



Providing quality homes

With housing in short supply across the UK, we're working hard to deliver new homes, make best use of our existing homes, and help families find a home that suits their needs.

Suzanne Forster,
director of finance



During 2010–11 we completed some of our most diverse and exciting developments to date. With additional grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, we've also been able to carry out our development programme without borrowing additional funds, which puts us in a stronger financial position. Best of all, these new developments have regenerated communities and delivered much needed affordable homes.

What's more, we've been working with local authorities on innovative projects to deliver more homes on empty sites; ensuring our existing homes are of a decent standard; and trialling new

ways to improve the sustainability of our older homes.

Central to all of our work is understanding our residents views, and improving our services to respond better to their needs. So it's essential to support the bricks and mortar we provide with effective housing management and opportunities for people to access other housing options. The improvements we've made to how we deliver and manage our homes over the past year have generated a variety of benefits and savings, which we are happy to pass onto our residents and use to build more sustainable communities.

New homes

The diverse expertise of the teams delivering our new homes enables us to overcome any challenges, make sure developments work financially, and provide quality affordable homes. Our 2010-11 development programme exceeded all targets set by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). We completed a total of 250 homes - 104 more than we targeted for - and we started onsite to deliver 645 more homes in the coming year.

Our development highlights include:

- **13 flats at Railway Meadow, Chipping Ongar, Essex**

These flats offer specialised support for vulnerable young parents aged 16-25. Three local authorities - Epping Forest, Brentwood and Uttlesford districts - came together to create this shared service. East Thames developed the 13 flats with the Barratts Group and is providing ongoing support and management.

- **7 new homes at Hughes Court Leytonstone, Waltham Forest**

The demand was so high for these seven affordable apartments for shared ownership,



that first time buyers snapped them up within weeks of them coming onto the market. In fact, the flats were over subscribed by 4:1.

- **241 new homes at Paper Mill Place, Waltham Forest**

This successful partnership involved East Thames, Telford Homes, L&Q and Waltham Forest Council. We own 107 of the homes for affordable ownership and rental. A further 82 homes are planned to be complete in 2012.

We're also progressing well on some of our larger regeneration programmes, such as Ocean Estate in Tower Hamlets (see more on page 18) and the Athletes Village, post 2012 Olympic Games (see more on page 36).

Giving empty homes and land a new lease on life

We've been looking at new and innovative ways to deliver more homes, including working with local authorities in Waltham Forest and Havering to turn disused garage sites into quality family homes and renovating empty and dilapidated homes in Newham. Already we've completed four new family homes on two disused garage sites in Havering as part of a pilot project run by Havering Council. We're also due to deliver up to another 63 homes on other sites in the next phase which will be completed in late 2011. In Waltham Forest we're developing 64 new homes on disused garage sites.



Before and after: garage sites in Havering

28 new homes for social rent are now available in Newham, thanks to two initiatives – one which renovated long-term empty homes and another which bought and repaired homes for sale.

so what?

Sustainable homes

In the UK housing accounts for 25% of carbon emissions, and we've been playing our part to help reduce this by designing more sustainable developments and looking at ways to turn our older housing stock into greener homes that are cheaper and more efficient to run.

We build all of our new homes to a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. We've also delivered two retrofit programmes which each transformed older homes with new green technology and improvements that reduced the homes' carbon emissions, saved energy and water and should reduce household utility bills. Each of these programmes will be monitored over the next two years to assess the energy and water savings achieved, and the effects of residents' behaviour on each home's carbon footprint. We will share the lessons learnt to help the industry understand the most effective methods of improving the sustainability of older homes.

As part of the Greener Homes for Redbridge project we retrofitted 19 homes with green technologies and rented them to people on



the social housing waiting list. The project was delivered in partnership with Redbridge Council, and was awarded the **Architect's Journal Retrofit Award** and also received a Highly Commended in the **Inside Housing Sustainable Housing Awards** in recognition of its contribution to housing sustainability best practice.

We also received funding from the Technology Strategy Board, as part of Retrofit for the Future programme. We **retrofitted three of our older homes** in east London and our work on these homes will also provide insight on how retrofit works impact residents who remain living at home during the works.

Housing options

Making best use of our properties means ensuring our residents live in a home that suits their needs. This is especially an issue with family-sized homes where there is big demand and short supply. To address this we've continued working with our residents who are under-occupying their larger home, to help them downsize to a more suitable home, which may enable them to save on tax and utilities costs.

In 2010–11 our housing options advisor visited 185 of our overcrowded residents to discuss their housing options such as exploring space saving initiatives like bunk beds and folding furniture, or even creating a loft extension for more space.

We're also working with our partners to help residents find homes in a more suitable location through mutual exchange, private sector rental, or a move through a mobility scheme such as the new G15 London moves.

so what?
62-82%
was the reduction in carbon emissions we achieved at 10 homes in our Greener Homes for Redbridge project.

so what?
32 overcrowded families were re-housed and 23 under occupying households were helped to downsize



Our 2010 housing options event saw over 300 people attend to find out more about home swap, private rentals and shared ownership. We also held a home swap event in November where 120 residents signed up to try and directly swap their home with another household in their desired location.

Stairway to home ownership

Our shared ownership homes are one of the best ways for first time buyers to get their foot on the property ladder. It enables them to purchase a share in their home and pay a subsidised rent on the remainder. The aim is for buyers to purchase additional shares in their home until they own it outright, which is called staircasing.

In 2010-11 we saw a large increase in the sales value we made through staircasing, which highlights that first time buyers view shared ownership as a viable option to help them eventually own their own home.



so what?

Our 2010-11 staircasing sales reached

£3.337m,

almost double our target of £1.87million. This surplus will enable us to invest the extra funding back into developing new affordable homes.

“ Ian Killion first moved into his East Thames property in Romford in 1997. To begin with, Ian owned 50% of the property as a shared owner.

Now over 13 years later, he has bought the remaining 50% to own it outright. Ian said: “Property prices were dropping so it seemed like a good opportunity to buy. And the service I got from East Thames while staircasing was really comforting and a huge help. Home ownership is important to me, I have an asset now, I can improve it if I want to and it gives me more flexibility.”

Housing management



Maureen Reynolds, an East Thames resident for over 20 years, had work carried out at her flat last December. She said: “They tiled and painted my bathroom and it went absolutely fantastically. They did a really good job. They also replaced my windows which were really old. The new windows have made such a difference. It’s quieter now and the difference in the heat is unreal. I used to have my central heating on all day and it cost a fortune but now I’m warm at home.”

100% decent homes

Since 2005 we’ve invested £37m making improvements to around 3,000 homes to bring our older housing stock up to the Government’s Decent Homes Standard.

This involves things like new kitchens and bathrooms; loft and wall insulation and central heating; and improvements such as new windows and roofs. Delivering good quality and achieving value for money is important.

When we re-tendered for our 2010–11 decent homes programme we saved more than £500k.

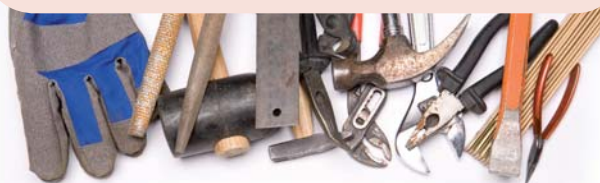
so what?

100% of our homes now meet the Decent Homes Standard. This means our tenants can enjoy a safe and comfortable home, that is cheaper to heat.

so what?

We reduced the average cost of our repairs from £130 to £93 and reduced the time it takes to complete routine repairs by

10 days.



Repairs and maintenance

Our residents have told us that a good repairs service is their top priority, and we’ve been focused on getting more repairs done on time, right the first time and completed to a high quality.

We launched a new repairs handy van service for our foyers to respond more quickly to repairs needs. By speeding up our repairs we’ve also managed to reduce our re-let times so new residents can move in faster. And we achieved 100% gas safety compliance across our homes, ensuring our residents are safe from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, which kills 50 people in the UK every year.

We’ve still got some work to do, but in 2010–11 we delivered some solid results.



Customer satisfaction

In early 2010 we set up a new customer advocacy approach to dealing with complaints, which enables us to address the underlying needs of our residents, and better capture and respond to complaints.

Our response times to complaints has improved significantly and we achieved our best ever performance with 93.6% of complaints being responded to within our target of 21 calendar days, with an average response time of 18 days.

During 2010-11 we saw a large improvement in our net promoter score, which seeks to weigh up the difference between our least and most satisfied customers. Our net promoter score increased from -11.6 in quarter one up to +50 in quarter four. This is a positive indication that our services are valued by more of our customers.

Rental arrears at an all time low

A new approach to customer account management focusing on improving the processes and providing quality case management saw our rental arrears reach their lowest ever levels. We also made sure residents had access to services to help manage their money and overcome financial difficulties, such as our welfare and debt advisors and floating support service.



Tackling housing fraud

We take housing fraud very seriously and in 2010-11 we created a new tenancy enforcement service which coordinates our efforts to identify and bring action against any tenant unlawfully using one of our homes. We developed a targeted list of properties that we checked during the year to ensure the tenants were not illegally subletting or mistreating the home. Our neighbourhood managers verified **110%** of our targeted tenancies, visiting over eight homes each per month.

With the help of these checks, information from neighbouring residents, and our involvement in the National Fraud Initiative, we had some success in our fight against tenancy fraud.

so what?
15 homes
 were found to be unlawfully used or sublet- these were taken back and given to households in need.