

Portraits of Success



Imagination, Inspiration, Innovation...

A selection of best practice projects from the NFA Awards 2010

Sponsored by Kier Building Maintenance



A word from our sponsor

People helping people

Award schemes showcase innovation and initiative at community level.

When members of the new government talk about 'The Big Society' and champion the cause of 'localism', all they need to do to see that theory put into practice is to look at the impressive range of schemes, initiatives and projects featured in the 2010 NFA Awards.

From South Essex to Solihull, Blackpool to Brent and from Barnet to Leeds and all points in between - the award submissions showcase people helping people with imagination, commitment, innovation and a dedication to improving the lot of the communities in which they live and work.

Tenant engagement and empowerment, putting people at the heart of the decision-making process which impacts directly on their homes and lives, is a central tenet of the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) model, a key factor in the success of the movement to date.

The schemes and projects highlighted in this publication show the kind of rich benefits that can happen when you give people influence and choice in how their communities should be developed and managed. Many are truly inspirational and worthy of replication.

At Kier Building Maintenance we share many of those passions and principles. We never forget that although local authorities and housing management organisations may be

our clients, people - tenants and residents - are our customers!

We have a workforce of more than 3,800 people providing reactive and planned maintenance and refurbishment to over 250,000 homes owned and managed by local authorities, ALMOs and registered providers (formerly known as registered social landlords) around the country. We were the first building maintenance contractor to achieve the prestigious Charter Mark in February 2008.

We constantly strive to improve our already industry-leading customer satisfaction levels and we recently became one of the first companies in our sector to be awarded the government's Customer Service Excellence Standard.

But our engagement with local communities goes far beyond the physical aspects of our day-to-day work. We take our corporate social responsibility very seriously and are proud of our many initiatives, including tailored training programmes and job creation schemes for specific local needs, as well as projects to nurture and improve the environment.

The country undoubtedly has some tough economic times ahead over the coming years as the government moves to tackle the huge financial deficit. We are told there will be painful consequences of difficult decisions. But the NFA Awards show just what can be

achieved, even in a challenging environment, when people are given the freedom and flexibility to take actions that directly influence their lives.

Kier Building Maintenance was proud to be one of the sponsors of the NFA Awards 2010 and is pleased to be the sponsor of this Best Practice publication.

The people and the projects featured in its pages should be proud of their achievements.



Peter Brynes
Managing Director
Kier Building Maintenance



The National Federation of ALMOs Awards 2010

The **annual National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) Awards** were set up to recognise and celebrate the hard work and achievements of ALMO employees, residents and partners around the country.

The 2010 NFA Awards: Winners and Finalists

Best Community Initiative

Sponsored by Connaught Partnerships Ltd

Joint Winners

Blackpool Coastal Housing: Traveller's site community centre

West North West Homes Leeds: Armley Mosque Project

Finalist

Hackney Homes: Grow your own food

ALMO Team Member of the Year

Winner

Julie Chipperfield, Hostel Manager, South Essex Homes

Finalists

Kevin Pearce-Biggs, Older People's Social Engagement Officer, Eastbourne Homes

Fred Garthwaite, Repairs Manager, South Tyneside Homes

Board Member

Winner

Alf Chandler, Hounslow Homes

Finalists

Phil Lyons, South Essex Homes

Roy Birch, Aire Valley Homes

Most Effective Partnership Project

Sponsored by Morrison Facilities Services

Winner

People 1st Slough: Hot blocks

Finalists

Stockport Homes: Play partnerships

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing: Prison! Me! No Way!

Most Outstanding Young Person

Sponsored by Rixonway Kitchens

Joint Winners

Rui Jorge Octavio, Barnet Homes

Jessica Perry, Brent Housing Partnership

Finalists

Adam Ferrell, Solihull Community Housing

Yasmin Uzomah, Hackney Homes

Best Use of Communication

Winner

South Essex Homes: Southenders

Finalists

East Durham Homes: Young person's guide to housing

Colchester Borough Homes: Social media project

Most Innovative Project

Sponsored by Warm Front Ltd

Winner

Solihull Community Housing: Fast track assessment service

Finalists

Derby Homes: Home2Work

Salix Homes: Customer Senate

Most Outstanding Resident

Sponsored by Kier Building Maintenance

Winner

Maureen Norman, Gloucester City Homes

Finalists

Chrissie Ince, Stockport Homes

Katherine McLnerney, Homes for Islington

People's Choice Award

Sponsored by Acceleris Marketing Communications

Winner

West North West Homes Leeds: Armley Mosque Project

Learning and sharing - a Message from the Chair

Since the inception of the annual NFA Awards four years ago, there have been almost 1,000 submissions featuring a diverse range of projects, schemes and initiatives all with a common objective – to improve the lives and communities of the families who call one of the million council properties managed by ALMOs in England 'home'.

To me that represents a reservoir of ideas, innovation and inspiration that can be shared. There is no reason why a successful project in Bolton cannot be replicated in Basildon, why a ground-breaking programme in Sheffield cannot be adopted in Solihull or why a novel scheme in Barnsley could not be as equally effective in Brent.

That is one of the real strengths of the ALMO movement; although we work in different parts of the country and face our own individual challenges, we have shared aims and ambitions. We can each learn from others' experiences and share their ideas and innovations to the real benefit of tenants and residents.

The quality of entries to the NFA Awards continues to develop year-on-year; those selected as winners and finalists in 2010 contained projects of real imagination and inherent value and that is why they have been included in this Best Practice publication.

I would also like to acknowledge here Kier Building Maintenance whose sponsorship has made this valuable publication possible. On behalf of the NFA, I offer my sincere thanks.



Alison Inman
Chair of the NFA

Winner: Most Innovative Project

Fast Track Assessment Service:

Solihull Community Housing drives forward customer care

Adapting to change



• THE NEED

Solihull Community Housing identified a need to reduce the waiting times of customers requiring disability adaptations to their homes, whilst making more efficient use of staff resources. To achieve this, four existing colleagues were trained for a new job role called Tad Techs (Trusted Assessor Driver Technicians), to carry out low-level assessments for a 12-week pilot period within the ALMO's private sector adaptation team.

• THE SOLUTION

Solihull Community Housing provided its four Tad Techs with specialist mentoring via its partner the Solihull Care Trust, to enable them to undertake a broader range of low-level assessments such as the issuing of equipment like chair and bed raisers and toilet frames. The objective was to bypass the full Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments these visits previously necessitated, for which customers often had to wait between two to six months.

Challenges posed by the initiative included securing the necessary financial backing, the cultural shift for 'non-OT' staff who would now be conducting assessments historically done by an OT professional, plus existing contractual arrangements.

• THE RESULTS

The pilot provided tenants, especially those who are vulnerable, with a highly efficient and

value-for-money service in that they could receive an assessment and provision of service in the same home visit.

In the first 12 weeks of the pilot, there were 76 jobs allocated to the Tad Techs. This resulted in 58 cases not being put on the OT waiting list and brought waiting times for OT-handled assessments down to a minimum and acceptable length.

Customers were visited and works completed within 10 working days, in contrast to the full OT assessments requiring a waiting time of two-six months, depending on the type of request involved.

The pilot also helped galvanise partnership working between the Solihull Care Trust and Solihull Community Housing, and encouraged a 'can do' approach to new ideas by Solihull Care Trust OTs and Solihull Community Housing operatives.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This common-sense approach to improving customer care has given tenants back their quality of life.”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

• KEY LEARNINGS

This scheme demonstrates how sometimes the most simple and practical approach can be the most successful.

Lean, common-sense thinking resulted in a solid model for the streamlining of services, a reduction in unnecessary staffing input, and an overall improved customer experience.

We are committed to continual improvement in our services to the community. Following the success of Tad Techs, the scheme was rolled out as part of our Solihull Independent Living integrated service in April 2010.

It is hoped the new service will continue where the pilot left off: reducing customer waiting times; mitigating increasing demands on OTs in terms of numbers of referrals; further developing multi-skilling arrangements for our operatives by positive mentoring, and continuing to deliver the service in an innovative and pioneering way.

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Finalist: Most Innovative Project

Home2Work Scheme:

Derby Homes puts worklessness top of the agenda

• THE NEED

With the Home2Work scheme, Derby Homes set out to address worklessness in the community by providing residents with the chance to participate in a four-week work experience programme within its own customer service department, helping them to develop the transferable skills, knowledge, and CV and presentation techniques required to boost their chances of securing employment.

• THE SOLUTION

Home2Work provides residents who are unemployed with a fully integrated solution to finding a job, from training in basic work principles such as timekeeping, appropriate clothing, and the benefits of being in employment, to a structured work experience programme around the area of customer service. The project also gives residents an opportunity to gain current and relevant

experience to strengthen their CVs, as well as a reference for potential employers on successful completion of their placement.

• THE RESULTS

The project was launched in January 2009 and has run bimonthly since then. By the end of 2009, 17 unemployed residents from a diverse range of backgrounds had enrolled on the Home2Work scheme.

Of these, six are now working (including two who have been employed by Derby Homes); four are volunteering; and seven have gone on to do further training to fill gaps identified by the scheme, such as NVQs in maths, English and IT.

The scheme has positively influenced those taking part by showing them the benefits of working; motivating them to find a job; building their confidence; and providing

experience, training and other tangible skills to help them find work.

One participant said: "I now have more confidence and real experience of customer service, as well as a better understanding of what goes on in the workplace. It's been excellent and I'll take a lot away with me."

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“Derby Homes has developed a highly replicable scheme.”

Alison Inman, Chair of the NFA

• KEY LEARNINGS

As well as providing vital employment experience for residents, many of whom may have been long-term unemployed and lacking the skills and confidence to get back into work, Derby Homes has also benefited – as an ALMO – from the Home2Work scheme.

Many of the residents who have taken part have subsequently shown more confidence and willingness to take part in our activities. Some have also signed up to tenant involvement initiatives to make a difference in their local community.

We intend to sustain our connection with Home2Work 'graduates' by offering them further development opportunities, such as a chance to apply for places on our tenant recruitment panel, and as tenant members of our Board and Local Housing Boards.

This scheme can be easily replicated across other ALMOs, and with tackling worklessness never higher on the Coalition Government's agenda, this is one way by which ALMOs can do their bit in helping get more people back into employment.



Celebrating success with Janet Street-Porter at the NFA Awards

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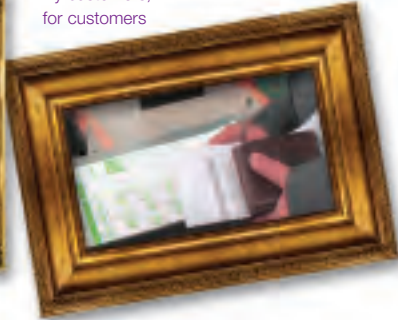
Finalist: Most Innovative Project

Customer Senate:

Salix Homes leads the way in resident-led self-regulation



By customers,
for customers



• THE NEED

A Customer Senate was developed to fit within Salix Homes' governance structure to provide residents with the opportunity to scrutinise the ALMO's work, have their say, and ultimately make a difference in developments improving the lives of the wider resident community.

• THE SOLUTION

Salix Homes had already made significant strides in improving involvement in the city and the Senate added the final piece to an innovative resident involvement infrastructure that was created by customers, for customers.

The Senate, made up of 14 customers, was launched in 2009. Members were selected from seven neighbourhoods across Salford.

More than 80 applications were submitted, many from customers who had not previously been involved. One successful applicant said: "It appealed to me, because of the concept of being able to scrutinise the work of Salix Homes as a customer of the service. Customer-led scrutiny is the most potent method of ensuring that the tenant voice is heard."

The Senate has developed an annual programme of scrutiny, considering issues of concern from the customer panels, senior management and board. The Senate uses crucial customer satisfaction, performance and complaints information in its processes.

To ensure the wider body of customers can influence the areas scrutinised, the Senate also developed a 'Community Call for Action', allowing customers to directly approach the Senate about services they are dissatisfied with.

Following the scrutiny of a particular service area, the Senate submit their recommendations to the Board. Action plans for the service area are developed and monitored by the appropriate committee and customer panels.

Crucially, should the monitoring reveal that these recommendations are not being delivered upon; the Senate is able to serve a 'Notice of Intent' on the Salix Homes Board, allowing them to seek the support of the council.

• THE RESULTS

To date the Senate has scrutinised two areas. A review of the telephone contact centre, Salix Direct, has resulted in significant improvements, including a new out-of-hours service to deal with anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse incidents, new tenant access arrangements and improved customer satisfaction. As a direct result of the improvements, the organisation has saved £50,000. The Senate's second area of scrutiny on service standards is reviewing how information is shared and monitored by customers.

The Customer Senate joined the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) on a nationwide tour to share its knowledge and achievements. Salix Homes has been invited to talk at national housing conferences and been cited in the TSA's New Regulatory Framework as good practice. The TSA has also made a film about the Senate, which sits on its website. The initiative has even been referenced in the House of Commons and in February 2010, Salix Homes was awarded the TPAS accreditation which stated the Senate was the "first example I have seen of true resident-led surveying".

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“The main difference between this and similar schemes that have tried and failed lies in the practical, definitive steps residents can take to ensure things get done...”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

• KEY LEARNINGS

Word of the Salix Homes Customer Senate has spread far and wide to other ALMOs. It has been heralded as best practice nationwide for leading the way in the move towards true resident-led self-regulation.

It has shown that customers can make a real difference across crucial areas such as customer service, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse. It has also encouraged residents, some of whom may not have been actively involved with Salix Homes before, to come forward and make their mark.

Tenant involvement and empowerment are the two major results derived from this initiative. The direct savings made as an outcome of the Senate's scrutiny of Salix Homes' telephone contact centre also show what else can be achieved along the way!

Joint Winner: Best Community Initiative

Armley Mosque Project:

West North West Homes Leeds builds links with Muslim community

• THE NEED

West North West Homes Leeds (WNWHL) launched a community cohesion project to build links with the Muslim community in the Armley area of Leeds. Race has been found to be an extremely divisive issue in Armley, with the Muslim community particularly isolated. WNWHL discovered that Muslim tenants were not coming forward to report anti-social behaviour issues, home repair needs or submit the necessary service forms.

• THE SOLUTION

To tackle this problem head on, WNWHL formed a partnership with the Armley Mosque Committee and developed a proactive and innovative approach to break down communication barriers, using sport, one-to-one dialogue sessions and open days to encourage Muslim tenants, traditionally a hard-to-reach group, to integrate with the wider community and be more vocal about their housing needs.

• THE RESULTS

The project has had an enormous impact on the area, not only improving housing services for tenants, but encouraging the Mosque to open its doors to other local services such as the West Yorkshire Police which has been able to deliver essential advice and information on anti-social behaviour. The momentum created by the partnership has prompted other community initiatives and activities including

a Friday meal where the whole community – Muslim and non-Muslim – is invited to eat together at the Mosque. A women's social group has also been set up and has been playing a central role in mosque affairs. The Committee has now applied for planning permission to build extra meeting rooms for regular police surgeries and social activities.

Residents now have easy access to housing information and advice via weekly surgeries and regular open days held at the mosque. The Muslim community has been extremely receptive to the initiative and WNWHL has already advised more than 150 extra tenants as a result of the new partnership.

WNWHL has also organised regular community sporting fixtures for the Mosque members and wider community including a charity cricket match which raised money for the British Heart Foundation and paid for new cricket equipment for the Mosque.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This initiative is a positive and effective example of engagement with a sector of the community that can sometimes be difficult to reach.”

Alison Inman, Chair of the NFA

• KEY LEARNINGS

The project really has been an important piece of work for us. It's a new way of approaching community cohesion which is making tenants aware of West North West Homes Leeds services while helping integration into the wider community.

When we became aware of the communication barriers amongst Armley's Asian population we realised that we needed to work even harder to reach those tenants.

The initiative has proved a fantastic tool for building links between groups of people and hopefully a model for other organisations across the country to use in their own communities.

WINNER: PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD!

In addition to scooping the joint Best Community Initiative award, West North West Homes Leeds' Armley Mosque Project became the first winner in a brand new category – the Acceleris People's Choice Award. The NFA's retained communications and events agency, Acceleris Marketing Communications, created short films for each finalist in the Awards and asked the ALMO family to vote for their favourite online.

ALMOs asked their employees and residents to vote, utilising their own social media communications - resulting in a total of just under 5,000 votes over ten days, demonstrating the growing value and power of social communications in the sector. Congratulations to the Armley Mosque Project, which achieved 3,800 votes (or 76 per cent) of the votes.

Bowled over about improving community cohesion



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Joint Winner: Best Community Initiative

Traveller's Site Community Centre: Blackpool Coastal Housing at home with the travelling community

• THE NEED

Blackpool Coastal Housing identified a real need for suitable community, education, health and personal development facilities at a long-established and close-knit traveller's site in Blackpool. The ALMO's response was to build a dedicated community centre for residents.

• THE SOLUTION

The traveller's site has existed in Blackpool since 1984 but has never been refurbished or developed, despite many long-term residents being proactive about improving their local community. The site is fully occupied with 59 residents, plus it has a waiting list of 16 households.

On close consultation with residents, Blackpool Coastal Housing discovered that an increasing number of children and young people on the site did not have anywhere to play or exercise – residents said that this should be of utmost priority. Other issues highlighted included a need for IT facilities to assist children with their homework (many of whom do not have their own computers), and a desire among some adults to learn to read and write.

In order to fund a single-story community centre complete with education, leisure, training and health facilities, Blackpool Coastal Housing successfully bid for a £439,972 Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant in 2006 from Communities and Local Government.

One reason for the bid's success was the innovative design features of the building and the use of future technologies which include ground source heat technology, natural ventilation within a conical roof and low energy lighting.

• THE RESULTS

The building is now complete and in use. It features a children's play area, teenage play area, teaching rooms, and a range of multi-purpose meeting rooms for use by the community to support training, personal development, health and education. Blackpool Coastal Housing is working closely with outside agencies where necessary to fulfil these requirements.

The centre has a dedicated classroom with ICT provision and interactive white board, plus an additional office/quiet room with capacity for three learners. These rooms are to be used for homework clubs and later for educational classes for adults and pre-school children.

Blackpool Coastal Housing is now working closely with Adult and Community Learning and Children and Young People/Sure Start with regards to supplying courses for the residents at the community centre. Residents have already proposed ideas for a future programme of classes and sessions, including courses in beginners computing, parenting, and work skills, in addition to play groups and consultations by a health visitor.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This new facility will help to ensure that travellers are given the support they need and are made to feel part of the wider community.”

Alison Inman, Chair of the NFA

• KEY LEARNINGS

The new traveller's site community centre fits into Blackpool Coastal Housing's vision and values, in that it has been developed with the sole purpose of meeting the needs of even the most hard-to-reach residents, in this case, travellers.

Not only is the centre built to eco-friendly standards, it gives travellers grounding and a presence in their community, supporting education, health and personal development through training.



Building links with the wider community



Finalist: Best Community Initiative

Grow your own food:

Hackney Homes gets back to basics

• THE NEED

Hackney Homes set out to transform green spaces across the borough from historically unused and weed prone areas, into community gardens in which residents could take pride and grow their own food.

• THE SOLUTION

In 2009, the Hackney Homes Estate Environment Team rose to the challenge of encouraging residents to reclaim and be proud of the green spaces on their estates, as well as giving them a way to grow their own healthy food and save money during the tough economic climate.

The team devised a community gardens initiative to do just this. Initial meetings were held to introduce local residents on estates to the concept and gauge opinion, ideas and feedback.

A series of summer events were then held across the borough where the teams provided residents with one-to-one advice and a starter pack consisting of a leaflet with information about how to start growing their own food, and a potted herb. A dedicated phone number was also set up for resident enquiries.

• THE RESULTS

Hundreds of residents have started their own personal gardens and over twenty estates have started community gardens. One such estate is Wilton Estate in Hackney where residents in partnership with Hackney Homes and the London Orchard Project have planted fruit trees on the estate. The fruit trees (apple, pear and plum) are looked after by local residents, and fruit will be available to everyone on the estate to enjoy.

Charlotte Dove, Secretary of the Wilton Estate Tenants and Residents Association said: "It's amazing how something as simple as planting trees can bring people together and put a smile on faces. The support that we have had from Hackney Homes staff has been tremendous. They have given advice on growing food, how to ensure that the trees bear fruit and general maintenance."

On a number of other estates in Hackney, residents are turning simple green spaces on their estates into beautiful herb gardens. Turkish and African residents have introduced new herbs to residents on the estate and shared recipes on how to use the herbs in everyday cooking.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This initiative is a community asset.”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

• KEY LEARNINGS

The outcome of the community gardens are not just bright, attractive green spaces, they also help to bring people of different cultures, backgrounds and generations together, improve neighbourhood spirit and give residents the opportunity to grow food which is cheap and healthy.

During a time when it has never been more important to save money and eat healthily, this initiative covers off all areas, as well as creating a key community cohesion tool for Hackney Homes and indeed other ALMOs which may want to roll similar schemes out in their own areas.

Cultivating pride

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Winner: Most Effective Partnership

Hot Blocks:

People 1st (Slough) blocks crime and fire risk

• THE NEED

People 1st (Slough) identified the need to engage with tenants and leaseholders face-to-face on two issues of great concern to them - crime prevention and fire safety. Both topics had not always generated positive dialogue in the past. This was because residents felt disengaged and distanced from any process that was genuinely responsive and could bring about improvements.

• THE SOLUTION

People 1st devised a high-visibility scheme in conjunction with Thames Valley Police, Berkshire Fire Service, and community wardens with representatives from the People 1st Estate Services team visiting neighbourhoods and asking residents there about their worries.

An awareness campaign addressing the greatest concerns - blocked corridors and community areas and security - demonstrated that the issues were being taken seriously. This was underlined by safety and enforcement inspections to ensure that passageways were unobstructed and entry doors not propped open.

• THE RESULTS

Hot Blocks has given residents the opportunity to identify risks and point to areas of environmental improvement. Direct consultation has helped instill a sense of

empowerment and involvement in tenants, making them far more forthcoming than they had been previously. This has meant that, rather than opposing the initiative, they have been overwhelmingly supportive of it.

As well as rebuilding the trust of customers, Hot Blocks has allowed the external works phase of the Decent Homes Improvement Programme to tap into a useful source of information, with repairs reported to the relevant contractors for completion.

The first round of inspection and enforcement visits saw some three tonnes of material being removed from low-rise blocks in the east of Slough.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This is proper housing management, with face-to-face contact a positive means of bringing real changes in safety, security and crime prevention. It is an approach that could and should be applied in other areas.”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

• KEY LEARNINGS

The fundamental outcome of this scheme is that key issues come over more strongly with residents when they are approached directly in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

This is so important, as local people are second-to-none as a source of knowledge that can guide the efforts of not just us, but a number of other agencies also.

The approach is one that our partners in the emergency services have found extremely useful. Hot Blocks has been an excellent opportunity for Berkshire Fire Service to talk directly to a high risk group - people living in high-rise buildings - and provide specific information to these target residents.

In addition, Thames Valley Police officers who have been involved with the initiative over two years, report that it has provided a great platform to meet the community, both in groups and on a one-to-one basis.

Raising awareness



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Finalist: Most Effective Partnership

Prison! Me! No Way!:

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing shows life inside is no life

- **THE NEED**

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing sought to reduce both youth offending and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in the town, by involving the No Way Trust, Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership and a host of other agencies with an interest in these objectives.

- **THE SOLUTION**

Prison! Me! No Way! saw five crime and safety awareness days organised at five upper schools in 2009 and 2010. Fully funded by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, the locations were all in areas known as 'hot spots' of anti-social behaviour.

The headline initiative at each awareness day involved uniformed prison officers taking charge of Year 9 students and treating them as inmates, bringing home the harsh realities, Spartan regimes and restrictions experienced by inmates.

- **THE RESULTS**

Through a series of workshops on the consequences of street crime and first-hand testimony of life inside from prisoners at a nearby open prison, the children were taught the importance of respect for fellow residents and to value their freedom.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing also ran its own workshops and co-ordinated those of partner agencies, including the Police and

Encouraging freedom and honesty

British Transport Police, Fire Service, community safety, community magistrates and Rochdale Council.

This was a key strength of the exercise, with pupils reporting that the sessions had had a profound effect and dispelled many misconceptions about crime, anti-social behaviour and life in prison.

As a follow up, all youngsters received the Children's Safety Education Foundation's 'Wise Up' teaching package, providing detailed information on many issues, including drugs, bullying, anti-social behaviour and hate crime.

- **THE JUDGES SAID:**

“This teaches young people to respect their communities...”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

- **KEY LEARNINGS**

Feedback from pupils and teachers was extremely positive. As the sessions were practical and completely different from the normal classroom environment, the real-life scenarios and

impactful presentations hit home in a way that might not have been achieved otherwise.

Prison! Me! No Way! also demonstrated that a well-organised multi-agency partnership really can bring results.

We hope that the success of the scheme, including its showing at the NFA Awards, will attract additional funding for further exercises. The messages are ones that should be reinforced with pupils in upcoming years to produce generations of socially responsible young people.



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Finalist: Most Effective Partnership

Play Partnership:

Stockport Homes makes child's play of play areas



All work and all play

• THE NEED

With Play Partnership, Stockport Homes set out to develop colourful, inspiring, well-equipped new play areas which would enrich communities and be truly valued by both children there from ages 4-16 and their families.

• THE SOLUTION

Stockport Homes worked with Stockport Play Partnership, which includes council departments and external partners. Crucially, though, local children and their parents were consulted for their opinions and ideas on exactly what facilities were needed and where these should be.

Some of the new equipment was actually designed by the young people who would eventually use it.

This was enabled by the fact that the Partnership shares resources and skills to work effectively with residents on the specification, development and construction of play projects.

Judicious planning and strategy ensured that resources were deployed where they were most needed, with priorities established using a 'play deprivation index'.

• THE RESULTS

In 2009, Play Partnership led to many positive outcomes in neighbourhoods:

- Eleven new, high-quality, inclusive community play spaces
 - Fifty weeks of play activities in 12 priority neighbourhoods
 - Over 7,000 children involved in play activities
 - An inward investment of £500,000 from the Big Lottery, Play Builder Programme, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and GM Procure, on top of the £240,000 investment by Stockport Homes
 - The appointment of two dedicated play workers for activities for homeless people in temporary accommodation
- In addition, six new play areas are being built in 2010, with £300,000 of further external funding.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“This is a fantastic initiative, which it would be great to see rolled-out across the country.”

Alison Inman, Chair of the NFA

• KEY LEARNINGS

Crucially, engagement with the local community, from concept to construction, has delivered the play areas that residents actually wanted.

As a result, the exercise has brought about responsible citizenship, with the facilities highly valued, looked after and monitored by proud customers.

The provision of play areas has improved the quality of residents' lives demonstrably. Children are more active, neighbourhoods are enhanced with a space for all members of the community to use and, on some estates, reports of anti-social behaviour have been reduced to zero.

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Winner: Best Use of Communication

Southenders:

South Essex Homes' international approach

- **THE NEED**

Southenders, from South Essex Homes, was an ambitious creative project mounted to encourage resident involvement and achieve a real sense of community cohesion in Southend. To achieve this, it set out to tell the stories of 20 people who have made the town their home.

- **THE SOLUTION**

Enlisting the involvement of highly diverse subjects from around the globe, Southenders used art as a medium. It essayed the life experiences of 20 individuals, originally hailing from as far afield as Albania and Sri Lanka, but who are now residents of South Essex Homes.

It took the form of a free visual and autobiographic exhibition that featured a profile of each participant. The creative content - photos, artwork and writing - was compiled by officers at South Essex Homes following interviews with the subjects.

Displayed at a local college, Southenders also included guest speakers from across the Southend community.

Among those in the spotlight were Chinn Kylasapathy, originally from Sri Lanka and now actively involved in the Southend community, despite facing many problems in life. It also included South Essex Homes staff members, Kosovo-born caretaker Bujar Kasabaqi and Emilia Nowakowska, a careline support officer who hails from Warsaw, Poland.

- **THE RESULTS**

Southenders not only challenged stereotypes about people who live in social housing, but also successfully communicated the fact that you can be proud of and involved in the area you live in, whether or not you were born there.

The exhibition went far beyond the original local target audience and captured the imagination of both the public and media. Hundreds of people visited the exhibition and much press attention was given to it. Among those covering it were BBC Radio and a local newspaper.

- **THE JUDGES SAID:**

“Inclusive and positive..”

Roger Jarman, Head of Housing at the Audit Commission

- **KEY LEARNINGS**

We learned the value of self-sufficiency, relying on our own officers to liaise with residents and produce all visual and written work entirely in house.

This meant that the subjects under focus were working with people they knew and were at ease with. As such, all felt that they were a valuable part of the project and had a sense of ownership over it and its objectives.

This was important in getting them to be forthcoming about their lives to date. By being able to profile such very varied personalities so effectively, we have been able to celebrate both the differences among people and the commonality that binds us all together.



Real stories, real people



Finalist: Best Use of Communication

Young Person's Guide to Housing:

East Durham Homes' 'heroic' efforts to present information



Appealing to all ages

• THE NEED

Launched in September 2006, East Durham Homes' group for young people - EDH Young Person's Forum - has members aged between 12-20 years. Although very influential in the way it communicates with younger customers, it wanted to improve its reach and effectiveness.

• THE SOLUTION

Bearing in mind target audiences, it was decided that the best way to get their attention would be by using a colourful, fun publication that relied more on imagery than text-heavy content.

Forum members designed it themselves. East Durham Homes backed the project by obtaining funding from Durham County Council for laptops with special design software and a local photographer's services.

Devising a 'superhero' to dispense advice in an entertaining way, the group produced the guide on a number of vital issues. These included:

- How to apply for a home
- What to do if you are homeless
- How to get a furniture package
- How to report repairs
- How to get an adaptation

- What to do about anti-social behaviour
- East Durham Homes' other support services

The young people co-starred in the publication, employing the design software to put photos of themselves in cartoon style story boards and providing the necessary text for each subject area.

• THE RESULTS

The guide has been distributed to colleges, community centres and other locations in East Durham Homes' footprint popular with young people. It is also given to younger tenants when they get a property.

It has proved popular with target audiences, with anecdotal feedback commending its accessibility and reporting great understanding of the subject matter. Retention levels for future reference or sharing with friends and family are high.

• THE JUDGES SAID:

“A positive way to engage young people...”

Roger Jarman, Head of Housing at the Audit Commission

• KEY LEARNINGS

By giving these motivated and responsible youngsters the chance to run with their ideas, we have produced a very valuable information resource which provides an effective service to a group of people who are, invariably, less familiar with housing issues.

The Young Person's Forum not only succinctly conveys the key facts, but presents them in an interesting, imaginative format.

The universally positive responses to the new guide endorse this, with those picking it up praising the publication's ready appeal to them.

Finalist: Best Use of Communication

Social media project :

Colchester Borough Homes takes tenant communication online

- **THE NEED**

In 2009, Colchester Borough Homes began an innovative project to use social media for a more personal, modern approach to tenant communication, as well as reaching a wider audience and making material more accessible to young people.

- **THE SOLUTION**

Colchester Borough Homes' project to communicate with tenants via the internet was launched on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

YouTube videos explain Colchester Borough Homes' role, what services it provides, and the impact its community projects have on residents. A Facebook Group and Twitter feed were also set up as a rapid and easy-to-administer way to provide tenants with the latest updates.

Colchester Borough Homes claims that YouTube is used by very few ALMOs as a tenant information tool. Using YouTube also offers excellent value-for-money, in that all production is done in-house, with staff time

the only expense after the initial purchase of a video camera.

The ALMO calculates that each video takes around four hours to create, including filming and editing, which is done by a communications and marketing officer.

- **THE RESULTS**

Colchester Borough Homes has reported that it has achieved its aim of reaching a wider audience, with YouTube film views totalling in the thousands.

Its videos have covered a broad range of themes, including its Community Project Fund, Safer Neighbourhood Group, Tenants and Leaseholders Conference, and an introduction to Colchester Borough Homes.

The Facebook Group now has an events diary, discussion forums and photos. The page is simple to administer, it takes just a couple of minutes per day to check if any comments have been made, and is an immediate way of getting information into the public domain.

- **THE JUDGES SAID:**

“Lots of people are using social media; making use of these online resources should be a natural progression for ALMOs...”

Michael Gelling, Chairman of the National Tenant Voice

- **KEY LEARNINGS**

In creating these online platforms with which to communicate with tenants, our objective was to move away from traditional, often 'stuffy' means of tenant communication, and to offer a quick, engaging and user-friendly source of information.

Resident-to-resident communication is also established, in that our tenants and leaseholders appear in the films, giving their views on the services we provide.



Spreading the net



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