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Foreword

Your Homes Newcastle manages around 32,000 properties throughout Newcastle upon Tyne. We have been operating since April 2004 and our expenditure totals around £200 million per year.

As a “2” star ALMO the Government awarded us with £346 million to meet the costs of making our homes decent.

The efficient management of the housing property portfolio is a requirement for any successful organisation. It means better living conditions and services for customers, and ensures priorities are met. Since our establishment in 2004 we have been focused on ensuring that we provide excellent, value for money services.

We are committed to providing excellent services to our customers and to have this recognised by becoming a “3” star ALMO. We recognise the pivotal role that an efficient, effective, value for money repairs and maintenance service plays in providing excellent services for our customers.

This is YHN's second Repairs and Maintenance Strategy and it sets out our approach to delivering excellent repairs and maintenance services.

John Lee
Chief Executive
Your Homes Newcastle

Executive Summary

1 Introduction

The efficient repair and maintenance of the property portfolio is a key requirement for any successful housing organisation. The development of a Repairs and Maintenance Strategy is designed to deliver an excellent repairs and maintenance service for tenants and leaseholders, that sees performance in the 'top quartile' as a benchmark 'norm', and enables them to live in well maintained, warm and safe homes that contribute to sustainable communities. This strategy concentrates on the delivery and development of the repairs service and should be read in conjunction with YHN's Asset Management Strategy that describes how we will deliver the decent homes standard. The Asset Management Strategy is currently being updated. This Repairs and Maintenance Strategy should also be considered alongside the Void Management Strategy.

2 *Mission statement, aims and objectives*

Our Vision is for Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) to ensure our tenants and leaseholders receive a Repairs and Maintenance Service that delivers the high quality, responsive service that they have a right to expect, and which offers excellent value for money.

"To do the right repair, first time at the right quality and cost"

We aim to secure for our tenants and leaseholders a service that is proactively managed by YHN and delivers:

- Continuous improvement in performance with top quartile seen as the benchmark norm
- Prompt repairs carried out by skilled and courteous operatives
- Demonstrable efficiency and highly competitive rates
- Top quality customer care and information for all users, however and wherever the service is accessed
- A valuable contribution to sustaining the City's housing stock and to the achievement of the Decent Homes Standard
- Productive partnership working with the service providers and service users
- A service that contributes to and recognises Equality and Diversity as a key part of Repairs and Maintenance delivery
- A valuable contribution to the environment

The strategy will be reviewed annually and translated into an action plan for the years ahead. The action plan for 2008/9 is detailed in **Appendix A**.

3 Equalities and Diversity

We are committed to equality and diversity and ensure we treat our customers with respect. In Newcastle there is a growing diversity of lifestyles, cultures, languages and ethnicity and we recognise that being able to understand everyone's needs will help us perform our duties in a manner that is sensitive and appropriate.

We are aware services should be tailored to meet diverse needs and that a 'one size fits all' approach to a Repairs and Maintenance service is not appropriate. Many of our tenants may be vulnerable through age, state of health or personal circumstances – other residents have language and cultural differences and needs. In addition we acknowledge the importance of delivering services that take account of individual diversity and equality of opportunity – this is particularly important in responsive maintenance as it is the service most frequently used by all residents.

4 *Key national drivers*

There are a number of key national repairs and maintenance drivers:

- Statutory and Regulatory requirements
- Decent Homes Standard
- Construction Task Force: procurement and partnering
- Gas Safety Regulations
- Communities Plan
- Gershon Review
- Comprehensive Spending Review (efficiency savings)

5 *Repairs and maintenance categories*

Our repairs and maintenance services are grouped into two main 'Best Practice' categories. These areas are:

(a) Reactive maintenance

The repair of components upon failure. These works, which are revenue funded, comprise of day-to-day responsive repairs and normal repairs prior to reletting void properties.

(b) Cyclical (or planned) maintenance

These are maintenance works that are carried out as routine preventative maintenance. The works are carried out on regular predictable cycles for servicing of equipment and inspection and testing required by regulations e.g. heating systems, asbestos, storage water treatment, lifts, door entry systems, fire fighting equipment, etc. Other planned cyclical works include external and internal redecorations.

6 ***Roles and responsibilities***

Following approval by the YHN Property Committee the Director of Tenancy Services will have responsibility for the implementation of this Strategy.

The Action Plan in Appendix A details the actions to be undertaken for the year ahead and identifies the services responsible for their delivery. Every six months Lead Officers will provide an update on progress, which will be reported to the YHN Management Team and Property Committee.

7 ***Consultation***

Pro-actively involving customers in shaping the repairs and maintenance services, agreeing priorities, service reviews and setting standards are of key importance to the delivery of this strategy.

8 ***Procurement***

Procurement is one of the key contributors to the provision of an effective repairs and maintenance service and, by adopting the Egan Principles; we have embraced Partnership working with in-house and external partners. We will continue to develop these relationships to improve both services for our customers and efficiency gains for the organisation. This strategy is consistent with the principles of YHN's Procurement Strategy.

9 ***Next steps and review***

The priorities for the strategy in 2008/09 are detailed in the action plan in **Appendix A**. The action plan will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect the priorities identified.

1 ***Introduction***

1.1 This Strategy builds on the success of the previous document and sets out our vision and approach to managing the maintenance of its property assets, and to meet the property related Strategic Objectives to provide:

- Three star excellent services
- Refurbishing and building homes

1.2 In essence the Strategy is designed to achieve the delivery of an excellent repairs and maintenance service for tenants and leaseholders, that sees performance in the 'top quartile' as a benchmark 'norm', and enables them to live in well maintained, warm and safe homes that contribute to sustainable communities.

1.3 In developing this Strategy account has been taken of the need to comply with all statutory requirements, most notably Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and subsequent Housing Acts, and:

- YHN 2008/9 Delivery Plan
- YHN Asset Management Strategy (currently under review)
- YHN Void Management Strategy
- YHN Procurement Strategy
- 2006 Housing Strategy 'Homes for a Sustainable Future'
- Newcastle City Council's 'Newcastle in 2021' Strategy
- Egan Principles on Rethinking Construction
- Decent Homes Investment Strategies
- Achievement of the most appropriate balance of responsive and planned works
- Inclusion of stakeholders into the process at all stages
- DCLG and Audit Commission guidance

2 ***Housing stock***

2.1 Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) manages a housing property portfolio of almost 32,000 homes for tenants and leaseholders at the end of April 2007 comprising of:

2.2 *Rented properties*

Property type	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed & above	Total
Acquired Properties	291	464	460	32	1,247
Multi-storey properties	1,511	2,965	115	0	4,591
Non-Traditional built properties	193	764	1,240	75	2,272
Sheltered Accommodation	869	38	19	0	926
Traditional built properties	3,578	7,489	9,736	636	21,439
	6,442	11,720	11,570	743	30,475

2.3 *Leasehold Properties*

Property type	Property subtype	Total
Bedsit	Mid Rise (3 to 5 Storeys)	3
Bungalow		3
Flat	High Rise (6 Storeys and over)	66
Flat	Low Rise (Up to 2 Storeys)	905
Flat	Mid Rise (3 to 5 Storeys)	261
House		22
Leasehold House		14
Maisonette	High Rise (6 Storeys and over)	11
Maisonette	Low Rise (Up to 2 Storeys)	7
Maisonette	Mid Rise (3 to 5 Storeys)	76
	Total leaseholders at end April 2007	1,368

3 *An excellent repairs and maintenance service*

3.1 We are aware that Repairs and Maintenance is a key function of service delivery and essential to the proper management of our housing stock.

3.2 We have three core objectives underpinning this strategy:

- To provide a prompt, efficient and responsive repairs service that is based upon good practice, is customer focused, quality driven and ensures that meets our statutory repair obligations.
- To plan for the long-term maintenance and investment needs of the housing stock that meets the needs of local communities beyond meeting the Decent Homes targets.
- To engage tenants, leaseholders and users in decisions about the maintenance service.

3.3 We will ensure that we know the condition of the housing stock for which we have repairing obligations, including energy efficiency of the properties, through the use of appropriate survey or inspection methods. We use property attribute and stock condition data to develop long-term 5-30 year plans that reflect the life cycle and sustainability of our housing stock. In particular we have developed programmes to deliver Modern Homes for its residents that meet and exceed the Decent Homes Standard within the required timescales – and continue to deliver homes that people want to live in.

3.4 We have demonstrated value for money and probity in the commissioning and execution of our repair, maintenance and improvement works through the application of our Procurement Strategy.

3.5 We involve tenants in comprehensive reviews and development of service standards, which will set out the objectives, type and level of service(s) to be provided – and performance plans that set out targets for performance. Tenants and leaseholders are currently involved through the Repairs Development Group, mystery shopping, service user workshops and the YHN / Citybuild Partnering Group.

Responsive repairs, including voids, gas servicing and other works

3.6 In 2005/6 we undertook a major procurement exercise to procure a comprehensive 5 year contract to deliver Responsive Repairs, Voids and Minor Works, with an option to extend by a further five years. This contract, which also includes Gas Servicing and Maintenance, was subject of an EU Procurement Directive and advertised in the appropriate press. Following a long and detailed procurement procedure the contract was awarded in its entirety to Citybuild, Newcastle City Council's direct works organisation.

3.7 Tenants and leaseholders were fully involved in all aspects of the procurement. A Panel was established early and, in conjunction with

Newcastle Tenants Federation, the Panel looked at:

- Specification design and quality method statements
- Scoring Contractors' tender submissions
- Site visits and contractor interviews

3.8 The contract is a Term Partnering Contract under TPC 2005 form of contract and covers three area and one city wide contract for the following works:

Area contracts

- Responsive repairs
- Voids
- Gas servicing and maintenance
- Smoke alarms
- Electrical safety checks
- Minor works

City wide contract

- Repairs Reporting Centre
- Door Entry and CCTV
- Fire Alarms
- Lightning conductors
- Intruder Alarms
- Communal Gas Boiler Servicing

3.9 The delivery of a repairs and maintenance service to comply with a wide range of specification and performance indicators within a partnering framework is a considerable learning experience. In order to independently assess the scope for further efficiencies in the delivery of the repairs and maintenance services and to achieve improved value for money, we have commissioned Tribal Consulting with the following remit:

- facilitate, develop and embed partnering principles and methodologies between the parties to the contract, (YHN and Citybuild)
- in consultation with us and Citybuild, identify opportunities to achieve improved efficiencies in service delivery, service development and value for money
- develop an action plan to achieve the foregoing objectives within an agreed timescale

In 2008/09 YHN and Citybuild will review the voids and out of hours elements of the contract.

3.10 In order to provide an excellent repair service, and maximise value for

money in the maintenance of the housing property assets, we employ 'Best Practice' by using the most appropriate process to the type and urgency of the work involved. These processes, which are based on nationally recognised practices, are:-

(a) Reactive Maintenance

Reactive maintenance is the repair of components upon failure. Repair may have to take place immediately (emergency) or almost immediately (urgent) in order that properties continue to function effectively and safely. The level of maintenance during any period may be influenced by such factors as adverse weather conditions, level of planned maintenance or improvement being undertaken and the condition of the property.

These are works that by their very nature cannot be foreseen and, due to the fact that they must be dealt with relatively quickly, they cannot be aggregated into a larger scheme with longer timescales. These works comprise of day-to-day responsive repairs and normal repairs prior to reletting void properties.

(b) Cyclical (or Planned) Maintenance

These are maintenance works that are carried out as routine preventative maintenance to replace components before they deteriorate to a critical level. These works are carried out on regular predictable cycles for servicing of equipment and inspection and testing required by regulations e.g. heating systems, lifts, door entry systems, asbestos, storage water treatment, etc. Other planned cyclical works include external and internal redecorations.

- 3.11 We are committed to reduce the level of reactive maintenance carried out through more effective programmed and planned maintenance works. A ratio of planned to reactive maintenance expenditure in the order of 60/40 is considered to be 'good practice' and YHN aim to achieve that ratio. Currently the split is around 50/50. During 2008/09 we will review the approach to planned maintenance in partnership with tenants and Citybuild.

4 Equality and diversity

- 4.1 We are committed to equality and diversity and ensure we treat our customers with respect. In Newcastle there is a growing diversity of lifestyles, cultures, languages and ethnicity and we recognise that being able to understand everyone's needs will help us perform our duties in a manner that is sensitive and appropriate.
- 4.2 We are aware services should be tailored to meet diverse needs and that a 'one size fits all' approach to a Repairs and Maintenance service is not appropriate. Many of our tenants may be vulnerable through age, state of health or personal circumstances – other residents have language and cultural differences and needs. In addition we acknowledge the importance

of delivering services that take account of individual diversity and equality of opportunity – this is particularly important in responsive maintenance as it is the service most frequently used by all residents.

- 4.3 We will ensure that all repairs and maintenance activities required to deliver the objectives of the YHN Delivery Plan, Asset Management Strategy, and this Strategy, will comply with the organisation’s Equality and Diversity Policy framework and will meet all Legislated or Regulatory requirements.
- 4.4 We make Citybuild aware, where known, of the individual needs of tenants regarding access for repairs work, for example where the resident may have hearing or mobility problems when answering the door bell or certain cultural protocols are required before an operative can enter a home. We have developed a vulnerability flag on It systems to highlight instances where operatives need to be aware of an individual’s needs.
- 4.5 We ensure the equal provision of access to services for all its residents by providing whatever assistance and services may be required to achieve that objective. This includes
- Equality and diversity training for all YHN staff
 - Ensuring YHN contractors and partners have received awareness training in equality and diversity
 - Providing access to repairs through local rate phone repair reporting, National interpretation services, large print and Braille documents and leaflets, level access to Housing offices, good signage, etc
 - Working with Citybuild to ensure that its recruitment and retention policies promote movement to a representative workforce.

5 *Repair IT system*

- 5.1 Citybuild employ Repair IT system for delivering all of their services. The system also includes the Gas servicing and maintenance records.
- 5.2 We recognises the need for the property database to seamlessly integrate with all the Citybuild Repairs IT system to ensure the best use of IT systems and deliver high quality management and performance data. YHN is aware that links between the systems need to be developed to enable greater effectiveness and efficient working.
- 5.3 Proposals to deliver this integration of the systems is included in the Action Plan attached as **Appendix A**.

6 *Reactive maintenance*

Day-to-Day Reactive Repairs

- 6.1 We aim to provide an excellent reactive repair service that delivers ‘top quartile’ performance standards, is responsive to customers needs and enables them to live safely in their homes.
- 6.2 In conjunction with tenants and leaseholders we have developed and published Service Standards so that all responsive repairs service users are clear about the level of service they can expect to receive from us. The Service Standards include:
- How, when and where residents can report repairs
 - Details of access arrangements including appointments
 - Categories and prioritisation of repairs with timescales for completion of works
 - Repairs receipts acknowledging the repairs reported by residents

A copy of the Service Standards is attached as **Appendix B**.

- 6.3 We will
- Review all Service Standards every two years, and will involve service users in this process
 - Publish the service standards through the use of leaflets in Community Housing Offices and in other appropriate YHN offices. We will also publish them on the YHN website, www.yhn.org.uk
 - Monitor all Service Standards and publish the results of the monitoring in ‘Homes and People’ newsletters produced quarterly for all tenants and leaseholders, and in reports to Area Boards.
 - Meet all our legal obligations as a Landlord and those required under the Right to Repair legislation.

Reactive Repairs Priorities

- 6.4 YHN has determined, in consultation with tenant representatives, a set of seven priorities of reactive repair, each having its own timescale target. These priorities are included in the published service standards in **Appendix B** - an example and targets for each priority are listed below:

Out-of Hours Emergency – 2 hour

- Repairs that need to be done quickly to remove any immediate danger or serious discomfort to the occupants, or excessive damage to a property e.g. significant structural damage from collision or severe weather, total loss of power, burst pipes, severe sewage leak, etc.

Emergency – during normal working hours – 4 hours

- Repairs in this category are the same as in the out-of-hours emergency above but they will be expected to be made safe and completed during the same visit wherever possible.

Urgent – 1 working day

- These are repairs that can seriously affect the comfort of the tenant or cause potential damage to the property and are defined as 1 day repairs in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions.

Urgent – 3 working days

- These are repairs defined as 3 day repairs in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions.

Rapid Response Repairs – 5 working days

- These repairs are non-emergency or non-urgent routine repairs, which do not seriously interfere with the comfort and convenience of the occupants.

7 Day Repairs

- These are repairs defined as 7 day repairs by contract definition or in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions.

Routine Repairs – 20 working days

- These repairs are also repairs that do not seriously affect the comfort of the occupants or cause potential damage to the property. These works generally involve significant amounts of material or special order materials.

6.5 We aim to ensure value for money when providing the repairs and maintenance service by regularly reviewing the repairs categories and priorities and by ensuring that only repairs that meet the above criteria for inclusion in a reactive service are carried out in this way. To meet this objective, repairs reported by tenants that are not identified and prioritised as emergency, or urgent, but are of a routine nature that can be included in longer term programmes of work. Examples include fencing upgrading / improvements, which will be included in such programmes with customers informed of the likely dates for the works to be carried out.

Rechargeable repairs

6.6 We have published a list of repairs, which were developed in consultation with tenants' representatives, that are the responsibility of the tenant. These are included in the Tenancy Agreement, Tenants Handbook and in the repairs booklet 'A guide for tenants'.

6.7 We enforce the policy of recharging tenants for the cost of carrying out any repairs that are not attributable to fair wear and tear, as indicated in the Tenancy Agreement. In some instances, such as accidental damage or burglary, where it can be proved that severe hardship would result from a tenant being asked to pay for a repair that is their responsibility, our managers will be able to use their discretion to waive the charge for the repair.

Right to Repair Legislation

- 6.8 We meet our obligations under the Right to Repair Legislation by carrying out the identified qualifying repairs within the required timescales and pay compensation to the tenants should we fail to meet our obligations.
- 6.9 Citybuild will notify tenants at the time of reporting a repair whether or not the repair being reported is a 'Qualifying Repair' as well as the maximum period in working days for completion from the date of notification or inspection and their rights to instruct an approved contractor if the repair is not started on time.
- 6.10 We publicise details of the Right to Repair Legislation through the YHN website, tenants handbook and the booklet 'A guide for tenants'.

7 Repairs to Void Properties

- 7.1 We updated our Void Management Strategy during 2007/08. It aims to deliver an efficient 'value for money' void management service that minimises the length of time a property is empty and assist meet housing need from applicants as quickly as possible. It will also maximise the rental income by reducing rent loss.
- 7.2 In order to achieve the above aims we will ensure that:
- Pre-termination inspections are undertaken to identify to the outgoing tenant their obligations and details of any rechargeable repairs considered necessary. The tenant is given an opportunity to carry out such identified works prior to leaving the property.
 - All void properties are repaired to an agreed Property Standard prior to being relet to new tenants that ensure the property is clean, safe and in good repair. A copy of the Property Standard is attached as **Appendix C**
 - The agreed Property Standard is reviewed with tenant representatives and provided to all new and prospective tenants
 - Safety checks for gas are carried out prior to reletting and provide copies of the Safety Certificate to new tenants
 - Appropriate Decent Homes improvement works are carried out.
 - Measures to address long-term void properties are identified and implemented
 - Key Performance Indicators that measure Citybuild and our performance are implemented and can be benchmarked against 3 star organisations.
 - We are learning from 'Best Practice' in void management and set 'challenging' completion targets for the turnover of void properties
- 7.3 Void property management performance is reported to the YHN Management Team, YHN Property Committee, Board and Area Boards.

8 Cyclical (or planned) maintenance

8.1 Cyclical maintenance is the collective name for works required of a preventative nature that YHN plans in advance and repeats on a cyclical basis. This is done to prevent the premature breakdown of time sensitive components and meet regulatory and legal duties. Examples of this are:

- Safety checks and servicing of gas heating systems
- Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide detectors
- Servicing of lifts, electrical installations and appliances, door entry systems, fire fighting equipment, etc.
- Water testing and treatment
- Asbestos Management
- External and internal redecorations

Gas safety checks and servicing

8.2 We recognise our duty to ensure that all gas appliances, flues and gas pipe work installed in the City Council's Housing properties managed by YHN are annually serviced and a gas safety check is carried out - in accordance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, and YHN's duty as a Landlord under Section 7(a) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

8.3 In order to achieve this we have developed and published a Gas Servicing and Maintenance Policy which is attached as **Appendix D**.

Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors

8.4 We aim to protect our tenants by providing smoke detectors in their homes to give audible warning of a fire situation. To ensure the continuous safe operation of these alarms we have included a programme of annual maintenance in the Responsive Repairs contract.

8.5 Following discussion with the Fire Service in 2007/08 we implemented a prioritised programme of installing Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors in properties commencing with high rise properties. This will be extended to bungalows designated for specific groups in 2008/09 and offered to the remainder of tenants with a gas supply in 2009/10.

Lifts, electrical installations and appliances, door entry systems, fire fighting equipment, etc

8.6 We have contractual arrangements in place for the annual safety checks, and regular servicing and maintenance of all YHN owned electrical appliances, mechanical and electrical equipment and associated materials and equipment in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations. We also have contracts in place for the specialist regular testing, servicing

and repair as necessary of all fire fighting equipment, intruder and fire alarms, etc. where installed in YHN properties, including communal schemes and office premises.

- 8.7 We regularly review our electrical and mechanical installations and equipment to ensure that it is meeting the required legal standards and meeting customers' requirements.

Water treatment

- 8.8 We have a duty regarding the operation of the Health & Safety Executive's Approved Code of Practice for the Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems (L8). We developed and implemented a policy and procedures for the managerial control of Legionella precautions and for enlisting competent technical advice, thereby complying with our legal responsibilities to control Legionella bacteria within water systems in buildings under YHN's control. We also have appropriate contracts in place for the specialist regular tests and treatment of water storage cisterns and systems, in accordance with 'best practice' and specialist advice, to prevent Legionella bacteria developing.

- 8.9 Records of the testing and treatment of water systems are maintained at a central point and copies are left with the Managers of the respective buildings where water storage systems are installed.

Asbestos

- 8.10 We recognise our responsibilities under The Control of Asbestos (CA) Regulations 2006 and have published and implemented our Asbestos Policy and Management Plan. The policy and procedures will reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable, any exposure of staff members and any other persons who will potentially be exposed to Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) within YHN properties and Council dwellings. The Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to meet the current legislation and 'best practice'.

- 8.11 The aims and objectives of the Asbestos Policy are to:

- Carry out surveys to identify ACM's in all Council Dwellings and related assets
- Identify, record and assess the health risks from ACM's through surveys by fully trained and competent persons
- Compile and maintain a comprehensive asbestos register database
- Remove, or suitably treat and make safe, any ACM's found to be in a condition where asbestos fibres could be released into the atmosphere
- Regularly monitor ACM's left in place in common parts of premises in order to ensure that they continue to remain in a safe condition. This approach accords with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

- Control all building repair, maintenance and improvement work so that either ACM's are not disturbed or, if they are disturbed, that this work is done in a strictly controlled manner which does not pose health risks to persons carrying out the work, or to other occupants or customers of the building. Also to ensure that where ACM's are to be worked on that affect persons within the building, occupants are kept fully informed of the control measures in place
 - Ensure that all appropriate YHN managers and officers are clear on their roles and responsibilities for the implementation of this policy
 - Ensure that Citybuild understand and implement this policy
 - Provide customers with information regarding the possible locations of asbestos within their property. In 2007 a leaflet was delivered to all tenants that highlights areas in a property where asbestos may be found. The leaflet has been given to all new tenants since the original delivery.
 - Ensure that the procedures and arrangements put in place are carried out.
- 8.12 In order to ensure that the Asbestos Register contains details of all YHN properties, a programme of property surveys is in progress for completion by 2012, with all survey recommendations for communal areas being completed in each year period.
- 8.13 YHN and Citybuild have completed computer development work to ensure that details of the presence of asbestos identified in properties is 'Flagged' up on the works orders provided to operatives.
- 8.14 The YHN Risk and Safety Manager provides in-house training to YHN Technical Officers and managers who have responsibility for premises. They have also given general briefings to area based staff. The training courses include raising asbestos awareness, identifying where this could be found and in what materials and highlighting the hazards. In addition it covers the legislation related to this area and the role that relevant officers have to play in relation to the Asbestos Policy and Code of Practices.

External and internal redecorations

- 8.15 YHN has a programme for the regular inspection of the external redecoration of every property, any repairs necessary prior to painting are identified and properties are redecorated.
- 8.16 Details of the external redecoration programme are published for tenants on the YHN website.
- 8.17 All tenants affected by the annual programme will be informed about the proposed works and given a choice of colours; they will also be invited to comment on the YHN and contractor's performance following completion of the works.

- 8.18 Internal decoration to domestic properties is a tenants responsibility but YHN inspect all internal communal and common areas on a regular basis and include any works, dependant on need, in the cyclical programme.

9 *Programmed maintenance*

- 9.1 As part of our commitment to move from reactive to more planned maintenance, the Repairs and Maintenance Contract, which came into effect on 1 June 2006, included a category of programmed maintenance repairs that are reported by tenants but completed on a batch and area basis. These works include:

- Fencing and gates
- Gutters and Rainwater goods
- Brickwork and concreting, including paths

We have implemented a programme of the above Planned Reported Maintenance in each of the three management areas on a maximum 3 month cycle.

- 9.2 We have allocated a significant budget to this planned work and believe this will make a noticeable difference to the local environment. This programme will assist the move to completing more repairs on a planned basis whilst also enabling efficiency gains to be delivered.
- 9.3 In partnership with Citybuild we are currently investigating the potential to introduce a 'House MOT' in all tenant's home. This would involve a planned visit to properties to check and repair or replace as necessary a range of components.
- 9.4 In delivering the planned programmes we have identified the need to develop policies to cover these works and ensure consistency of message for the residents and delivery of the service. The development of a Fencing Policy that meets the needs for a YHN standard but also complies with any local planning or special requirements has been included in the attached Action Plan.

10 *Services for leaseholders*

- 10.1 We aim to meet our legal obligations to all leaseholders by providing an efficient and effective repair and maintenance service for those repairs that are our responsibility.
- 10.2 We notify all leaseholders of any and all proposed future works identified as necessary for their properties in compliance with Section 20 procedures under the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002. We consult with leaseholders over the projected cost of work where applicable and also consult leaseholders over the procurement of contractors and qualifying long term agreements where applicable. This will give leaseholders the

opportunity to comment at each stage of the procurement process.

- 10.3 Leaseholders may be required to pay estimated sums in advance within their annual service charge for cyclical and/or programmed works. The leaseholders account will then be adjusted accordingly at the end of the financial year. Leaseholders will also be required to pay a service charge for works undertaken to their individual property, block and/or common areas for items such as general cleaning, window cleaning and grounds maintenance.
- 10.4 We have agreed to offer leaseholders the opportunity to buy in to a range of services not covered under the general lease, including gas servicing and general internal repairs. This is an agreement set up with our contractor Citybuild where the work is recharged directly to the leaseholders via a private arrangement and is due to be implemented during 2008/09.
- 10.5 We have established formal consultation methods with leaseholder groups and individuals and regularly survey leaseholders to assess their satisfaction with the services provided. These satisfaction results are then fed back to leaseholders via an annual report which details how the service has been developed accordingly.

11 *Efficiency, value for money and procurement*

Efficiency and value for money

- 11.1 We are committed to providing excellent services for our customers and recognises the pivotal role that efficiency and value for money play. Value for money means that we can obtain better services for our customers, more choices and ensure that needs and priorities can be met. Since our establishment in 2004 YHN has been focussing on ensuring the provision of value for money services and, through that success to date, have been able to reinvest savings to improve existing services and develop new services to ensure the priorities of customers are fully met.
- 11.2 We have published an Efficiency Strategy designed to provide high quality services in a cost effective manner which will help to deliver better homes, better services and better neighbourhoods.
- The strategy will be reviewed annually and translated into an action plan for the year ahead. Actions identified that relate to the Repairs and Maintenance Services are included in the 2008/09 Action Plan.
- 11.3 We have developed and implemented a number of initiatives to help deliver value for money in repair and maintenance services. They include:
- Reducing the level of expenditure on emergency and urgent orders
 - Increasing the use of planned programmes of work
 - Utilising better continuous improvement performance indicators

- Ensuing better communication of estate management and technical staff to ensure communal repairs are completed in the most efficient manner
- Developing the specification for undertaking repair and improvement work that takes full account of environmental aspirations and maximises the opportunities for standardisation and the use of new and innovative materials, whilst providing excellent value for money

Procurement

- 11.4 We recognise that the efficient delivery of excellent repairs and maintenance services requires the adoption of 'best practice' procurement practices that comply with National and European procurement legislation.
- 11.5 The key aims of the YHN Procurement Strategy are to:
- Support the delivery of the YHN Business Plan
 - Ensure that procurement planning reflects YHN's vision, core values and corporate aims and objectives
 - Secure commitment to effective procurement from Board Members and officers at all levels throughout the organisation
 - Promote a thorough understanding of the markets in which YHN operates at Board Member and senior officer level
 - Ensure that YHN's responsibility to secure equalities throughout is addressed
 - Co-ordinate procurement activity to help achieve optimum resource allocation whilst avoiding duplication of effort
 - Map out the way forward on reforming and continuously improving the procurement function
 - Facilitate programming and assignment of budgets, tasks and targets to meet the key procurement objectives identified
 - Encourage long-term thinking and commitment to procurement issues
 - Identify and promote the benefits of procurement
- 11.6 We will continue to work with Citybuild to identify, investigate and maximise opportunities to obtain increased efficiencies in procurement including the use of Supply Chain Partners, and national and regional procurement clubs, such as Procurement for Housing, Procurement for All, North East Procurement, etc.

12 Performance management and quality control

Key Performance Indicators

- 12.1 The repair, maintenance and improvement activities and contracts contain contract delivery specifications, driven by continuous improvement, and

key performance indicators for measuring the performance of the service and contractors. These indicators include local indicators developed in conjunction with customers together with the nationally prescribed set of Best Value Performance Indicators.

12.2 YHN carry out regular monitoring of all key performance indicators is embedded in all repairs, maintenance and improvement services and that the results are regularly and systematically reported to YHN Property Committee, Area Boards and the Board. Performance has improved during 2007/08 and Citybuild are expected to achieve almost all of their targets.

12.3 Key Performance Indicators include:

- Completion of Reactive repairs priorities within required timescales – commencing from the date the repair was reported
- Percentage of repairs completed on first visit
- Percentage of Repairs Appointments made and kept
- Overall average repair times
- Percentage of Tenant satisfaction with the repairs service
- Void turn around times – at each stage
- Void Repair costs
- Ratio of Reactive to Planned Maintenance
- Gas heating systems serviced within 12 month anniversary
- Number of additional properties meeting the Decent Homes Standard

12.4 Citybuild's performance during 2007/08 has been good however we are jointly conducting a review of the performance indicators to ensure that they reflect tenants' priorities, national best practice and are challenging. Consultation on a new set of indicators has commenced with the Tenants Federation and it is expected that the new indicators will be in place for the second quarter of 2008/09.

Quality control inspections

12.5 We have quality control procedures and processes in place to monitor the performance of contractors employed, workmanship and materials, and ensure value for money and customer satisfaction with the services provided. They currently include:

- 10% Post-inspection of Reactive Repairs
- 100% post-inspection of Void property repairs at handover
- 10% audit of all Gas servicing and repairs
- 100% post-inspection of all external redecoration works

12.6 Where possible we use internal staffing resources to undertake quality

checks and ensure that 'continuous improvement' quality standards are included in all contracts. At present the post inspection of reactive repairs is based on a 5% random sample of completed repairs and a 5% targeted sample. Analysis of the random sample approach has shown that it is not cost effective to continue this practice. The staff costs involved are greater than the amount reclaimed from Citybuild. We are therefore ceasing this practice and centralising the post inspection function within the quality and scrutiny team. We are redirecting resources from the area based Technical and Maintenance team to enable the centrally based team to carry out this work.

On specialist contracts such as lift maintenance, water testing and treatment YHN employ specialist audit companies to carry out quality checks on our behalf.

Customer satisfaction

12.7 We are keen to obtain as much customer feedback as possible to assess the quality and effectiveness of services provided. We invite Tenant Satisfaction feedback on all works to their homes through the use of a variety of media and methods, including:

- Satisfaction Cards
- Telephone surveys
- Service user groups
- Mystery shopping

12.8 We have recently incentivised the return of satisfaction cards in an aim to increase the amount of feedback from this method. We report customer satisfaction results to YHN Property Committee, Tenants Representative Groups, Area Boards and the Board. The performance will also be published in Tenants Newsletters and Local Housing Officers at regular intervals.

12.9 The results of the quality inspection carried out by YHN and specialist companies together with Tenants' Satisfaction will be used to assess the performance of Citybuild and will be used as a key consideration in the award of future contracts.

13 *Customer consultation and involvement*

13.1 We are committed to high quality customer consultation and involvement and to this end developed a Tenant Compact which set out the framework for tenant involvement. This Strategy was the result of widespread and long-standing consultation with tenants. Over the years YHN tenants have emphasised that the repairs and maintenance service is of high importance to them and consistently features in their highest priorities. This Strategy has resulted in many initiatives over recent years, including:

- Establishment of the Tenants Repairs Development Group

- A Tenants Investment Forum
 - Status Surveys
 - Exit and new tenant surveys
 - Involvement in Best Value Service Reviews of repairs and maintenance, Planned Investment programmes and other services
 - Mystery shopping by tenants
- 13.2 The Tenants Federation Repairs Development Group has been closely involved with YHN Officers in service development and in monitoring performance. This forum will continue to play a part in developing the repairs and maintenance service and in monitoring the outcomes from the action plan activities, particularly in relation to the working with customers actions.
- 13.3 Customer consultation and involvement are an integral part of the management and delivery of repairs and maintenance. This takes place at both operational and strategic level. We will continue to pro-actively seek representational involvement of tenants and leaseholders through a variety of methods to provide the following:
- Views of the repairs, maintenance and improvement services from a resident's perspective
 - Shaping policy review work on maintenance and investment
 - Contributing to procurement processes
 - Recommending and agreeing standards of service for repairs and maintenance
 - Monitoring performance and continuous improvement activity,
- 13.4 The more specific areas that we want residents to be continually and pro-actively involved include:
- Reviewing the Lettable Standard for Void Properties
 - Considering any proposals for changes in Repairs Priorities, Tenants Repair Responsibilities, Appointment system, etc.
 - Specification of material choices for residents
 - Selection of contractors
 - Reviewing and setting Key Performance Targets for repairs appointments and repairs completed on first visit
- YHN will review the effectiveness of its current approach to involvement in relation to the repairs service in 2008/09.

Appendix A: Repairs and maintenance strategy – action plan 2008-09

	Objective	Actions	Responsibility
1.	Productive partnership working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint business plan with Citybuild • Review the voids service with Citybuild • Review the out of hours service • Hold four formal review sessions with Citybuild during the year • Implement open book across all areas of the repairs and maintenance contracts • Complete review of the Technical and Maintenance structure • Implement targeted post inspection regime that focuses on high cost and high volume areas of activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance • YHN Technical and Maintenance
2.	Continuous improvement and top quartile as the norm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete review of existing performance indicators • Agree new indicators that include gas servicing, customer satisfaction in relation to the repairs centre and a measure to monitor errors in assessing work and booking off completed repairs • Complete relevant recommendations arising from the Audit Commission inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild
3.	Planned maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review fencing policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce handyman pilot scheme • Install carbon monoxide detectors in designated properties • Transfer ownership of gas servicing programme data to YHN • Conclude review of House MoT schemes and produce a business case for service in YHN managed properties 	<p>Maintenance / Citybuild</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and Maintenance • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild
4.	Working with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review overall approach to customer involvement in delivery and development of repairs service • Produce programme of activity for the year • Publicise performance to customers in Homes + People newsletter • Respond positively to issues raised by tenants mystery shopping of voids and general repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and Maintenance, Tenant Involvement, Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance, Tenant Involvement, Citybuild • YHN Technical and Maintenance, Communications Team • YHN Technical and Maintenance / Citybuild
5.	Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete diagnosis of repairs to reduce the number of repairs per property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YHN Technical and Maintenance, Business Strategy

Appendix B: responsive repairs – service standards

YHN has produced a set of Service Standards for Responsive Repairs so that every tenant is clear about the level of service they can expect to receive.

- YHN will review the Service Standards every two years and involve service users in this process.
- YHN will monitor all service standards and publish the results of its monitoring in 'Homes & People' and on the YHN website.

SERVICE STANDARDS

How to report repairs

- Enable tenants to report repairs through a dedicated local rate telephone number 0845-113-8888 that is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
- Enable tenants to report repairs in person at Local Housing Offices, via Customer Service Centres or by advising any member of staff
- Enable tenants to report repairs via the YHN website by e-mail or by using the online reporting form supported by online diagnostics software to enable the tenant to report the repair quickly and accurately
- Publicise its repair reporting procedure, including 'out-of-hours' emergency repairs service in the Local Housing Offices, Tenants' Handbook, tenants' newsletters and information leaflets
- Ensure arrangements are in place to enable tenants who are vulnerable, disabled or do not have English as a first language to report repairs through a variety of methods, e.g. language line interpreters, Braille, audio, plain English documents, etc.
- Publicise widely the repairs that are the tenant's responsibility but, if requested, will carry out those works at a cost and recharge to the tenant
- Ensure that all staff receiving repairs calls at the Call Centre are appropriately trained and also have the benefit of diagnostics software to identify and prioritise the repair
- Prioritise repairs according to the urgency of the problem and after taking into account the vulnerability of the residents
- Advise all tenants of the appropriate Priority for their repair and when they can expect it to be completed.

Repairs priorities

YHN has a set of six priorities of reactive repair each having its own timescale target. Example and targets for each priority are listed below:

- **Out-of Hours Emergency – 2 hour**

Repairs in this category are those that need to be done quickly to remove any danger or serious discomfort to the occupants, or excessive damage to a property e.g. significant structural damage from collision or severe weather, total loss of power, burst pipes, severe sewage leak, etc. Essential work to make the property safe will be carried out within 2 hours of reporting with any necessary follow up work completed within 24 hours (although in the case of certain emergencies it may not always be possible to carry out a full repair within 24 hours – such as parts not being readily available).

YHN will only carry out repairs in this priority that cannot be left until the next working day.

- **Emergency – during normal working hours – 4 hours**

Repairs in this category are the same as in the out-of-hours emergency above but they will be expected to be made safe and completed during the same visit wherever possible.

- **Urgent – 1 working day**

These are repairs that can seriously affect the comfort of the tenant or cause potential damage to the property and are defined as 1 day repairs in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions

- **Urgent – 3 working days**

These are repairs defined as 3 day repairs in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions

- **Rapid Response Repairs – 5 working days**

These repairs are non-emergency or non-urgent Routine repairs, which do not seriously interfere with the comfort and convenience of the occupants and are generally of smaller value that can be completed on first visit and do not require special order materials, etc.

Rapid response repairs will be arranged by mutually convenient appointment with the tenant and completed within the 5 day time period.

- **7 Day Jobs**

These are repairs defined as 7 day repairs by contract definition or in the qualifying schedule of the Right to Repair Legislation provisions.

- **Routine Repairs – 20 working days**

These repairs are also repairs that do not seriously affect the comfort of the occupants or cause potential damage to the property. These works generally involve significant amounts of material or special order materials and will also be carried out on mutually agreed appointment dates/times.

Access arrangements

- Arrange for an inspection of some reported repairs before the repair can be ordered through convenient and flexible appointment arrangements
- Arrange appointments for all Urgent and Routine priority repairs by offering

flexible appointment slots that can accommodate the tenant's working and/or family commitments and arrangements

- Meet 100% of the agreed appointments but, if YHN have to cancel the appointment for any reason, YHN will advise the tenant in writing or by telephone offering another convenient date and time. However if the tenant is not at home, or access cannot be gained, a card will be left asking the tenant to contact YHN using the local rate phone number to make suitable revised access arrangements
- Endeavour to complete all works 'At First Visit' by carrying, as far as possible, imprest stocks of materials in all responsive repair team vehicles
- Take legal action where necessary, in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement, to gain access to a property to ensure the safety of the occupants and the property, e.g. to carry out safety checks to gas installations
- Recognise that customers have diverse and unique requirements. YHN will endeavour to recognise and accommodate these requirements when they are attempting to access the repairs service
- Take any necessary urgent action to gain access to a property to undertake an emergency repair or make a situation safe whilst the tenant is not at home. In these circumstances, access will be forced and property left secure and an explanation will be left at the property explaining our actions
- Ensure that all workers visiting tenant's homes carry identification, have the skills necessary to undertake the repair using good quality materials and carry out all works in tenants homes in accordance with an agreed and published 'Code of Conduct' that tenants and YHN staff have been involved in designing

Repairs receipts

Following the reporting of a repair and the placing of an order for the necessary works YHN will advise the tenant in writing of the:

- Order Number
- Description of repair
- Priority and timescale for completion
- Contact number of the contractor
- Details of the appointment date/time, where applicable

Appendix C: Void Lettable Standard

It is important to YHN that all of the properties we let across the city are of a good standard, safe, clean and in good condition for a new tenant to move into.

Safe

YHN will make sure that, amongst other repairs, the property has no:

- Bare wires or damaged electrical fittings
- Missing flooring, floor tiles or floor treads on stairs
- Insecure doors
- Missing or damaged handrails
- Missing or damaged glazing
- Damaged gas and electrical appliances
- Missing fencing

YHN will check the safety of gas and electrical installations, and provide the new tenant with a copy of the gas safety check report.

Clean

YHN will clean the property before a new tenant moves in, including:

- Clean kitchen units, toilets, baths and wash basins
- Wash down all paintwork and clean the inside of all windows
- Clean the outside windows in low-rise properties (two-storey blocks of flats)
- Clear all rubbish from the house and garden, including any rubbish from building work
- Clear all rubbish from outbuildings and shared areas
- Put air fresheners in the house
- Clean and disinfect all baths, toilets, wash basins and sinks

Good condition

YHN will complete all repairs needed to bring the property up to a good standard, including:

- Doors and windows are not damaged and will open and close correctly
- Kitchen units and worktops are in good condition
- Flooring and floor coverings are in good condition
- Toilets are not damaged or cracked and are flushing correctly
- Baths are not cracked and work properly

- We will complete any major plaster repairs
- Complete work that is needed following gas, electric and central heating inspections that find problems

Decoration

YHN recognises that in some cases it will be necessary for new tenants to redecorate some rooms in their new homes so we will provide decorating vouchers to enable them to buy decorating materials.

YHN will also refer new tenants to an advice and support worker who may be able to assist them to access more help, depending on their individual circumstances.

Appendix D: Gas servicing and maintenance policy

Your Homes Newcastle, (YHN), recognises its duty to ensure that all gas appliances, flues and gas pipe work installed in the City Council's Housing properties managed by YHN are annually serviced and a gas safety check is carried out - in accordance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, and YHN's duty as a Landlord under Section 7(a) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. In order to achieve this YHN will:-

- Ensure that a Senior Manager is responsible at all times for the overall delivery of the Council's Gas Servicing and Maintenance responsibilities
- Maintain all gas appliances that are YHN's responsibility, in safe working order and in accordance with the respective manufacturer's instructions. A property database will be maintained clearly detailing the gas appliances installed in each property, servicing history, date next service is due, access records and timescales
- Take all reasonable steps to gain access to properties to carry out safety checks and servicing including the use of 'best practice' alert programmers, warning notices, door stickers, Court Injunctions and Access Warrants where necessary, and will maintain records to demonstrate the actions it has taken to meet its responsibilities
- Cap off the gas service to all void properties and reinstate following completion of a new safety test and CP12 Certificate upon the commencement of a new tenancy
- Treat all mutual exchanges as new tenancies under Regulation 36 of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and will carry out a new safety test and CP12 Certificate upon the commencement of a new tenancy
- Ensure that the requirement to gain annual access to properties for the purpose of carrying out the annual gas safety check will be written into Tenancy Agreements
- Regularly publicise the importance of gas safety to tenants and staff through various methods of communication including the website, articles in tenant newsletters, posters in Community and Housing offices, etc.
- Make the necessary contract procurement and award arrangements to ensure that all works to gas appliances and fittings are carried out by competent and suitably qualified companies who are CORGI registered and their engineers have all passed the appropriate ACS Course.
- Proactively engage customers to ensure that they have an opportunity to comment on and contribute to the future direction of the gas servicing and maintenance service
- Ensure that procedures are in place to deliver these objectives and will regularly review these procedures to ensure that they continue to meet current Gas Regulations and 'Best Practice'
- Fulfil its commitment to equality and diversity while delivering the gas servicing

and maintenance service for tenants

- At all stages through YHN's responsible Manager for Gas Servicing and Maintenance, ensure that all procedures are being followed in a timely fashion through the use of Management Information Reports, generated from the Repairs IT system, and Key Performance Indicators that demonstrate continuous improvement
- Regularly report performance in delivering these objectives to the Senior Management Team and Your Homes Newcastle Board who will be responsible for ensuring that the Landlord's responsibilities are delivered