

Building  
Blocks to Excellence



## Building blocks to excellence

**Building blocks to excellence** is designed to set out the way James Butcher Housing Association (JBHA) plans to build on its commitment to residents and to improve its services.

Our aim is to make sure that our services, policies and procedures are designed to be flexible, allow for choice, and have the support of our residents.

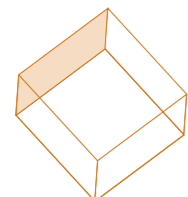
We recognise that closer working with our residents in their neighbourhoods is the single most important change we need to make in order to achieve the improvements we plan. A new understanding of the needs and aspirations of our residents will allow us to strengthen the way we work, so that we can deliver the services our residents most need and want.

**Building blocks to excellence** lays out the foundations for our improvement agenda. We will now build on these foundations as we work towards service excellence.

### Our key aims

As a registered social landlord with a strong commitment to our residents and other stakeholders, our key aims are to:

- provide homes that meet the needs of our current and future residents
- help our customers quickly and efficiently by providing answers the first time they contact us
- make it easy for residents to meet with us, either in their own home, at our offices or in another convenient place
- design our services for older and disabled residents so as to offer choice and provide support when it is needed most
- collect all the money owed to us, being sympathetic to people in financial difficulty but firm with people who are not being responsible
- develop our neighbourhoods so that people want to live in them and are willing to take ownership and responsibility for what goes on locally
- create an environment that welcomes, encourages and motivates residents to work with us to improve services
- make sure that our services meet residents' needs and recognise the diverse needs of the wide range of people we work with
- ensure our staff are trained to deliver our key aims.



### Our core values

At the heart of our work, we hold the following core values:

- We will invest in our services as well as in our homes.
- We will involve residents in designing and developing our services.
- We will retain what is good already and develop further by:
  - listening to our customers and delivering better and more efficient services
  - being open and accountable to our customers for our actions
  - caring about residents and the work we do
  - making sure we offer equal opportunities
  - supporting strong, lasting communities, and working towards better energy management and more environmentally efficient homes
  - working in partnership with others.



JBHA works closely with residents to understand their needs in order to deliver excellent services and desirable homes.



## Focus on improvement

### Meeting organisational aims

Meeting organisational aims, we plan to improve our work by:

- developing a better understanding of the current and future needs of our residents, so that we can produce clear plans to improve neighbourhoods
- making closer relationships with the community and our partners in local neighbourhoods, providing additional resources to maximise the positive effect we can have
- doing more to make sure new tenancies get off to a good start, so as to prevent future problems with rent arrears and other tenancy breaches
- working with the Southern Housing Group Customer Service Centre to make sure it provides our residents with the best possible one-stop, flexible service, so that our housing officers can spend more time in our neighbourhoods
- improving our rent collection performance
- creating jobs and a workplace environment that encourage staff to take ownership of problems, find solutions and provide a reliable and consistent service for residents
- focusing our resources in the areas where we can make the most difference.

We recognise that achieving these improvements will be dependent on our:

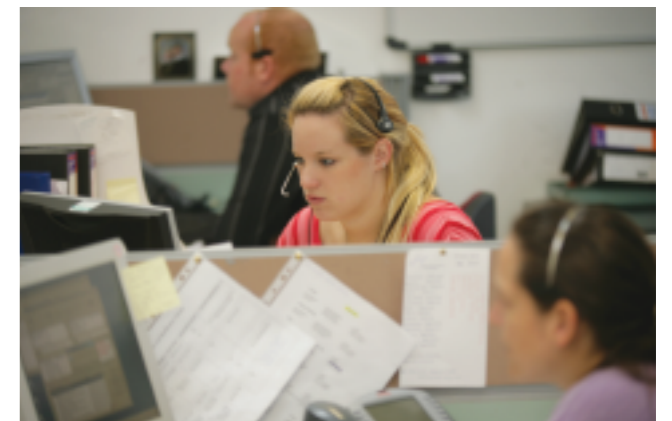
- having good systems for monitoring and improving our performance
- having corporate targets that are understood and fed down to staff at all levels, with clear targets for all teams and individuals
- genuinely learning from the complaints and comments we receive, as well as from examples of good practice shown by other organisations
- taking good care of our customers
- getting involved in our neighbourhoods
- knowing who our residents are
- being willing to take risks – giving staff the power to make decisions and get on with the job.

### Where do we want to be?

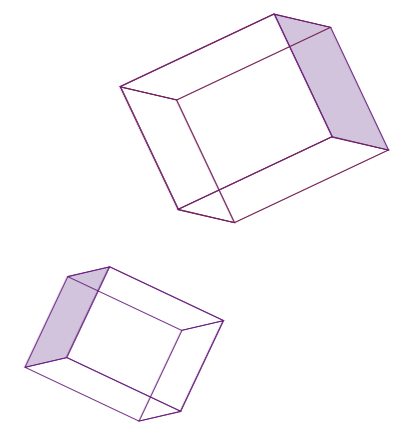
The work of registered social landlords is regularly checked and graded by an independent body appointed by the Government. JBHA is due to be inspected by the Audit Commission during 2007.

By April 2007, we aim to achieve an Audit Commission rating of at least one star for our service. One star would signify that our service is seen as 'fair', with promising prospects for improvement.

By 2010, we aim to be working towards a three-star rating, signifying that our service is 'excellent' and has excellent prospects for further improvement.



The Group's Service Centre provides residents with a single point of contact for all enquiries.





## The steps we are taking

In our drive for improvement we will take concrete steps in the following areas.

### Maintaining our properties

We will maintain our properties to a high standard and we will carry out a regular, five-year rolling programme of consultation with residents to find out their views on our investment strategies. These strategies will cover:

- the work we are carrying out to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard, which is designed to make sure all social housing is in a good condition by 2010
- the work we are doing to refurbish our older stock
- our regular programme of redecoration and renewal
- our day-to-day repairs service.

Each of our strategies will lead to a clear programme of work.

We will achieve the Decent Homes standard for all our properties by the target date of 2010.

### Housing services

We will manage our homes to a high standard and will:

- have a clear system for continuously improving customer services, that is based around resident involvement
- regularly review the effectiveness of the ways we involve residents, to make sure that residents really can influence the direction of our work, our policies and ways of working
- develop services that reflect the needs of existing and future residents.

### Supported housing

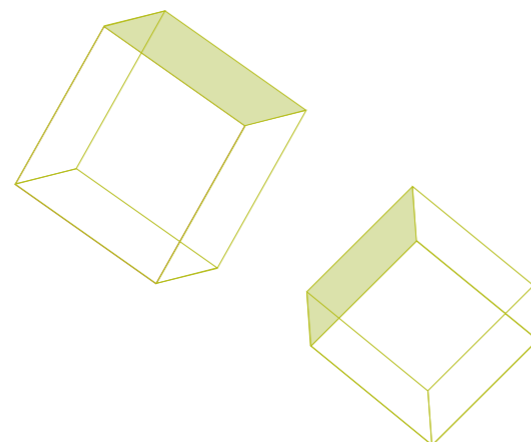
A high proportion of our properties are designed for residents who also receive additional support.

To improve our work in this area, we will make sure that we:

- provide a range of homes and services that are flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of our residents
- provide and make possible the support services residents need
- have systems in place to help us identify the individual needs of residents, so that we can tailor our services accordingly.



The Group has rationalised its maintenance contractors through a 'Partnering' selection process to provide a better service for residents and to benefit from greater collaborative working.



## The role of good governance and management

We recognise that our organisation needs to be clear about its direction, well managed, well resourced and well supported at every level to achieve the improvements and aims we have set ourselves.

### A clear direction

The clear direction we have set out in this document will be reflected in the way our organisation operates at every level and is further strengthened by our association with Southern Housing Group.

Southern Housing Group promotes an organisational culture of reliability, effectiveness, approachability, continuous improvement and innovation, which we will use to inform and boost our work.

We benefit from strong governance arrangements. Our strategic direction is set Group-wide by the experienced Board of Southern Housing Group and at local level by the committed Board of JBHA.

JBHA will be managed by a strong senior management team, backed by good line managers at every level. Our aim is to be customer-focused, with resident involvement one of our key priorities.

### The right staff

Staff are a key resource for any housing organisation. Recruiting, training and maintaining the right balance of staff are therefore crucial to our success.

In delivering this plan, with the support of our parent organisation which has a strong track record in the area of human resources, our staff will benefit from:

- flexible working arrangements
- good training and study support programmes
- good support systems
- clear instructions about working arrangements and authority levels
- good performance management

We are a learning organisation and our staff will be expected to come up with plans that are SMART (specific, measurable, accountable, realistic and time-bound).

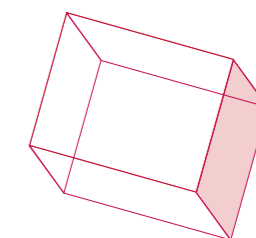
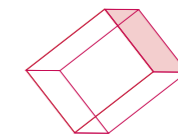
### Support services

Our frontline services depend on the strength of our support services and the resources they provide. Many of these services are provided Group-wide by our parent organisation, Southern Housing Group.

We will make the best use of our strong management accounting team. We will also benefit from the local and centralised support of Southern Housing Group's IT, policy and human resources specialists.

Based at its London head office, the Group also provides expertise in communications and specialists in the procurement of services, contracts, equipment and components for our large-scale repairs.

The balance between Group-wide and local support services is providing us with efficiency savings, so that we can provide the best possible value for money for our residents, as well as benefiting from the innovative approach of a larger organisation.



## Meeting outside agendas

As a not-for-profit public body, our strategic direction and operational approach are also strongly influenced by our regulators and inspectors, local and central Government agendas and national debate, as set out in the list below. We will also remain sensitive to new directions that open out in the future.

The Audit Commission's **Key Lines of Enquiry**, which are used to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of housing organisations when they are being inspected, provide a useful measure of our performance, when we plan and review our services and service standards.

We are mindful of the Government's **Respect Agenda**, which tackles the problem of anti-social behaviour and places a high level of responsibility at the door of social landlords. JBHA benefits from Southern Housing Group's longstanding and considerable expertise in this area, as well as its own local experiences.

The National Housing Federation's **iN Business for Neighbourhoods** initiative commits social landlords to providing homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live. JBHA and the Group as a whole are supporters of this scheme, which is designed to get landlords to invest in good quality services not just in their properties.

The Government's **efficiency agenda** for social housing is setting challenging targets across the sector, which we will work to achieve. Membership of the Group has already led to considerable efficiency savings as we make use of centralised resources such as the Customer Service Centre. We are also **assessing procurement** arrangements, making the best use of the Group's specialist team, with a view to achieving savings while meeting good quality standards and new EU regulation in this area.

We will work to play our part in realising the social vision set out in the **South East Plan** of the South East Regional Assembly, published in 2006.

**The National Framework for Tenant Participation Contracts** drawn up by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (now the Department of Communities and Local Government) influences our work with residents, as well more recent work carried out by the National Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation's consultation document **Delivering Change Through Involvement**.

Our work is also informed by the Government's **Sustainable Communities Plan**, launched in 2003, which promoted a long-term programme of action for better communities, designed to improve and reform housing and planning, the homes being developed and the lives lived by residents.



"The dedicated Anti-social Behaviour team has developed a framework to support the Respect Agenda which is succeeding in tackling complex behavioural problems and minimising ASB on our estates."

Part of Southern Housing Group, JBHA provides the full range of Southern Housing Group services. Specialising in the provision of sheltered accommodation, JBHA owns and manages over 4,200 homes along the M4 corridor.

Southern Housing Group is one of the largest housing associations in southern England, housing 48,000 residents, owning and managing over 24,000 homes, employing 900 people and working with 70 local authorities.

The Group's activities centre on four key areas: the development of quality affordable housing, housing and neighbourhood management, a range of housing options for rent and home ownership, and social investment. Our experience has taught us that investing in people and communities is as important as building homes, and this philosophy has informed our activities for over 100 years.

### For help with translation, contact the Service Centre.

#### Arabic

لمساعدتك في الترجمة يرجى الاتصال بمركز الخدمة على هاتف 0300 303 1771.

#### Bengali

অনুবাদ সাহায্য পেতে হলে সার্ভিস সেন্টারে 0300 303 1682 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

#### French

Si vous souhaitez recevoir de l'aide avec vos traductions, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

#### Somali

Wixii ah caawimo turjumaan ka soo wac Xarunta Adeegga telefoonka 0300 303 1771.

#### Spanish

Si necesita que le ayudemos con alguna traducción, llámenos al 0300 303 1771.

#### Turkish

Tercüme konusunda yardım için 0300 303 1683 'den Hizmet Merkezi'ni arayın.

For a copy of this document in large print, call us on **0300 303 1771**.

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Housing  
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Part of Southern Housing Group

