Enable positive living for people in our homes and neighbourhoods.
This has undoubtedly been a year of change. When we opened for business in 2004, our focus was on improving housing services and the standard of the City Council’s housing stock.

Since then our service offer has broadened. We now provide a range of support services that improve the sustainability of neighbourhoods and tenancies and promote independent living across the city.

We work hard to ensure that our strategic and operational objectives are aligned with those of the landlords whose homes we manage, which are now Newcastle City Council, Byker Community Trust and Leazes Homes. This spirit of partnership working is captured in our Management Agreements and continues to underpin everything we do.
This year we reviewed our Statement of Purpose and our objectives so that they better fit our wider role and the environment we work in. They set out how we aim to continue to offer high quality services despite the challenges we face. This was done alongside a review of our Business Strategy for 2013 to 2016.

Our new Statement of Purpose is to:

Enable positive living for people in our homes and neighbourhoods

We are committed to improving council homes and the city, and supporting customers when they need it. But we also recognise our services must empower customers.

Our new Strategic Objectives are:

1 Make the money deliver;

2 Work together to realise a brighter future, and

3 Create homes and neighbourhoods we all can be proud of

The objectives recognise that we have many responsibilities which we can only meet by working with others. The impact of welfare reform also means we need to change.
To support our Statement of Purpose we have also developed a Strategy Statement. If the ‘Statement of Purpose’ says what we want to do, the ‘Strategy Statement’ sets out the way we want to do it. The strategy statement is to:

Respond to the challenges in our environment, focus on finance, seek opportunity and develop our relationships

This recognises that:

• We have to be more aware of what’s happening outside of YHN;
• We have to think more about money as it allows us to deliver our services, and
• Having good relationships and reacting quickly to opportunities has brought us success before and we believe it will in the future.

This year’s annual report gives a snapshot of the work we have been doing to support customers and achieve our new objectives.
Over the last couple of years some parts of YHN have been successful in bidding for contracts for new business, whilst others have managed to attract sponsorship or access things like grants for customers.

Now we’re trying to do more of all of those things, and support teams to bring in money so that their day job is not compromised.

Things are going well so far. During 2012/13 we brought in over £2.5 million in sponsorship, grants and traded services. Our furniture rental service NFS had a great year winning:

- Three one-off sale of goods contracts worth £36,186 in total.
- Two framework contracts for the supply and installation of furniture and white goods:
  - one worth up to £1,500,000 over three years
  - one worth up to £750,000 over two years (with two possible 12 month extensions to this).

We also generated £2.58 million in funding for District and Group Heating in Byker.
Some of the money we bring in is from working in partnership with other organisations such as:

- Newcastle Futures to win **£60,000** to fund a project which provides intensive housing and employment support to tenants affected by the government’s benefit cap.

- Northern Learning Trust to win **£50,000** to create a resource in Walker to provide basic skills, employability skills and learning opportunities to our tenants.

We’ve had success with our overall approach to efficiencies - consistently achieving over 3% of savings year on year. And we have reduced our comparative management fee costs to the City Council by over £4 million since 2004.

But there is more we can do, from procurement of large items and contracts to day to day efficiencies such as buying fewer office supplies, reducing sickness (we’ve gone from 10.11 days in 2009/10 to 8.93 days in 2012/13), and using heating and lighting more efficiently.

Some other efficiencies include:

- **Concierge review** - **£977,000** savings made through vacant posts not being filled during 2012/13

- **Investment Delivery review** - **£144,500** in savings and around **£370,000** from bringing the tenant liaison function back in house

- **Income review** - **around £45,000** savings

- **Housing Management** - reduced re-let times from 19 days in 2010/11 to 16.5 days in 2012/13, resulting in a huge increase in the amount of rent we have been able to collect on those properties.

And we expect our **Sheltered Housing review** to save - **£144,000** in staffing costs.
The rents we collect fund many of the services we provide to customers. That is why, as welfare reform begins to take effect, it is so important that we continue to bring in rental income.

The amount of rent collected is the total amount we collected over the whole financial year, as a proportion of the total amount due for the same period. The figure includes current tenants’ arrears that were outstanding at the start of the year.
Work together to realise a brighter future

We have strong relationships with our customers and with external partners. This is something we need to preserve and build on.

From working closely with our contractors to deliver the Modern Homes Programme, through to customers helping us decide how to spend money on estates, partnership working has enabled us to make big changes that benefit customers, the estates we manage and our organisation.
April 2012 saw the launch of our Financial Inclusion Team (FIT). It was first set up to offer new tenants help with budgeting, benefit advice and support to settle into their new home. Between May 2012 and January 2013 the team increased customers’ income by £655,903.06, including £389,146.43 in Housing Benefit. The team has since become an important part of our work around welfare reform - responding to the thousands of referrals that have resulted from the under occupation home visits (see page 15) and working closely with those tenants affected by the Benefit Cap.

We ran You’ve got the Power 3 in July 2012. We gave tenants the opportunity to decide how to spend £54,000 on projects across the city. 218 tenants voted on which projects should receive a share of the funding. Some of the projects and the difference they’ve made included:

**United for Employment** – 27 tenants completed the 10 week course. Four gained employment, three went on to further education, 20 completed two week work placements and 22 gained qualifications in sport and business.

**Helping Hands** – 61 households were helped to move and 59 of those were disabled or vulnerable and claiming benefits. Those customers we helped gave extremely positive feedback.

**Edible Elswick** - planting and clean up events have improved the appearance of the estate, 10 schools have used the community garden to grow produce and we worked with perpetrators of ASB to discourage further incidents in the area.
Responding to the government’s benefit changes has formed a large part of our work over recent years. A large number of our customers will have less money, forcing them to make difficult decisions about their lives and homes.

We have carried out a great deal of work with tenants negatively impacted by the changes, to look at their options and offer advice and support. Activities have included:

**Home visits** – we identified 6,703 tenants who we believed were under occupying. We decided to try and visit each one in their home to help them assess their individual circumstances, look at their potential options and refer them for specific advice and support where appropriate. We successfully completed 4,713 visits, although many more were attempted.

**Employment support** – in partnership with Northern Learning Trust and Newcastle Futures to help tenants prepare for and get back into work.

**Briefings** – to various partners, stakeholders and community organisations to give an overview of the changes, what the impact is on customers and YHN and what we and they can do to help.

**Reclassification** – of properties where an Easibathe shower unit has been installed. This has removed or reduced the impact of under occupation for a small number of tenants.

**Allocations** – tenants that are under occupying and who want to move have been placed in a higher band on our Tyne and Wear Homes register to help them to downsize, and we have promoted mutual exchange as a way of helping tenants swap to a more suitable property. We have also changed our sign up process for new applicants to make sure they understand the implications of under occupation at registration.

**Staff training** – to make sure all staff (mainly housing management) know what the changes are, what the impact is on YHN and what they should be advising customers. Online resources are also available to all staff to enable them to stay up to date with the changes and our response.
Reductions in budgets at the City Council mean they may not be able to continue running some local facilities such as leisure centres and libraries.

We have been working with the Council to identify possible partnership arrangements where we can share existing facilities to provide a housing management service whilst preserving the local library facilities, for example.

Partnership working also extends to our neighbouring authorities. Going for Gold is our new way of monitoring the quality of our estates. Trained YHN tenant inspectors inspect our estates once a year and rate them Bronze, Silver or Gold. Then colleagues and tenants at Gateshead, Hartlepool and Gentoo, who have formed a benchmarking club with us, share best practice and give an impartial review of our estates. This allows us to make continuous improvements for the benefit of all residents.

We have helped a number of tenants gain qualifications and find work. During 2012/13 we:

- Took on 10 apprentices from YHN managed homes, in a range of roles across the business - 60% of these have gained full time work.
- Employed 20 unemployed tenants for six months through our Your Homes, Your Jobs programme - 75% have since gone on to longer term employment.
- 137 tenants were supported at the Walker Learning Hive. They received one to one support, advice and guidance with employment, job searching and ICT. 30 completed maths and English courses, and 42 have moved into employment, education, training or volunteering.
Homes improved during 2012/13:

- 1,104 have new windows
- 981 have new doors
- 1,933 Kitchens
- 865 Rewires
- 1,138 Boilers

5 March 2013
Date we completed our Modern Homes Programme

Homes improved since we started the Modern Homes Programme:

- 21,000 have new windows
- 14,300 have new doors
- 11,500 Bathrooms
- 24,000 Kitchens
- 17,000 Rewires
- 14,000 Boilers
Create homes and neighbourhoods we all can be proud of

Reaching the end of our Modern Homes Programme means the focus of our investment team is changing. We are now placing more emphasis on improving and regenerating estates through initiatives such as participatory budgeting (involving tenants in deciding how we spend money), making sure our properties do not fall below the modern homes standard – but continue to meet current and future standards, and remodelling estates to make better use of existing accommodation.

During the year we:

- Spent £37.4m on making 1,779 properties decent
- Spent £9.9m on other projects including:
  - refurbishment of 17 St. Oswald’s Green*
  - demolition of the Cruddas Park blocks
  - Housing Project Fund schemes

*17 St. Oswald’s Green was a children’s home that we converted into two 4 bedroom properties.

We have some pretty ambitious plans in place for our 2013/14 investment programme. These include environmental improvements on the Blakelaw 165 and New Mills estates, window replacement, and remodelling of some of our sheltered schemes to bring them to modern standards.
During the year we carried out a number of external insulation projects.

Due to their construction type, over 400 non-traditional properties in West Denton were unsuitable for more traditional methods of insulation.

We received £700,000 of Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) funding and £760,000 of eco funding. This enabled us to carry out a programme of external wall insulation to improve the properties’ thermal efficiency.

And four multi storey blocks across the city were externally rendered to improve the insulation of the flats and reduce tenants’ heating bills.

Despite experiencing a particularly cold winter, tenants in the flats saw up to a 50% reduction in their heating bills and were able to reduce the amount of time they had their heating switched on. The work even had the added bonus of giving the blocks a facelift.
In February 2013 we launched our Energy for the Future scheme, to help identify potential energy savings in tenants’ homes and reduce their carbon footprint. A home visit from a trained officer looks at their current energy bills and fits a range of energy saving devices. So far we have:

- Carried out more than 70 visits
- Saved tenants up to £30 a month on their energy bills
- The Energy for the Future officers have also helped a number of tenants apply for the Warm Homes Discount which can save them around £130 a year. Some tenants have seen savings on their water bills by switching to a meter.
At the end of 2012 Leazes Homes became an independent charity. We are working with them as they develop new general needs and supported accommodation, and we continue to provide housing management services to their 329 tenancies across the city. In 2012/13 they delivered 42 properties across three sites.

11 bungalows at Beecham Close, Pendower have been built to Code 3 for Sustainable Homes (which means they meet strict targets for energy efficiency, so tenants should benefit from lower energy bills) as have the properties at Reedsmouth, Fenham. This site of 113 new build homes is made up of 97 private homes (which were for sale) and 16 affordable homes which are owned by Leazes Homes. The development was built on a brownfield site which was previously Hillsview Primary School and had become a haven for fly tipping.
Enabling positive living for people in our homes and neighbourhoods

Board and Management Team are providing strong leadership and direction in an uncertain environment. They remain determined that all customers and staff have fair access to our services and employment opportunities.

Equality and Diversity

Throughout 2012/13 we took part in a range of activities and events including:

- Mela
- Northern Pride
- Interfaith Week
- Asian Business Connexions Expo

Once again we ranked in the Stonewall Top 100 Employers in the Workplace Equality Index, continued work to ensure we maintain Level 3 ‘Excellence’ of the Social Housing Equality Framework and developed a range of Equality and Diversity training packages for all staff.
The Board

During the year we have had a number of changes to our Board membership.

Since April 2012 the following members have left the Board. We would like to thank them for their contributions to YHN:

George Pattison and John Stokel-Walker who left on 29 May 2012.

Louise Sutcliffe appointed 23 May 2012 - left 14 February 2013.

Gerry Keating left 3 May 2012.

Jacqueline Turner and Roger Harral left 18 September 2012.

The Board is made up of six tenant, six independent and six Council members and an independent Chair. During 2012/13 our Board members were:
Following a Committee Review in August 2012, the Board now has five Committees. Their Terms of Reference were reviewed and new ones established, which set out the function and delegations for each Committee. These were approved by the Board in December 2012.

The Committees are:

- Audit
- Customer and Service Delivery
- Finance and Resources
- Commercial
- Remuneration

The three groups of Board Members (tenant, independent and Council) are each represented on the committees. The Audit Committee has an independent chair. They were appointed to provide an independent and objective approach to overseeing the work of the committee and to ensure that the organisation’s practices and processes are efficient and effective. The Chair of the Audit Committee was re-appointed for a second term of office on 18 September 2012 and will be re-appointed for a further term at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September 2013.
Management Team

We reviewed our organisational structure in January 2013. The Executive Management Team is now made up of:

- **John Lee**
  - Chief Executive

- **Sheila Breslin**
  - Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

- **David Langhorne**
  - Director of Property Services

- **Neil Scott**
  - Director of Tenancy Services

The review was carried out partly due to the retirement of Ross Atkinson, Director of Finance and Resources, on 31 January 2013 and also to ensure that our structure can support the future needs of the business and our customers.

The new Director of Property Services took up his post on 1 April 2013.

The operational day to day running of the organisation is delegated to the Chief Executive and his Executive Management Team in accordance with the organisation’s Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations.

### Board meeting dates
(all meetings are held on a Tuesday)

- 5 November 2013
- 3 December 2013
- 28 January 2014
- 11 March 2014
- 15 April 2014
- 27 May 2014
- 8 July 2014
- 19 August 2014
- 30 September 2014 (AGM)
This information is about Your Homes Newcastle, who are responsible for managing council homes on behalf of Newcastle City Council, and how we are doing. If you need this in your language or a different language phone 0191 278 8633. This information is also available in large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a British Sign Language interpreter.

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Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8PR.

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