

NFA Awards Sponsors

The NFA would like to **thank** the following companies, whose **generous support** made this year's awards possible.

AWARDS SPECIAL

ALMOs in ACTION

▲▲▲ National Federation of ALMOs
▲▲▲ championing better homes and communities

Connaught Partnership Ltd



Connaught is the **UK's leading provider of integrated asset management services** to local authorities and registered social landlords. We provide a **full range of housing maintenance and estate management services**, all of which are tailored to the **individual requirements** of the communities in which we work.

Connaught was recently recognised at the prestigious Housing Excellence Awards, winning the Tennant Care Scheme of the Year award with First Choice Homes Oldham, and the Partnering Contractor of the Year award.

Keepmoat PLC



Keepmoat PLC is a **leader** in Community Regeneration across the North and Midlands of England and is **committed to delivering** housing partnerships, **affordable homes** and **social housing solutions**.

Our **success** and **significant growth** is founded upon our **expertise**, culture and people, as well as our **capacity** to deliver a diverse range of quality products and services. We play a **major role** in delivery of the government's Sustainable Communities agenda.

Through our operating company Haslam Homes, we provide **quality, affordable new homes** for first and second time buyers.

Through our delivery companies Bramall Construction and Frank Haslam Milan, Keepmoat **refurbishes over 34,000 homes a year** for Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, ALMOs and Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfers.

Mazars LLP



Mazars LLP is one of **Europe's leading accountancy** and advisory firms. We are a **major provider** of services to the housing sector. We currently work with **over 100 housing organisations**, including ALMOs throughout England and Wales. We have a national housing practice with **over 80 housing sector specialists** who enjoy working with our clients to deliver **practical solutions**, so that they can **rise above their challenges** and reach their **strategic goals**.

Apart from **traditional services** such as external and internal auditing, we are **actively involved** with our clients advising on current best practice, value for money and **continuous improvement**.

Mears Group



As the **leading provider** of repairs and maintenance services to the Social Housing Market, Mears Group works in some of the most socially deprived areas of the country.

Along with our **professional commitment** to tenants, we feel a strong sense of **responsibility** towards the wider community. Helping a local community to **thrive** increases the **quality of life** for tenants and makes our job that little bit easier.

We have **three main areas of focus**:-
- To **support and strengthen** the communities in which we work.
- To **recruit employees** locally whenever we can.
- To **encourage employees** to volunteer their time and skills to specific community projects.

In 2006 our staff delivered over 12,000 hours of community work with 40 per cent of staff actively volunteering their time. We supported upwards of 220 different projects.

Wates Living Space



Wates Group is one of the **UK's largest** private construction companies. Established in 1897 the company remains **100 per cent family-owned** and now **employs 2,000 people across the UK**.

Over the last six months Wates has been named "**Best UK Family Business**" by investment bank, JP Morgan; awarded "**Best Training Achievement**" prize at the national Quality in Construction Awards; and the "**Best CR Strategy**" award at Building Magazine's annual sustainability awards.

Trowers & Hamlins



Trowers & Hamlins is a city and **international law firm** with 106 partners and some 600 staff. The firm's head office is located in Tower Hill in the city of London, we also have regional offices in Manchester and Exeter. Overseas, the firm is located in Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Cairo, Dubai and Oman.

Trowers & Hamlins have the **largest ALMO** and Public Sector Housing team in the country. We helped create the ALMO concept, drafted the model documents and have acted for a majority of the ALMOs that have been established.

Our **comprehensive advice** on social housing corporate governance ranges from assisting in the preparation of resolutions and notices, through to constitutional reviews and the establishment of group structures. Our lawyers are familiar with all forms of corporate body used in the social housing movement, from traditional Industrial & Provident Societies, and tenant led/mutual organisations, through to limited companies (including local housing companies). At Trowers & Hamlins we **focus** on providing our clients with a service that is second to none. We can do this because **we understand** what our clients need from their lawyers - solid, practical, timely advice from a friendly face.

Kier Group



Kier Building Maintenance (KBM) is a division of Kier Group PLC, created to offer **specialist skills** to the social housing and public building sectors.

KBM is **dedicated** to improving the communities in which we work, putting the customer at the heart of everything we do, and operating a process of **continuous improvement** to meet local needs.

KBM has an **impressive portfolio of long term partnering** and joint venture arrangements with many local authorities and other residential social landlords, and is **committed** to delivering sustainable communities and a better standard of living for tenants. We have helped clients attain Beacon status and top five housing association status, and won national awards for diversity, training and considerate construction.



Homes for Islington residents enjoy football lessons from Arsenal FC coaches

Hello

 National Federation of ALMOs
championing better homes and communities

and welcome to the third issue of **ALMOs In Action**, featuring the **biggest stories** from the world of council housing management.

In this issue, we highlight the success of the first annual NFA Awards. The quality of the more than 200 entries was outstanding. Innovation, success and best practice were all firmly in the spotlight as more than 280 ALMO representatives and residents gathered in the Royal York Hotel to enjoy a three-course meal and a programme of presentations compered by BBC TV's Working Lunch presenter Nik Wood.

Five years after the first Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) were established, the NFA Awards were designed to recognise and reward individuals and organisations who have performed to the highest of standards at grass roots and beyond.

Three expert independent judges assessed the entries: Michael Gelling of TAROE (Tenants and Residents Organisations of England); Janet Dean of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); and Roy Irwin, Chief Inspector of the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate.

But despite their expertise, the judges struggled to choose winners in each of the seven

categories. As Roy Irwin said after the event:

"I was very impressed by the standard of all the entries. Reading them conveyed a vivid impression of the commitment and dedication of so many within the ALMO world to their communities – and not just staff but residents too."

Community cohesion was one of the evening's most consistent themes. Helen Morris, of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation, was named Most Outstanding Resident for her determined efforts to promote community spirit, learning Spanish, organising lunches and day trips for the over-50s, and for organising a humorous community video project called *Bingo Spit*. This featured older residents dressed in hoodies, and local youngsters impersonating their older neighbours.

A resident of St Leger Homes in South Yorkshire was instrumental in the creation of the most inspired tenant-led programme – a bicycle recycling scheme, in which local residents are given refurbished bicycles free of charge.

Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing in West

Yorkshire scooped the Most Innovative Award for its discount card. This self-proclaimed "local card for local people" provides ALMO residents with discounts on the goods and services offered by local shops, promoting community businesses rather than the usual high street chains.

The inaugural NFA awards were a tremendous success, and we would like to extend our thanks once again to all of the sponsors, whose support made this event possible, and to the judging panel who took on the tough task of choosing winners.

In a rousing speech, the Rt Hon Clive Betts MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for ALMOs, told delegates that the evening was not just about the winners of each award, but about respect and recognition for the hard work taking place at every level in every one of the country's 65 ALMOs.

Clive was right. The NFA Awards were about so much more than speeches and trophies. You could not ask for a clearer illustration of the commitment and dedication of everyone within the growing ALMO family.



Dennis Rees,
Chair, the National Federation of ALMOs

Clive Betts, Chair, the All Party Parliamentary Group for ALMOs

ALMOs have become a **success story** in a very short time. Already **222,000 homes** have been made decent and 77 per cent of tenants are **satisfied** with their landlord.

This is, however, just the start. We need to complete the Decent Homes programme and start to think of Decent Homes Plus beyond that. More resources are needed for environmental improvements and ALMOs can become lead players in co-ordinating the management of our public open spaces.

ALMOs were initially considered by some as a temporary means to access Government funds. They now need to be established on a permanent basis, with long term contracts and the ability to borrow against assets. A case needs to be made for allowing ALMOs to borrow to invest, as housing associations already can.

The chronic shortage of social housing to rent requires ALMOs to begin a new build programme, accessing Housing Corporation funds and working in partnership with local councils. Let's applaud the successes to date but also plan with ambition to meet new challenges ahead in the future.



Clive Betts, Chair, the
All Party Parliamentary Group for ALMOs

ALMO round-up

Four new ALMOs went live in April, while the six Leeds ALMOs merged and became three. A total of 65 live and five aspirant ALMOs are now managing more than **one million council homes** in 66 local authorities.

There are 14 three-star and 31 two-star ALMOs in April 2007, with Golden Gates Housing and Cheltenham Borough Homes becoming the latest three-stars on re-inspection.

All party parliamentary group

The next meeting and AGM of the All Party Parliamentary Group will take place on 18 July. It will discuss financial issues, specifically the comprehensive spending review and the need to ensure adequate funding for decent homes, new build, social housing grants and financial freedoms.

Access to Social Housing Grant

The NFA funded a half-day workshop organised by Carrick Housing, together with Solihull Community Housing and Derby Homes, for those ALMOs hoping to bid for social housing grants. The workshop enabled them to meet and exchange ideas on how to approach the application process. This followed a separate meeting with the Housing Corporation to discuss the requirements for obtaining preferred development status.

NFA Annual Conference

The largest-ever NFA annual conference and AGM took place in York on 9 and 10 May. With the government carrying out a wide-ranging review of the role and regulation of council housing, delegates were treated to some excellent presentations from a variety of major speakers, all considering the impact on ALMOs of the changing political agenda. Other topics covered in workshops included the impact of digital TV; board member issues; the Respect standard for housing management; inspections and tenant involvement. The 2006/07 Annual Review was published, featuring contributions from every established ALMO, and the highlight of the conference dinner was the NFA awards ceremony.

News round-up

REDBRIDGE AT ARM'S LENGTH

On April 2, brand new ALMO Redbridge Homes was established to take on the management of the 7000 council homes in Redbridge, north-east London.

Most of the staff working for the borough's existing housing department transferred to the new company, which is determined to raise standards and introduce new approaches to the delivery of services. As a symbol of change, the staff of Redbridge Homes will wear new uniforms.



BARNET FUNDS INNOVATION

Barnet Homes has established a special Innovations Fund to tap into the creativity of its staff. The fund has £50,000 to invest in good ideas, projects or initiatives proposed by staff during the year.

Projects which have already received funding include an open day on dog ownership. Over 100 dog owners attended the event, receiving free advice on canine care and responsible pet ownership, along with free dog tags and scoop bags.

An innovative interface for the council's website has also benefited from the Fund. The interface, aimed at members of prominent ethnic minorities, features animated faces giving an outline of services in Farsi and Somali. Talking computer screens in reception areas have also been customised to include information in Farsi and Somali.

HIGH PEAK OFFERS HOME OPTIONS

High Peak Community Housing has launched a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme known as Home-Options (www.home-options.org). Developed in partnership with High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, and Dales Housing, the scheme will provide new and existing social housing tenants with the maximum possible choice and promote co-operation between social landlords and the private rented sector.

This is the first ALMO-based sub-regional scheme to go live with money obtained from the department for Communities and Local Government. Home-Options went live on the 1st March 2007 and the first let was made on the 12th March.

SHEFFIELD HOMES SETS THE STANDARD

Sheffield Homes has become one of only a handful of organisations across the UK to win a top accessibility award for its website.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind's (RNIB) 'See it Right' initiative defines strict standards of accessibility and usability in order to benefit visually-impaired people. Sheffield Homes is one of only 40 organisations across the country to have achieved these standards and is the first ALMO to achieve it.

Over 1,000 web pages were reviewed and improved as part of the audit, which is carried out by an experienced RNIB consultant.

Meanwhile, the ALMO has also been awarded a prestigious national quality standard for excellence in customer service.

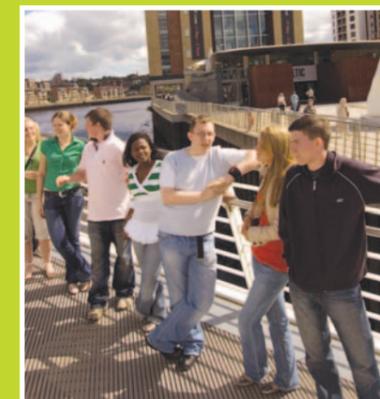
Charter Mark, sponsored by the Cabinet Office, recognises public sector organisations that show a commitment to developing services. Not only has Sheffield Homes achieved this standard but the company has been put forward as an example of best practice to be included on the Cabinet Offices' Charter Mark good practice database.

To gain the Standard, Sheffield Homes demonstrated that its services meet the diverse needs of people across the city. The ALMO, Britain's largest, also showed that customers and staff are regularly consulted.

GATESHEAD YOUTH WEBSITE A HIT

A website for 16-to-24 year olds created by the Gateshead Housing Company has proved a major success, having attracted over 500,000 'hits' since its launch late last year.

The site, at www.mypadgateshead.co.uk, provides a range of information and advice designed to help young people with the transition to independent living in their own home. The site, designed with the help of young people from across the borough, includes sections on leaving home, finances, renting a property and buying a home, amongst many others.



The 2007 NFA Awards

Most Outstanding Resident

Sponsored by Kier Group



Winner Helen Morris - Kensington & Chelsea TMO

Helen Morris, 60, devotes time and effort to helping her neighbours, particularly those who are vulnerable. She is committed to breaking down barriers, and she demonstrated this last year when she learned Spanish to help her communicate with ethnic minority residents and engage them in the different activities and events she organises.

As the dynamic chair of the Over 50s Club on the World's End Estate, Helen provides daily lunches for up to 60 elderly residents and organises day trips.

Last year industrious Helen worked with Chelsea Youth Club to encourage both younger and older TMO residents to collaborate on a DVD entitled 'Bingo Spit'. The idea behind 'Bingo Spit' was to tackle the preconceptions both groups might have had about each other.

Older and younger residents of the TMO dressed as each other for the light-hearted production. Members of the Over 50s club dressed in tracksuit bottoms and hoodies and paraded around their estate like teenagers. Meanwhile, members of the Youth Club dressed as their elderly neighbours, using walking sticks and Zimmer frames. Both groups had a lot of fun while gaining a better understanding of the other group's point of view.

This innovative project was recognised by the Audit Commission in 2006 as positive best practise.

Helen has been on the Management Committee of Chelsea Youth Club for over 20 years and she is considered a friend by many young people on the estate.



Highly Commended

Eve Privett - Ascham Homes • Daniel Illisevic - Northwards Housing

Most Inspired Tenant Led Programme

Sponsored by Mazars LLP



Winner St Leger Homes – Bicycle Recycling Scheme

Craganour Tenants' and Residents' Association has developed an innovative bicycle recycling scheme to help residents in need of two-wheeled transport.

Local man Jim Tierney established the scheme after hearing about a young lad who had lost his bike. Jim decided that he would find him a new one – and the idea quickly snowballed.

The scheme is staffed by volunteers, who spend time every day working on the many donated bikes. Jim is usually on hand to provide advice and assistance.

Everyone in the community can benefit from the scheme. Children only have to send their parents to Jim and they are given a bike; young people can be given an economical way to get to work; and some pensioners have found a new way to keep fit.

Everyone taking part is healthier and both landfill and carbon emissions have been reduced. The bikes come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, including tandems, and volunteers have even managed to fulfil a request for a triathlon bike!

Jim is now investigating ways to send recycled bicycles overseas to help deprived children or for use in disaster areas.



Highly Commended

Dale & Valley Homes - Wear Valley Customer Panel • Homes For Islington - Brecknock Playground Project

Best Resident Communication

Sponsored by Keepmoat PLC



Winner CityWest Homes – CityWest News

A panel of residents and staff was closely involved in the development of the new-look CityWest News.

CityWest News is the ALMO's key method of communication with the residents of its 22,000 homes across Westminster. It offers all news relating to the organisation through one single title, including service information, improvement work updates and performance information, all written in a popular and accessible style. This bi-monthly newspaper was introduced in March 2007 to replace a glossy, quarterly magazine, following consultation with the communications panel and the wider resident body.

The communications panel was set-up in December last year to help shape resident communications. It includes tenant and leaseholder representatives, along with staff and CityWest board members. They are consulted on key documents and provides feedback on both editorial and design issues.

Resident representatives on the panel said: "Give us something that we'd want to pick up and read." They asked for a tabloid-style newspaper written in plain language, with a firm focus on residents and lots of photographs.

Content is decided by the communications panel. The wider resident body is also invited to contribute ideas, stories and letters. Stories are written by the communications team and freelance editors and are then returned to members of the panel for feedback.



Highly Commended

Carrick Housing – Malabar Video Project • Derby Homes - Youth Website

Most Innovative Project

Sponsored by Connaught Partnerships



Winner Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing – KNH Excel Discount Card

The KNH Excel Discount Card enables council tenants and leaseholders, as well as Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH) staff, to save money on the goods and services provided by local businesses.

The scheme is the first of its kind in the country to have been completely developed in-house. KNH staff and tenants' representatives worked with over 170 shops and businesses to develop a "local card for local people".

Residents told KNH that they did not want an off-the-shelf scheme that could only be used in High Street chains. They wanted something that could be used in local shops.

Members of the Kirklees Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations and KNH staff spent hours on the phone and walked miles to persuade local businesses to join the scheme.

The card has been endorsed by various Chambers of Trade operating within Kirklees. The Chair of the Dewsbury Chamber was the keynote speaker at the launch event in January. The scheme has also been praised by the Mayor and the Leader of Kirklees Council.



Highly Commended

Newham Homes – NeAT Project • Sheffield Homes - City Stewardship Programme

Best Community Initiative

Sponsored by Mears Group



Winner Homes for Islington – Sport Activities for Everyone Programme

In 2006-07 the Sport Activities for Everyone Programme (SAFE) involved over 1000 young people in a variety of sporting activities around Islington, including coaching, competitions and accredited training courses.

The activities were targeted at young people aged 8 –19 on estates around the borough, and also offered anyone aged 16 and above the opportunity to work towards qualifications as a sports coach or leader.

The project had two key objectives: - to combat antisocial behaviour amongst young people and to increase positive activities and opportunities for young people and adults living on Islington estates.

During the year, 44 volunteers each delivered 12 hours of mentored coaching and 54 people obtained nationally-recognised and accredited sports coaching and leadership awards. Sixteen inter-estate tournaments were organised.



Highly Commended

Barnet Homes – The Barnet Homes Gardening Club

Cheltenham Borough Homes - CBH Junior Wardens and Youth Forum

Most Effective Partnership Project

Sponsored by Trowers & Hamlins



Winner Carrick Housing – Ground Source Heat Pump

Many rural households in the Carrick region have no gas supply, so Carrick Housing and its partners developed ground source heat pumps as a genuine alternative. These are an affordable and efficient way for these households to heat their homes and water.

The negative environmental impact and high cost of oil and electric central heating was a major concern for both Carrick Housing and its tenants. As the cost of carbon fuels continues to increase, heat pumps will provide a long term benefit to rural households.

Carrick Housing has worked over the last two years with Powergen, Earth Energy and Gary Turton Ltd to pilot and test a number of different heat pump systems. Heat pumps have now been fitted in 205 properties, with a further 100 currently on site. Powergen believe this is the largest installation programme in the country.

Last winter was the first in which many homes were heated using heat pumps and the tenants have been delighted with the system. In fact, many tenants who were initially sceptical of the new technology have, after the positive verdict of their neighbours, asked for the system to be installed this spring.

With heat pumps tenants have only one standing charge and they are a particularly cost-effective option for landlords and tenants. The system has a 20-year life compared to a gas-fired combi boiler and it does not require an annual service.



Highly Commended

Blackpool Coastal Housing - Customer Focused Partnering • Nottingham City Homes - ASB Events

Board Member Of The Year

Sponsored by Wates Living Space



Winner Karin Jaeger – Brent Housing Partnership

Despite suffering from depression and preferring the quiet life, Karin Jaeger is an active member of her tenants' association. While many sufferers of depression opt out, Karin has most definitely opted in, typically giving as much as three days every week to Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) projects.

In October and November she made a huge contribution as a member of the LAPN evaluation team. This involved 15 days of detailed work, reading and scoring documents, as well as preparing for and undertaking site visits and interviews. The LAPN coordinator said: "Not only was Karin an exceptionally clear and thoughtful member of her team but she also helped less experienced residents on the panel and gave them the confidence to express their views."

As each year has gone by Karin has become more self-assured and by 2006 she had become a member of the area housing board as well as several committees. She is also a member of the procurement panel.

She was an enthusiastic participant at the BHP Open Day in November, when she helped residents to cater for the event. She also helped organise the 2006 summer street festival and the July annual youth forum.

Any Brent Housing Partnership project that needs resident support can count on Karin. She is a member of the editorial board group and, in 2006/7 attended several meetings to review the BHP Neighbourhood Warden service.

Karin even allowed BHP to use her home as a model of the Decent Homes works for visiting politicians. As councils around the country consider conversion into ALMOs, Karin provides advice and speaks to staff and tenants.



Winner David Procter – Hounslow Homes

David Procter has been an independent board member for Hounslow Homes since the company went live in April 2002. He has consistently been one of the most active members, recognised amongst staff for his commitment to the organisation, his business acumen and expertise.

His intelligence and emphatic manner have earned him real influence with stakeholders, and his availability has made him one of the most recognisable and approachable of the board members. David regularly meets front-line staff and represents the ALMO at a national level on the NFA board.

Hounslow Homes has undergone a series of significant changes over the last year, including a 100 per cent turnover in the senior management team, a change in council administration and a ten per-cent reduction in the workforce.

David made some outstanding contributions during this period. He acknowledged the challenges faced by the organisation and the need for new and experienced senior management. Whilst correctly continuing to resist operational involvement, he offered tangible leadership and guidance to customers, the council, staff and management during a challenging time.



Highly Commended

Trevor Renouf – Barnet Homes • Janet Storar – Nottingham City Homes