



Your Homes  
Newcastle

# Delivery Plan 2018-19

## Introduction

The Delivery Plan supports our **Business Strategy 2016-2020** by turning it into actions for the year ahead. This helps staff to see how they contribute to delivering against our purpose, which is '**delivering great services, enabling people to thrive in great communities, supporting a great city**'. It also makes clear to our customers and key stakeholders what we will do during the year.

All of the actions for the year ahead contribute to our strategic objectives which underpin our purpose.

### Our three strategic objectives are:

- Keep the housing stock decent, and neighbourhoods clean and safe
- Collect the rent and let properties efficiently
- Promote health and wellbeing and support vulnerable people to enjoy independence.

The actions in our Delivery Plan also support our six cross cutting objectives which act as a guide for the way we do things over the next year.

### These cross cutting objectives mean we will:

- Use modern technology and innovation to challenge and redefine service delivery
- Achieve efficiency at every level and direct resources to where they are needed most
- Have high performing people who understand how to contribute to our purpose
- Trade profitably and appropriately to support core services
- Work proactively with NCC and our other landlords
- Maximise partnerships to improve services.

## **Core values**

Our core values are at the heart of our business, and are the principles and standards that influence the way we work in all that we do. Our core values were refreshed and communicated to staff during 2017-18 and our new values are to be RARE. This means we are

<b>Ready</b>	Together we're prepared for anything
<b>Amazing</b>	Exceed expectations
<b>Revolutionary</b>	Have courage to be bold
<b>Energetic</b>	Make every day count

## **What is in the Delivery Plan?**

- A look back at our performance during 2017-18;
- A look forward to the year ahead;
- The strategic targets reported to YHN Board and NCC Cabinet; and
- Our commitments to tenants.

## Who was involved in developing this plan?

Consultation has been delivered at different stages in developing the Delivery Plan and targets and has involved:

- Board members;
- Key officers including:
  - YHN Executive Team;
  - YHN Corporate Leadership Team;
  - YHN Service Managers; and
- Newcastle City Council (NCC).

We have developed our Delivery Plan with NCC, who is our sole shareholder, to ensure that our plan is aligned with their priorities within their Corporate Plan. NCC priorities are:

- **A working city** – creating good quality jobs and helping local people develop the skills to do them;
- **Decent neighbourhoods** – working with local communities to look after each other and the environment;
- **Tackling inequalities** – tackling discrimination and inequalities which prevent people from fulfilling their true potential; and
- **A fit for purpose council** – a council which leads by enabling others to achieve.

Our Delivery Plan and strategic targets give NCC assurance that we are delivering across all areas of our Management Agreement to deliver housing services on their behalf. A number of the strategic targets have been set for us by NCC, to cover all aspects of the Management Agreement.

## Looking back

We're now 18 months into our transformation and the benefits are already emerging: this has been an exciting and productive year. The energy and sense of shared purpose that has been generated by our 'Gap Year' staff and customer engagement campaign has helped us successfully operate during a challenging year for social housing providers across the country. We have already reduced our operating costs significantly to respond to the financial challenge placed on the Housing Revenue Account – this has seen our management fee income reduce by 5% in both 2016/17 and 2017/18. But, by being leaner we have retained flexibility to invest and improve our services to our customers.

Change has come at all levels of our business, with September's AGM confirming some important structure changes and appointments at Board level. Jo Boaden, the distinguished and experienced Chief Executive at Northern Housing Consortium, was appointed as the Chair of our Board. New Board members have brought a wealth of skills and a new Customer Services Committee, made up of tenants and chaired by a tenant, has been introduced with direct interaction with the Board, demonstrating active accountability and influence.

Nobody can fully predict the future; all we can do is prepare for it. Building a strong and positive culture has been key, because it means we will be able to adapt to changing times faster. We've developed a dynamic new Vision and Purpose, as the foundation upon which everything else can grow. These are underpinned with new values that have put positive and energetic behaviours right at the core of what we do. A new staff recognition scheme has been introduced which regularly and visibly celebrates when our staff have brought the values to life as part of their day-to-day work. It's proved very popular and some of the customer stories we've shared have brought the feelgood factor to the workplace!

We realise that transformation will be experienced differently by everybody working at YHN, so to help us keep a check on this, we introduced a new staff engagement tool called 'Hive'. This gives staff a constant, real-time means of feeding back how they are feeling at work. It's just one of the improvements we have introduced to support staff, many of whom have already enjoyed the opportunity to refresh their working knowledge of YHN as part of a new, interactive induction programme for our new colleagues. Improved attendance across YHN is testament to that renewed sense of shared purpose, and has helped us continue to meet the needs of a diverse customer base, many of whom have found themselves at the sharp end of Government welfare reforms this year, including the introduction of Universal Credit in more parts of the City.

Pleasingly, those behind the scenes changes are feeding through to improved frontline performance. We have met challenging income collection targets without compromising the support that we offer to those that need help to maintain their tenancy. The signs are there that we are getting closer to the optimum balance of being as efficient as we can be, without losing the personal touch for the times and

the people that need it. Eviction remains very much the last resort, and our rate of tenancy sustainment continues to be one of the best in the North East.

We have acted on customer feedback to improve customer service in our hubs, using handheld technologies to cut waiting times. Improvements to working practices prompted by a successful review of our Enquiry Centre are helping drive a better service to customers that contact us over the phone, but it's not been about scripts and processes, quite the opposite. Empowering staff has been key, as demonstrated by the immediate impact of a new, simplified complaints policy, with staff relishing the opportunity to resolve complaints on the spot. It's reduced the time taken to address, and learn from, complaints as well as retaining our customers' loyalty.

Service improvement and innovation has been matched by investment in the City Council's housing stock. We have delivered the Council's £50m capital investment programme on time and to budget, and the challenging 99.6% target for repairs completed on time was exceeded. Regular, open discussion with customers is helping us to make the most of the investment we are managing. This was a particularly important aspect of our response to the Grenfell tragedy. We have worked closely with the Council and the Fire Service to ensure our tenants were reassured about our current safety measures, as well as the improvements that are being delivered.

Partnership work with the Council, and with Leazes Homes, has delivered 282 new homes for the city, including new supported housing developments that are improving quality of life for people whilst reducing the cost of care for the Council. Innovation hasn't been limited to new build though, as our efforts to review and rework the repairs contract for the Council continued to progress, with YHN taking the lead for the repairs service by the end of March 2018.

As the year came to a close, we unveiled an exciting new partnership with Q-Bot, who provide an under-floor insulation service delivered in part by an AI (Artificial Intelligence) enabled motorised robot. The partnership will enable us to improve the energy ratings of the properties we manage and should open doors for further collaboration with landlords across the North of England.

We have drawn on our strengths to deliver some new projects over the past 12 months. This includes a new tenancy agreement on behalf of the City Council, which will come into effect in April. A review of our Ostara telecare and mobile response service for vulnerable customers has set a clear future direction to improve the service, and we are ambitiously developing our vision for a broader Housing Plus offer that will further differentiate YHN from other providers

To celebrate our successes, we have put more of our work forward for awards, where it can put us on the map and help us understand how we compare to others. In particular, the flagship Tree Top Village sheltered development in Walker has won several design and development awards, and continues to attract interest from housing sector colleagues from across the country.

More and more of the work being done to make YHN a great place to work is being led by staff, from across the business and it's producing great results. We were the first organisation from the North East to achieve Ambassador status at the Better Health at Work campaign. We also retained our position in the top 50 of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index, featuring for the first time in their top 10 list of employers demonstrating a significant commitment to trans equality in the workplace, which we're really proud about.

## **The year ahead**

This year will see many more of the service changes identified during our 'Gap Year' engagement programme come into effect. We called this phase 'Crossing Over' because we anticipated that putting some of these changes into practice will take perseverance and commitment; a flatter structure represents a big change to the way we work and requires us all to be more flexible in the pursuit of an improved customer experience.

The changes we're introducing were, of course, largely suggested by our customers and staff. The principles and practices introduced in our new Customer Insight and Engagement Strategy will guide us in our work to understand how change is experienced by our customers. The strategy sets out how we can use customer information and data to shape and redesign service delivery and invest in local communities. Building better quality, real-time customer understanding will help us respond to emerging and future customer needs at a time when we really have to get the most out of the resources we have.

We will continue to act commercially as the income it generates protects front line services: it's become an important part of who we are. We will seek to develop our relationship with Leazes Homes, and will continue to promote our Furniture Service, complementing it with new or enhanced services where they can improve our offer and make good commercial sense.

Partnership with the City Council is at the heart of some of our bigger projects to transform our services. Closer working between our respective Repairs and Maintenance teams under a Single Point of Leadership will drive improved performance, simplify reporting routes for Operatives and Officers alike and help us meet the challenge of a mature and diverse housing stock. Joint working with the City to review the approach to telephone, digital and face-to-face customer services will identify and eliminate duplication and result in simpler routes for customers.

Our Board is working on a new Business Strategy and Strategic Objectives, building on the new Vision and Purpose agreed in January 2018. This work will conclude in the summer and will effectively bring the first phase of our transformation to a close, and will give staff clearer and achievable goals to work towards.

We remain committed to social housing and the services that support our customers. The ways and means are changing, but the goal remains the same as it ever was.

## **Strategic targets and actions**

A set of key business targets and actions has been developed as part of the annual Delivery Plan. They are designed to give snapshot assurance to key stakeholders of NCC, YHN Board and customers, to assess whether business critical areas are on track.

Working with the Council, we have identified six strategic targets which will be used to monitor performance. The strategic targets for this year are

**Collect 98.48% rent from current and former tenants**

**Void rent loss not to exceed 1.57%**

**Tenancy turnover not to exceed 8.6%**

**92% of customers are satisfied with repairs service**

**HRA Programme Board is satisfied with YHN's delivery of the capital programme**

**HRA Programme Board is satisfied with YHN's delivery of the Repairs and Maintenance Service**

These targets have been developed following consultation with NCC officers and feature as part of the Management Agreement.

In addition to these measures there are two targets reported to YHN Board which relate to the Group's business interests. These are:

**Performance against profiled budgets**

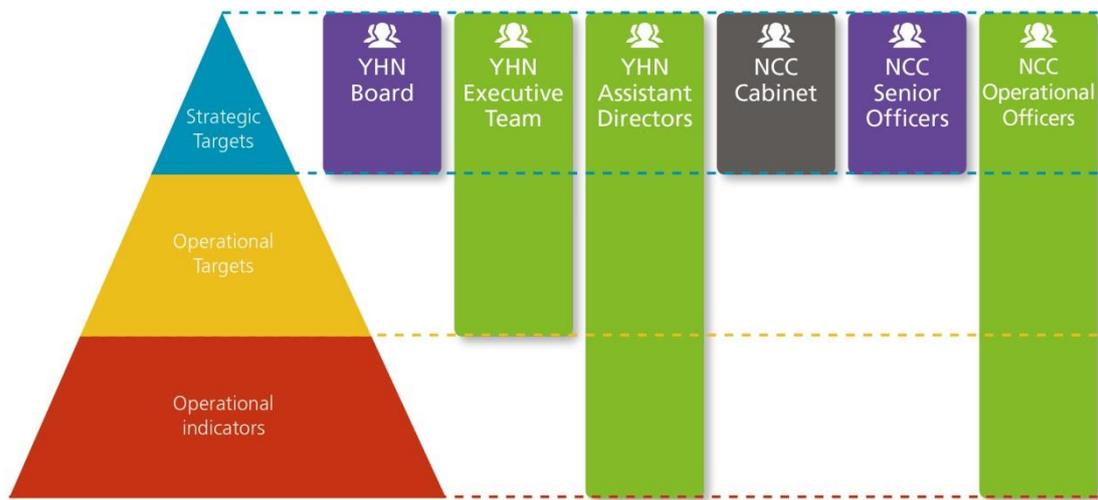
**Sufficiency of cash balances**

## How is performance monitored?

YHN Board reviews the Group's performance on a quarterly basis – this is delegated to the Finance and Performance Committee. YHN's Executive team monitor the strategic targets, as well as the operational targets that underpin them. Our Assistant Directors monitor the operational targets and service specific measures and indicators. The council reports on YHN's performance to Cabinet every six months.

The Executive Team and Assistant Directors are also responsible for ensuring that YHN delivers against agreed service and investment projects, reporting to Board as is appropriate.

This graphic shows which audience receives YHN performance information and on what frequency.



How often is performance reported?

- 6 Months
- 3 Months
- 1 Months

## Customer Commitments

Within the city there is an overarching framework for engagement to ensure the voice of the customer is at the centre of how we provide and improve services.

There are three elements to this framework. YHN delivers an engagement programme that aims to understand how customers experience our services and how they could be improved. Newcastle City Council has commissioned Newcastle Independent Tenant Voice (NiTV) to focus on strategic and policy issues and an independent advisor “Engage Associates” to provide scrutiny on housing services.

Every year some of our strategic goals are based directly around customer priorities. These Customer Commitments are informed by and developed with our customers. They demonstrate that we’ve listened to our customers and make sure we deliver on things that matter most to them. To inform the priorities, we looked at customer feedback gathered from involvement activities we have organised throughout the year. This gives us a broad understanding of the issues that affect tenants and where they want to see services improve.

The commitments have been fully endorsed by our Customer Service Committee which is made up of 100% tenants.

Our customer commitments for 2018/19 are:

- We will improve our customer service and ensure that issues are dealt with at the first point of contact
- We will ensure that we know our customers better
- Customers will be able to access services easily and conveniently
- We will make it easier to apply for a home/mutually exchange
- Customers’ views will be heard and acted on