



newcastle furniture service

turning tenancies into homes



Newsletter - Issue 3

Summer 2005

This issue includes information on:

- 2004 newsletter feedback
- How we perform
- Child Safety Equipment Scheme
- Supporting Charities
- Working with the community
- Service expansion
- Menu Options
- Complaints and Compliments
- Consultation
- How we spend our money
- Charter Mark
- Audit Commission
- Service Improvements
- Future Developments
- Staff 'Going the extra mile'



Customer Service
excellence

This edition of the Newcastle Furniture Service Newsletter was published in August 2005

For more information on Newcastle Furniture Service or any features in this newsletter please contact

Jason Wylie

Your Homes Newcastle

Newcastle Furniture Service on

Tel – 0191 278 1888

Fax – 0191 278 1884

Minicom – 0191 278 7727

E Mail – furniture.service@yhn.org.uk

www.yhn.org.uk

You can get this information on audio tape, in Braille and in other languages.

If you or anyone you know would like a copy, please call 0191 278 8633.

अगर आपको इस बारे में अपनी भाषा में जानकारी चाहिये तो हम आपकी सहायता के लिये एक दुभाषिये का प्रबन्ध कर सकते हैं।

(Ar)

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় চান তাহলে আমরা আপনাকে সহায়তা করতে একজন সোভায়ীর ব্যবস্থা করতে পারি।

(Be)

如果您需要该信息被翻译成您使用的语言的版本，我们能够提供一个翻译来帮助您。

(Ch)

در صورت احتیاج به این اطلاعات به زبان فارسی، لطفاً برای ترتیب حضور یک مترجم تلفنی با ما تماس حاصل نمایند.

(Fa)

Si vous désirez ces informations dans votre langue, veuillez nous téléphoner pour que nous puissions vous trouver un interprète.

(Fr)

अगर आपको इस बारे में अपनी भाषा में जानकारी चाहिये तो हम आपकी सहायता के लिये एक दुभाषिये का प्रबन्ध कर सकते हैं।

(Hi)

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹਦੇ ਬਾਰੇ ਜੁਹਾੜੀ ਆਖਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਜੁਹਾੜੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਦੁੱਬਾਸ਼ੀਦੇ ਦਾ ਇੰਤਜ਼ਾਮ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

(Pu)

اگر آپ کو اپنی زبان میں یہ معلومات درکار ہیں تو ہم آپ کے لئے ترجمان کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

(Ur)



Welcome to our third newsletter which is especially for people who are customers of Newcastle Furniture Service. This newsletter is to let you know how well the service is working and what we are doing to make improvements to the service.

2004 newsletter feedback

We sent our second newsletter to Approx 5000 of our service users in the summer of last year, 47 customers responded, feedback included;

- 82.98% said they were either satisfied / very satisfied with the service we offered.
- 97.87% said the service newsletter was useful / very useful.
- 84.31% said they would rather we contact you by letter.
- 14.89% said they wanted more furniture options made available.

Overall our performance has improved from the previous year, help us to improve further by completing the feedback form in this edition of our newsletter.

Supporting Charities

In 2003 we set up a partnership with several charities in the local area including – William Moulton Charity, Families First, Newcastle Independence Network and the Learning and Skills Counselling Service.

The purpose of the partnership is to ensure that their clients receive high quality, value for money furniture items. We receive a referral form from the charity and deliver the goods within 5 working days; the charity pays for the furniture that has been requested.

So far we have carried out 170 deliveries supplying £32,714.14 worth of furniture.

Working with the community

In 2003 we set up partnerships with Shaw Trust Employment (An agency that supports people who want to return to work after a long absence) and Key Enterprises (A Mental health workshop).

We have continued to develop our relationship with the community and have been supporting 2 new organisations including; a local Brownie group and have committed ourselves to taking work placements with Connexions, this includes school leavers.

In total we have supported 5 placements over 2 years with 2 gaining full time employment, 2 in search of work and the other still attending school.

More importantly we have built up a partnership with all four organisations and will continue to offer placements in the future.

You said

You wanted more choice.

You wanted more flexible delivery times.

You wanted better quality products.

We did

We introduced the Menu Options in August 2004, this gives customers more choice and flexibility, Menu Options is only available to new customers.

We now offer delivery times on Tuesday evenings between 4pm and 7pm.

We have introduced improved product quality from January 2005.

How we perform

Service performance 2004 / 05

Our service performance last year includes 2384 deliveries with 81% within 5 working days

1215 collections with 84% within 5 working days

Deliveries and collections outside of our service standard were done so at the request of the customer.

We visit all our customers after 8 weeks and ask them several questions about the service we provide:

- 100% say having a furniture pack has helped them to live in their home.
- 88% described the furniture quality as good or better.
- 95% would recommend a furniture pack to a friend.
- 83% were happy with the choice of furniture available.

These surveys have indicated high levels of satisfaction for the furniture service; this has been enhanced by the introduction of the Menu options scheme.

Consultation

We have improved our methods of consultation based upon your suggestions from last years Newsletter; we now carry out several surveys including new customer, 8 week visit, 5 year visit and when you end your tenancy. We also carry out a survey for all customers of the Child Safety Equipment Scheme.

We are planning to carry out estate based consultation as well as have staff available in your local Community Housing Offices from the Autumn of 2005, for further details please observe the notice boards within the Community Housing Offices.

Child Safety Equipment Scheme

As well as providing furniture our service operates a Child Safety Equipment Scheme for families on low income with children aged under 5.

The aim of the scheme is to create a safer home environment for young children and therefore cut down the number of accidents caused in the home.

We supply and fit a Child Safety package that includes fire guards, cupboard locks, door stoppers and smoke alarms. A safety gate is also available to families with children aged under 2. Each year we aim to install 1,200 packages of equipment within 8 weeks of us receiving a request. In 2004/05 we exceeded that target and fitted 1468 packages in total and our average time to fit the equipment was 67 days, in total we fitted 72% of all referrals within 8 weeks.

In 2003 we set up a child safety stakeholder group to discuss the service we give to our clients; this group consist of staff from the service, Health Visitors and Suppliers. The group meets every 6 months.

When we fit your equipment we will ask you to complete a survey form, this helps us to improve our service to you, the outcomes for 2004/05 include –

- 93% rate the scheme as between either Very good or Excellent.
- 95% reported that the fitting was carried out at a time and day convenient to them.
- 98% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall way the fitting was carried out.

If you would like more information about the service please contact your health visitor or us.

Remember – ‘Safety equipment is not a substitute for parental supervision’

In partnership with



‘Working together to make Newcastle’s homes safer for our children’

Charter Mark

On September 16th 2004 we were inspected by a Charter Mark assessor, he assessed our service against 6 Criterion, they are –

- Performing well
- Engaging customers
- Accessible and promote choice
- Developing and improving
- Use resources effectively and imaginatively
- Improve opportunities and the quality of life in communities we serve

This was the final assessment of a process that started over a year previous; the assessor completed a rigorous assessment of our service, recommendation of the Charter Mark standard was made the same day along with 2 areas identified as Best Practice, they are –

1. A pro active approach to customer complaints.
2. In partnership with the Health Authority the provision of child safety equipment, this results in reduced accidents in the home.

The assessor also made several key comments about the service –

- The quality of the application was very good.
- The service is very progressive.
- The impact upon the community by Newcastle Furniture Service is considerable.
- The management of the service is professional and effective, staff are empowered and valued.
- The service performs well and has embraced the ethos of Charter Mark.
- Staff working for the service 'Went the extra mile' when carrying out their duties.

Audit Commission

In November 2004 the Audit Commission carried out an inspection of Your Homes Newcastle, this was to determine the level of service we offer our customers. YHN have subsequently been identified as a 2 star good service with promising prospects for improvement, the inspection identified NFS as a strength of the organisation giving positive practice.'

Audit Commission 2004 – 'The Commission will identify and promote good practice. Every inspection will look for examples of good practice and innovation, and for creative ways to overcome barriers and resistance to change or make better use of resources'.

Furniture project promoting tenancy sustainment

The Newcastle furniture service is playing a positive part in tenancy sustainment. It is the largest furniture service in the country supporting over 5000 part and fully furnished council and housing association homes in Newcastle and the surrounding area. The service has also installed over 1200 child safety packs for households with children under five which it estimates has reduced child accidents by around 30 per cent. Following a Best Value Review and feedback from customers the furniture service has introduced greater choice for customers through a menu-based approach and a clearer pricing structure.

Going the extra mile

Earlier this year when 2 of our delivery staff were carrying out a delivery in the Arthur's Hill area of the City, they noticed smoke coming from a house close to where they were. Immediately they rushed into the property and heard a lady shouting for help, they helped the lady out of the home before the fire got too bad.

The property was so bad, the lady could not move back in to it, she was later taken to hospital and has since made a full recovery.

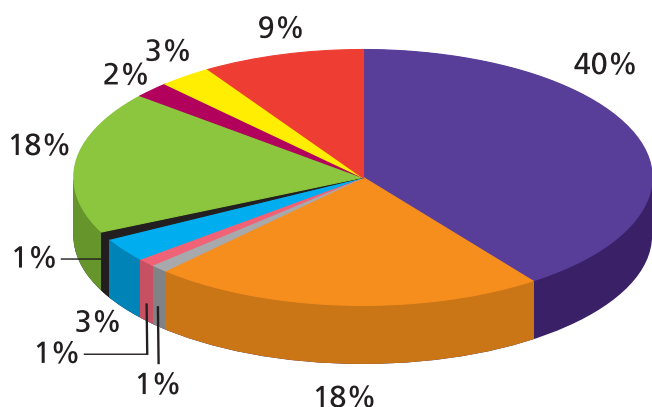
Later the same day we delivered emergency furniture items to the lady in her new property that had been organised through the Community Housing Office at Avison Street.

Again during the recent flash floods in June this year we helped 5 tenants with emergency furniture products after their own were destroyed by the rain.

How we spend our money

The chart below shows you what we spent our money on in 2004 / 05. We spent a total of £1,745,626 on running costs and a further £1,145,191 to buy furniture for our customers.

NFS Service running costs



Capital Expenditure	£1,145,191
Corporate resource pool	£642,730
Supplies and services	£33,250
Repairs/Replacement/Cleaning	£20,000
Van/Skip hire/Fuel	£96,907
Child safety equipment	£32,293
Salaries	£512,970
Neighbourhood services staff	£55,346
Rent /Rates / Gas / Electric	£82,870
Central admin charges	£269,260

Service expansion

Following on from last year's newsletter, I am pleased to announce that we have expanded our staff and vehicles; this will enable us to give all of our customers a better service.

We now employ 31 staff and have 4 - 7.5 tonne vehicles along with 10 smaller vehicles, all of our vehicles run on either LPG or Bio diesel; these fuels protect our environment.

We also have some new contracts; they are Kindstream (supported housing), Teasdale Council and Blyth Valley Housing.

Service Improvements

Following on from last year we have dramatically improved the services available to you! We now offer our new 'Options' type of furniture packages where you can choose from a list of products, this includes choice of colours. This service is only available to new customers of the service.

We have expanded our delivery times to include Tuesday evening deliveries for customers who can not arrange delivery within the standard working day.

Complaints and Compliments

Did you know?

We welcome your complaints and compliments. In 2004/05 we received 1 formal complaint, 0 informal complaints and 11 compliments.

This complaint was regarding the poor quality of service received from the Child Safety Equipment Scheme when fitting a safety gate; the fitter could not fit the gate in the location requested by the customer, this was due to the null post on the staircase being very decorative.

One of the furniture service co-ordinators visited the customer and quickly clarified the

problem the following day. The customer was very happy with the outcome.

We received 11 compliments from a variety of people including councillors, churches, St Oswald's hospice, staff and customers. All staff received individual praise in our team meetings from the service manager, the compliments ranged from donating old unusable items to a Church, collecting money for St Oswald's hospice to a general 'thank you' from our customers.

If you are or are not happy with any part of our service, please let us know.

We want your views on the service that we offer you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter; remember we want to provide you with an excellent service that meets your needs, by completing the feedback form you are helping us to achieve this.

We are offering 1 lucky customer the chance to win a £25.00 Eldon Square voucher; all completed questionnaires will be entered into a draw with the lucky winner being drawn on the 31st of September.

We will personally notify the winner and put their details on our web site at – www.yhn.org.uk

Future Developments

We are always trying to improve the service we are offering you, over the coming year we will be introducing and exploring the following improvements –

- Review our warehousing.
- Continued expansion to other organisations.
- Cleaning of Fully Furnished properties.
- Renew the contract to supply us with the small furniture items we buy to supply you.

Tell us what you think!

We want to give you the best service we can. To do that we need to listen to you. Tell us what you think about how well we do our job and your views will help us to plan ahead and to continue to give you a high quality service.

You can also tell us what you think of this newsletter, so that we can be sure that you are getting all the news from us that you need.

Just fill in the form, including your name and address and put it in the post using the pre-paid envelope provided. You don't need a stamp!

1. Please answer these questions about how we communicate with you.

Would you be interested in joining our group of service users to participate in discussions on the service we provide? Yes No

If you ticked **Yes** how would you like us to get in touch with you? Phone Letter

How useful have you found this newsletter?

Very useful Useful Not very useful Not useful at all

If you have filled in "Not very useful" or "Not useful at all" please tell us why:

What would you like to see covered in future newsletters?

Updates on our service How we are doing Local stories Events

Other

2. Let us know how satisfied you are with the service you get from us

How satisfied are you with the service you get from us?

Very satisfied Satisfied Not very satisfied Not satisfied at all

If you have filled in "Not very satisfied" or "Not satisfied at all" please tell us why:

What can we do to improve the service you get from us?

3. Tell us about yourself

Name

Address
.....

Postcode Telephone number

Please use this space to tell us anything you would like to say about the services we provide or any ideas you have about how we can improve.