 lub odwiedzenie naszej strony internetowej www.jjhousing.co.uk

Polish

إذا كنت بحاجة لخدمة الترجمة، فمساعدتنا في مركز خدمة العملاء (Customer Service Centre) - هاتف: 0845 604 1095 - يمكنك أيضا زيارة موقعنا الإلكتروني، الموقع: www.jjhousing.co.uk

Cantonese

آپ کو ترجمہ کی خدمت کے لیے فوراً ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔ ہمارے 0845 604 1095 پر رابطہ کریں۔ یا اس کے ساتھ ساتھ ہمارے ویب سائٹ www.jjhousing.co.uk پر بھی۔

Urdu

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Welsh

