



South Tyneside Council

South  
Tyneside *Homes*

South Tyneside Council's  
Housing Company



2015

# Tenants' Annual Report



TOGETHER...  
MAKING A  
HOUSE A HOME



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# The Annual Report Working Group

Each year tenants from across the borough join together to help write the Annual Report, examining performance information, assessing how South Tyneside Homes performs against the standards. Through our role as tenants we are independent and are able to provide you with a balanced report on how South Tyneside Homes is performing and importantly where there is room for improvement going forward.

This is why it is important that the Annual Report is written by tenants for tenants.

## Why do we need a Tenants' Annual Report?

The Homes and Communities Agency is the regulatory body responsible for social housing. The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing 2015 establishes the expectations of registered housing providers by setting out 'standards' for service delivery.

South Tyneside Council, in partnership with South Tyneside Homes, are responsible for ensuring these standards are being met in a transparent and accountable way.

South Tyneside Council must demonstrate that it has worked with customers to develop and agree standards that set out how services will be delivered. The Annual Report sets out the standards and shows how South Tyneside Homes works with tenants to ensure that the standards are being met.



This year's Annual Report Working Group



# Introduction

Following on from last year's report, the Annual Report Working Group felt it would be good to hear from those who help to lead and guide the organisation. We had further talks with Paul Mains, Managing Director, Councillor Ed Malcolm, Chair of South Tyneside Homes' Board and Councillor Allan West, Lead Member for Housing and Transport to discuss how they felt South Tyneside Homes has performed over the last twelve months and what is planned for the future. Here are their thoughts:

## On company performance:

South Tyneside Homes has continued to perform well in most areas and there have been some significant changes across the organisation, particularly around area management, where we have worked with the Council to streamline services and become much more efficient.

Customer satisfaction continues to remain high, however, the management team know that they cannot be complacent and that improvements need to continue to be made. There are a number of significant challenges for the next year including:

- completion of the Decent Homes programme by December 2016 to a good quality standard with high customer satisfaction.
- managing the overall impact of Welfare Reform, particularly the benefits cap and introduction of Universal Credit and supporting our customers through difficult times.
- embedding our new area management structure and working "tenure blind" to manage whole estates not just the Council's housing stock.
- continue to work in partnership with South Tyneside Council in delivering and improving our services.
- make important strides to tackle fuel poverty across the borough, including an exploration into helping customers to save money on their energy bills.



## On tenant involvement:

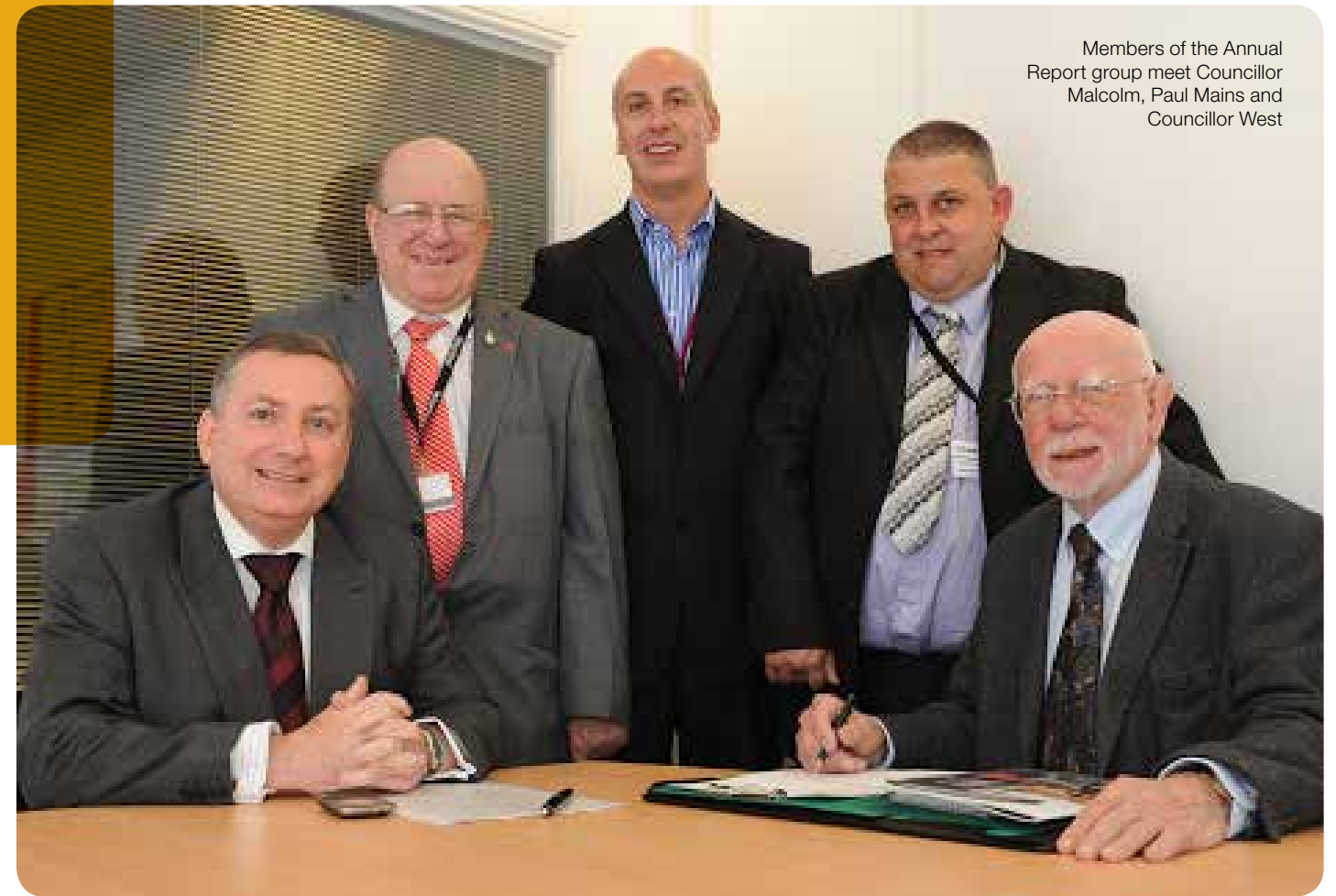
South Tyneside Homes needs to work in partnership with tenants to ensure that we offer good services, estates are clean and tidy and support each other in order to deliver on our promises.

Although tenant involvement has made huge strides over recent years and contributed towards significant improvements across the organisation, we cannot be complacent. We need to encourage younger tenants to get involved to ensure a wide range of tenant input which represents all demographics.

There are some significant changes coming which will affect both the organisation and our customers and it is vital that we work together to manage the impacts of these changes and continue to provide an excellent service to everyone in the borough.

On behalf of South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes we would once again like to thank the tenants who have worked really hard to produce this report.

The Annual Report Working Group would like to thank Councillor West, Councillor Malcolm and Paul for meeting with us again this year. We intend to monitor the progress against the challenges mentioned.



Members of the Annual Report group meet Councillor Malcolm, Paul Mains and Councillor West

## The view from the Board

"In the last year, South Tyneside Homes has been involved in some innovative and exciting projects that are tenure blind, providing services across the community. However, with 18,000 properties, South Tyneside Homes must always be vigilant that the involvement, views, hope and aspirations of their tenants is still our number one priority."

**Councillor Ed Malcolm,**  
Chair of South Tyneside Homes' Board

## The view from the Council

"As a member of the Cabinet working within the democratic process it is my role to ensure that the views of both tenants and councillors are reflected in the decision making process. Tenants know better than anyone how services are received and we need to provide a warm, comfortable home suitable to their needs in a safe area."

**Councillor Allan West,**  
Lead Member for Housing and Transport

## The view from the organisation

"Our customers are at the centre of the decision making process and it is vital that we work in partnership with our customers to improve services. As service users, customers know best and we need to listen to our customers and continue to work positively together to make improvements."

**Paul Mains,**  
Managing Director of South Tyneside Homes



# The borough of South Tyneside

South Tyneside Council has five area meetings which it calls its Community Area Forums (CAFs). The Forum areas are: Jarrow and Boldon, Hebburn, Riverside, East Shields and Whitburn and West Shields, Cleadon and East Boldon.

Each of the CAFs covers a particular area of the borough made of the electoral wards that lie within its boundaries. The role of the CAFs is to discuss matters that are important to local people to provide a proactive service within local areas.

Housing and Area Management teams mirror the CAF areas, enabling South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes to focus on the issues that matter most to people. These issues include clean streets, fly-tipping, dog-fouling and anti-social behaviour, along with all tenancy related issues.

Members of the public are actively encouraged to attend CAF meetings which are held approximately every six weeks. To find when the next CAF meeting is in your area call 0300 123 66 33.

## Area Housing Offices



Jarrow Town Hall



Strathmore House



Landreth House



Homefinder



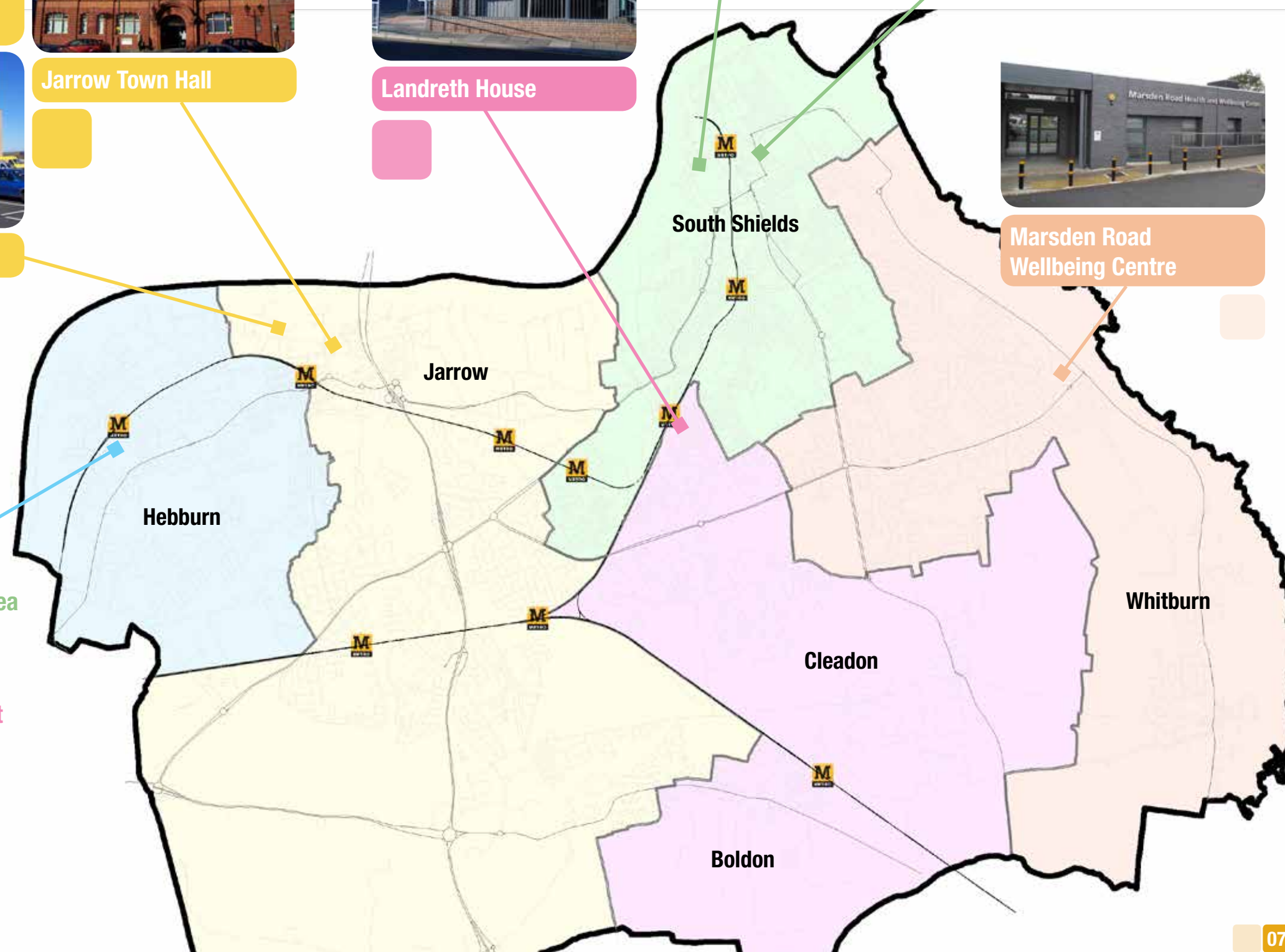
South Shields Town Hall



Marsden Road Wellbeing Centre



Hebburn Central



**Hebburn CAF area**  
Area Manager: Eric Crammon

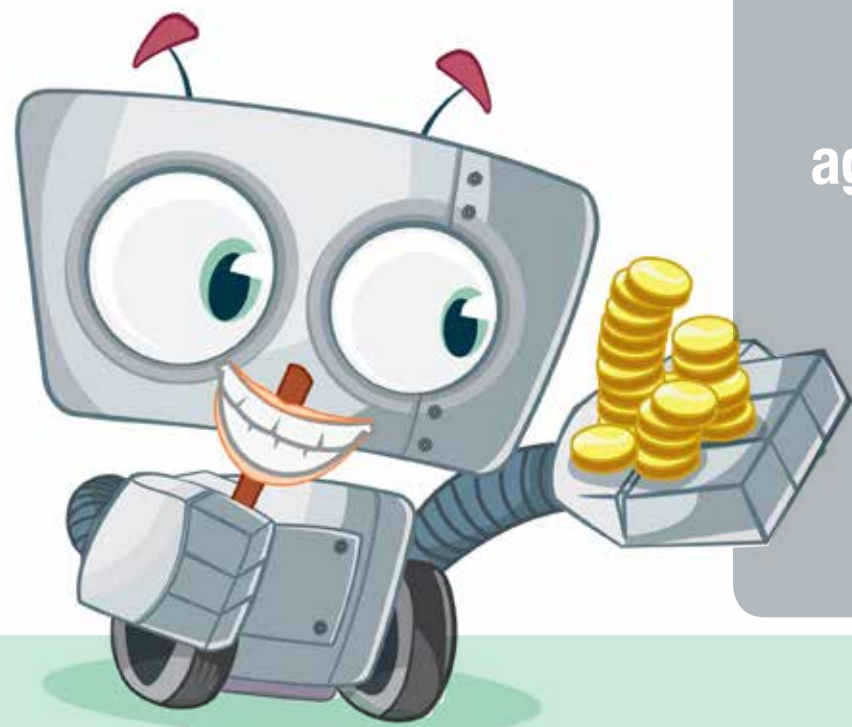
**Jarrow and Boldon CAF area**  
Area Manager: Julie Molyneaux

**East Shields and Whitburn CAF area**  
Area Manager: Nicola MacDougall

**Riverside CAF area**  
Area Manager: Tracey Richardson

**West Shields, Cleadon and East Boldon CAF area**  
Area Manager: Esther Windass



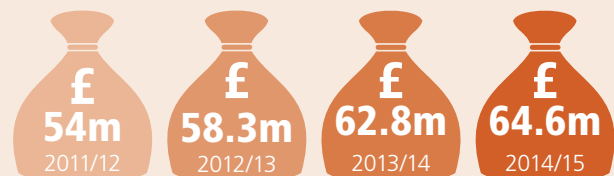


Hello it's me, Robee again. Welcome to my performance page!

It's that time of the year where I show you details on how South Tyneside Homes has performed over the last year. You can see from these pages where performance and satisfaction has gone up or down. The remainder of the report will focus on service areas in much more detail but here are some of the key points.

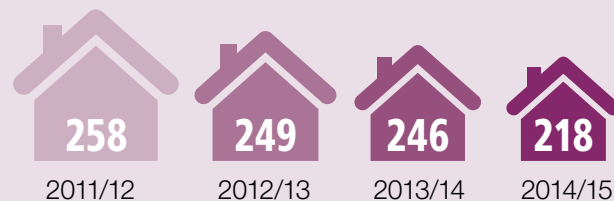
## Performance at a glance

### Rent collected

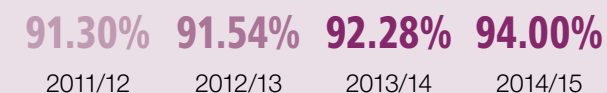


### Empty homes

Average number of empty homes

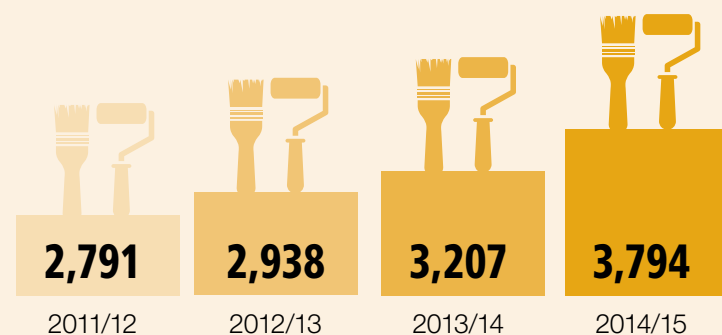


Customer satisfaction



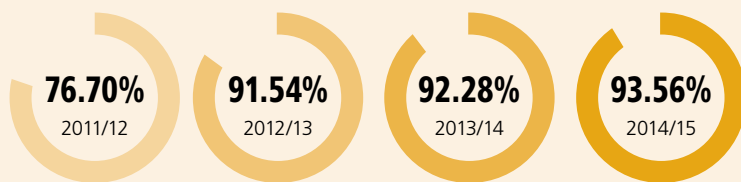
### Decent homes

Number of homes made decent each year



Customer satisfaction

(Every customer had the opportunity to fill in a customer satisfaction survey in 2014/15, 466 surveys were collected)



### Keeping your estates safe (anti-social behaviour)

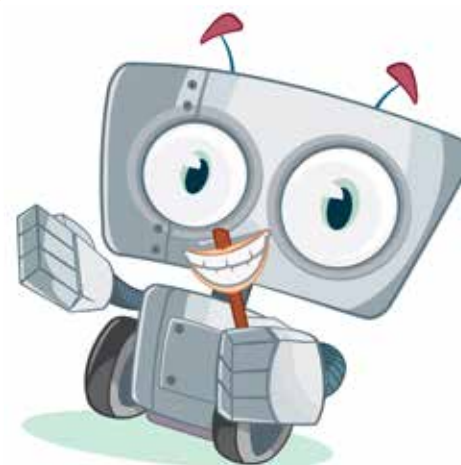
Number of ASB complaints



% of complaints responded to within timescale

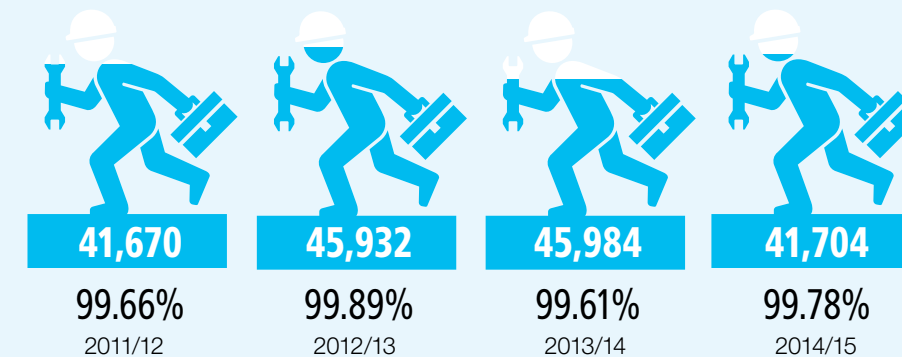


Customer satisfaction

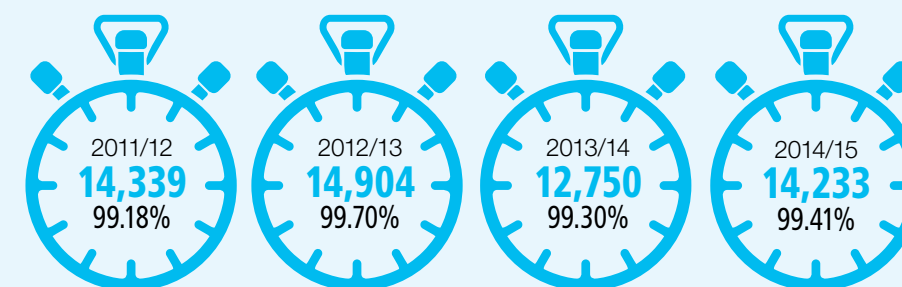


### Repairs and maintenance

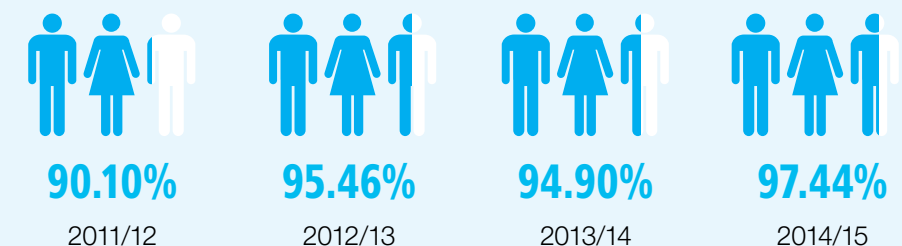
Number and % of routine repairs delivered within the 20 day timescale



Number and % of emergency repairs delivered within the 4 hour timescale



Customer satisfaction (100 people surveyed every month)

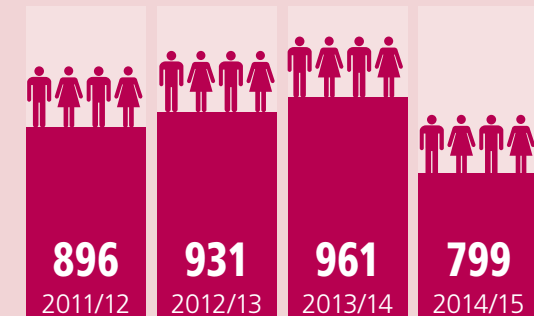


### Complaints and compliments

Compliments received



Complaints received





# Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

The framework says your landlord should:

- provide opportunities for involvement and empowerment
- have a clear focus on good customer service, choice and complaints
- understand and respond to the diverse needs of customers

This year some real, practical, positive changes have been suggested by the wide range of involved tenant groups. Over the last year, volunteers have given up their time to help South Tyneside Homes make improvements across its services, to benefit all tenants. As well as carrying out new reviews, the teams have also been monitoring service performance and working with managers on consultation exercises which lead to service improvements.

There are a variety of ways that tenants are involved in helping to improve services. These include:

- Scrutiny Panel, which carries out in-depth reviews of services and recommends improvements.
- Tenant Inspectors, who inspect South Tyneside Homes' Service Standards to see whether they are being met.
- Customer Forums, which carry out consultative workshops and discuss ways in which South Tyneside Homes can improve the management of homes and the delivery of services.
- Residents Groups, which are locally-based groups focussing on improvements to their area.

## Key achievements

Some of the key achievements of the involved groups are:

- the Scrutiny Panel and Tenant Inspectors carried out joint reviews on the sign-up procedure and Estate Walkabouts recommending a number of service improvements.
- the Scrutiny Panel carried out a review of tenant/leasehold board member recruitment.
- the Customer Forums produced a new Lettable Standard leaflet for prospective tenants.
- developed "What's Next?" cards for repairs, when extra work is needed.
- conducted consultation exercises on changes to customer services, our energy survey and value for money.
- ongoing communication improvements following the Scrutiny Panel's review of Decent Homes.



Involved tenants help to promote South Tyneside Homes across the borough

## Watch this space...

During 2015/16 the involvement groups will be working on more projects to help improve services that tenants receive. Reviews of the Homefinder service and Housing Plus are planned as well as developments to publications and the website to improve customers' understanding and satisfaction.



**Kevin Carter,**  
Scrutiny Panel member

"Having been involved with various organisations throughout my working life and helping people I was pleased to become involved with the Scrutiny Panel of South Tyneside Homes. This has given me another outlet to keep my mind active in retirement and hopefully help South Tyneside Homes and its residents whilst enhancing myself with the various courses that are made available to me."

"By being part of the Scrutiny Panel process I have gained confidence within myself and the training provided by South Tyneside Homes like equality and diversity plus many more course looks great on my CV. This has helped me enormously with the fantastic support of the Involvement Team."

**Beverley Corner,**  
Scrutiny Panel member





## Involvement team

The Involvement team supports the various involvement groups which form the Involvement Framework, as well as providing training and development opportunities to involved tenants to help with their personal and professional lives.



The Involvement team

## Training

The training programme for involved tenants has continued to progress since its launch in 2013. Last year, the Involvement team increased both the number of courses available and the range of subject areas covered. 23 courses were provided over 43 sessions with 152 attendees. This represents a 33% increase from 114 in 2013/14.

The courses available covered Universal Credit Awareness, Energy Efficiency, IT Skills, Equality and Diversity and Introduction to Service Improvement.

## South Tyneside Homes' Apprenticeship Scheme

South Tyneside Homes is committed to supporting young people and developing employability skills in local people. The organisation has a wide range of apprenticeship programmes covering plasterers, electricians, painters, customer services, gas and plumbing, general maintenance, housing and business administration, employing a number of local young people every year.

In September 2014, our latest 10 apprentices started in their relevant skill area and are all making excellent progress.



The 2014 year one apprentices

"Having an apprenticeship with South Tyneside Homes is an amazing opportunity. I have been able to gain experience from various areas of the company including Business Support and Tenant Involvement. As a Business Administration apprentice I have been supported to gain an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration, and the potential to achieve the Level 3 qualification. I believe my apprenticeship will be beneficial for my future roles."

**Amy Punshon,**  
Business Admin Apprentice



## Did you know?

**23** training courses were provided to involved tenants across 43 sessions with 152 attendees.

There are **58** tenants involved across the core involvement network.

**11** resident groups have been supported by the Involvement team in the last year.

## Things to do

- Continue to implement the Involvement Framework and work with involved tenants to review how it is going.
- Develop the approach to involvement at a local level with the Housing and Area Management Delivery teams.
- Continue to work with tenants expressing an interest in involvement and help them find the right opportunity for them.
- Improve the accessibility of [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk) to ensure tenants have access to the latest information

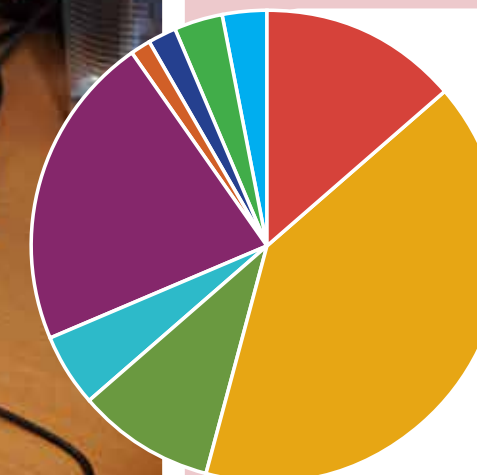




Customer Services is committed to dealing with your queries quickly and efficiently

## Number of complaints by team

Team	Total Number Logged	Total Percentage (%)
Area Management	107	13.81
Repairs and Maintenance	316	40.77
Empty Homes	73	9.42
Homefinder	40	5.16
Decent Homes	164	21.16
Housing Plus	12	1.55
Tenancy Enforcement	14	1.81
Income	27	3.48
Customer Service	22	2.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>100%</b>



### Complaints Received

Area Management	(13.81%)
Repairs and Maintenance	(40.77%)
Empty Homes	(9.42%)
Homefinder	(5.16%)
Decent Homes	(21.16%)
Housing Plus	(1.55%)
Tenancy Enforcement	(1.81%)
Income	(3.48%)
Customer Service	(2.84%)

## Customer Services

The Customer Service teams, in both the housing offices and the customer service centre, continue to take and resolve customer queries as the first point of contact for the organisation. This service is vital in ensuring that your queries are dealt with quickly and efficiently.



From April 2015, the way in which South Tyneside Homes handle calls changed, with all repairs being reported to the customer contact centre rather than using two call centres. Using one team to handle all calls means that you should receive a more consistent experience when reporting a repair.

All members of staff are trained in-house and to the same standard to ensure that excellent customer service is delivered to every tenant.



### Watch this space...

There are some exciting developments planned which will improve customer services over the next year. The telephone system will receive a significant upgrade to improve call handling and reduce technical issues, and new technology will be introduced to improve the response to customer enquiries and reduce staff training time.

## Complaints handling

South Tyneside Homes has continued to work at improving the complaints system. Staff who deal with complaints have had refresher training to ensure that customer care remains a high priority. In order to stop repeated errors from occurring, staff have been shown the importance of focusing on using complaints information to make improvements to services.

The organisation is also committed to learn from compliments to help make improvements in other service areas.

### Did you know?

**427** compliments were received.

**67%** of complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

**75%** of calls were resolved at the first point of contact.

**172,259** calls during 2014/15 were handled by the Customer Services team.

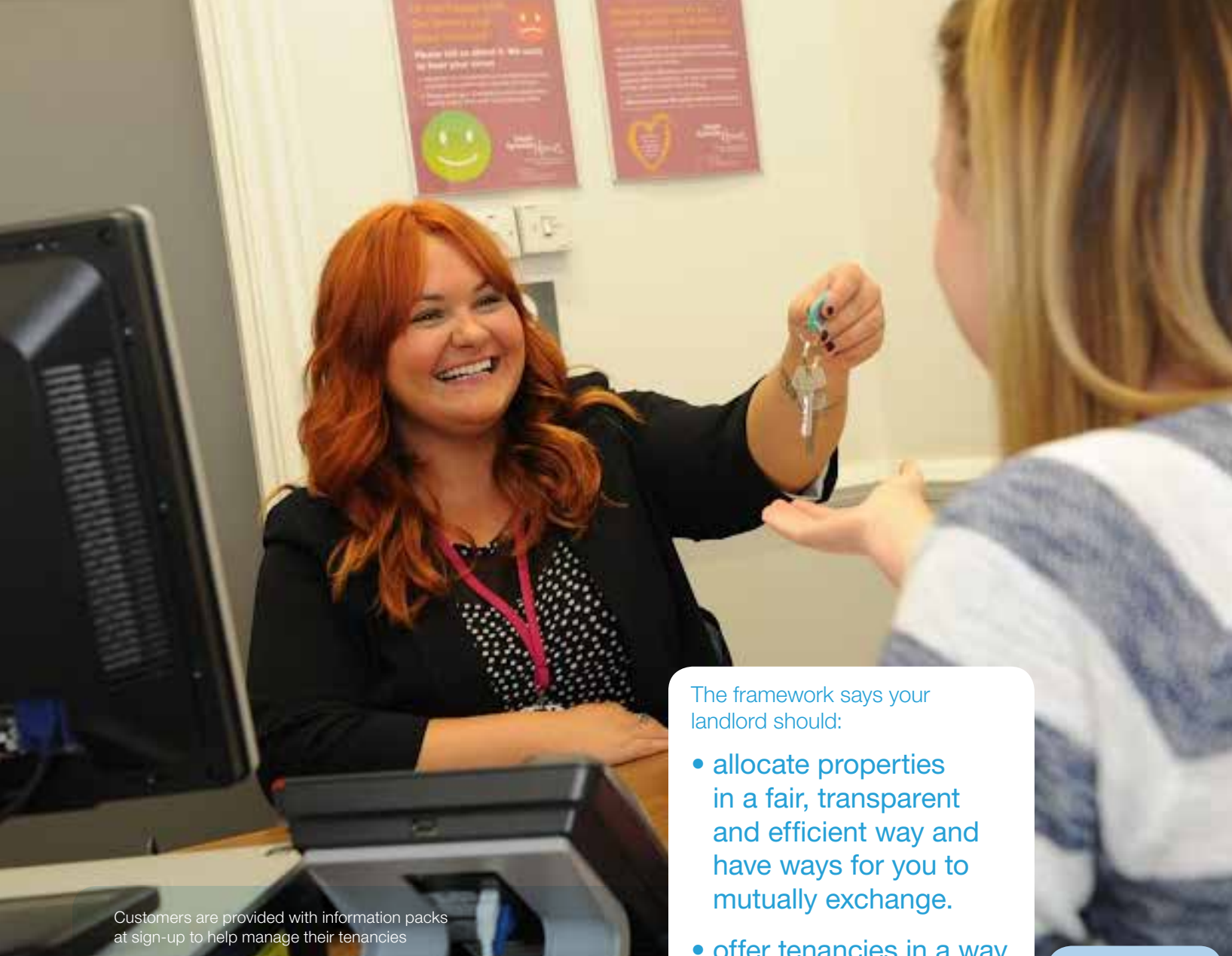
**58%** of calls were answered in 30 seconds or less.

**72,665** people visited our local housing offices.

### Things to do:

- Review repairs text service to landlines.
- Work with tenants to develop the extended use of the customer relationship management system.
- Expand the use of social media, for example facebook. You can like us at [f /stynesidehomes](https://www.facebook.com/stynesidehomes)





Customers are provided with information packs at sign-up to help manage their tenancies

The framework says your landlord should:

- allocate properties in a fair, transparent and efficient way and have ways for you to mutually exchange.
- offer tenancies in a way that makes best use of stock.

# Tenancy Standard

## Key Projects and Achievements

### Continued development the Homefinder service

The Homefinder service has continued to evolve and develop over the last year. The team has now taken full responsibility for the homeless service and temporary accommodation on behalf of South Tyneside Council. A review of the Allocations Policy is ongoing and it is anticipated that this will be completed in 2015, with the aim of making it easier for customers to understand.

As part of continuous development the team has undergone an extensive training programme to ensure customers receive excellent customer service. The team's next goal is to achieve the Gold Standard for Homelessness over the next two years. This is a national recognition of service excellence and it is hoped that South Tyneside Homes will become one of the first



council-owned organisations to achieve this.

The team also introduced a Young Person's Co-ordinator who works specifically with young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## Did you know?

Last year it took on average **36.21** days to repair and re-let a property.

We had on average **218** empty properties at any given point.

The Homefinder pages of the South Tyneside Homes website received over **90,000** views throughout the year.

**36,960** bids have been placed for housing.

**3,118** offers have been made.

**379** homeless cases were made, of which 240 of these were accepted.

**392** furniture packs were delivered to tenants.

**973** applicants registered for a mutual exchange.

## Things to do

- Involve customers in the development of a new housing options system.
- Explore potential changes to the furniture pack scheme and the option to buy furniture.
- Advertise properties during the termination period.
- Improve how we market empty homes including properties which are readily available
- Investigate the possibility of introducing variable tenancy start dates.
- Continue to reduce the time taken to let a property.
- Continue reducing the number of empty homes.
- Review the introduction of the Lettable Standard leaflet.

## Development of a new Lettable Standard leaflet

Working with involved tenants, the Empty Homes team has developed a new Lettable Standard leaflet which is given to all prospective tenants when they receive a property offer. This has made the standard much easier for customers to understand and ensures that they know what to expect. During 2015, checks are planned to ensure this standard is being met and to look at how it might be improved.

## Empty Homes

South Tyneside Homes has continued to focus on reducing re-let times over the last year. Empty properties lead to lost income so efforts have been focussed on re-letting properties as fast as possible, whilst ensuring that they are let at a quality standard. Due to the impact of welfare changes, some properties have become more difficult to let and the Empty Homes team along with Homefinder have been looking at how we can best match these to the right tenants.



## Mutual Exchanges Case Study

"I completed a mutual exchange in early 2015. My previous property had a huge garden which was difficult to maintain. I was advised by housing office staff that a mutual exchange would be an additional option to a traditional housing application. I found the process was much quicker than joining the housing register and I have moved into a property which is a similar size without a garden. The staff were really helpful throughout the process and I would definitely recommend and consider this process again in the future"

**Carl Wilson,**  
South Shields  
tenant





# Tenancy Management

The framework says your landlord should:

- support its tenants to maintain their tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions.

## Rent collection and performance

2014/15 was another challenging year in terms of rent collection. As tenants continue to be affected by changes to the welfare and benefit systems, some tenants are finding it increasingly difficult to pay their rent and manage their tenancies. Despite this, £64.96million of rent was collected last year with the collection rate again rising by 0.03%.

The Income team is continuing to work hard to ensure that as much income is collected as possible. This is hugely important to ensure that the finances are available to operate and deliver key services to customers. Supporting customers is paramount and evictions are only used as a last resort.

## What has South Tyneside Homes done to help tenants?



- Increased partnership working between the Income team and Welfare Support team to make sure all customers who need additional support have access to this.
- Supported tenants to make claims for the Discretionary Housing Payment where possible. £293,770 was claimed last year by South Tyneside Homes tenants (71% of the total budget for the South Tyneside borough).

## Universal Credit is coming

The Government has started the roll out of Universal Credit across the country which will merge a number of existing benefits into one single monthly payment. The first claimants of this new, simplified benefit in South Tyneside will be in early 2016. South Tyneside Homes is going to great lengths to prepare for this and ensure that our customers are supported throughout this process as we recognise that a significant number of our customers will be affected by the changes. In preparation for this, the Welfare Reform team and the Council's Welfare Rights team have merged to form the new Welfare Support team. This is providing customers with an easy "one stop shop" for welfare advice and debt support.



The Income team supports tenants to manage their tenancies

## Did you know?

Your rent statement is available at [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk)

**£294,770** was distributed in Discretionary Housing Payments to help keep tenants in their homes.

**99.81%** of all rent was collected; up from 99.78% during 2013/14.

**234** referrals were made to advice agencies by Income staff to help get tenants additional support to help manage and sustain their tenancies.

## Things to do

- Review the current system of recording information across Welfare Support Team and develop a way to record the number of referrals made to the team for advice and support.
- Continue preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit.
- Introduce mobile working for income and housing staff.
- Complete the evaluation of Tenancy Support visits.
- Introduce new Tenancy Support visits to customers.

## Watch out for...

Improvements being made to the tenant online account system on the South Tyneside Homes website which can help you manage your tenancy. As well as viewing your rent statements you will soon be able to:

- view information relating to your gas service
- view potential asbestos information for your property
- update your personal details

## Housing Management Support

South Tyneside Homes is committed to supporting tenants in their properties and ensuring that tenancies do not fail. Last year, housing staff carried out over 2,200 tenancy support visits to both new and existing tenants, which was a decrease from 3,240 visits carried out during 2013/14. Although performance has decreased, there have been a significant number of changes in this area of the organisation, particularly in terms of staffing. Tenancy Support Visits will continue to be a main priority for the new Delivery Officers to ensure tenancies are maintained.



Before

During

After



A before, during and after view of internal Decent Homes work

## Home Standard

### Key Projects and Achievements

#### Decent Homes programme delivery update

2014/15 was the second largest year of the Decent Homes programme with 3,812 properties being made decent. South Tyneside Homes was successful in attracting an additional £15million to help complete the remainder of the Decent Homes programme by December 2016.

Last year there were some problems experienced with Decent Homes contractors and South Tyneside Homes has worked hard to make sure that a strong commitment to customer care was maintained. Stricter procedures and guidelines have been

implemented for contractors to ensure performance is at the levels expected. South Tyneside Homes' staff have also carried out more frequent site visits to ensure customers are supported throughout the work.

In response to issues over the past year, the roofing programme was accelerated in order to meet targets. During 2014/15, 591 roofs across the borough were replaced against the initial target of 350

The framework says your landlord should:

- provide a quality of accommodation that meets the Decent Homes standard
- carry out repairs and maintenance to your homes

#### Things to do:

- Improve information on the Decent Homes programme available to customers at [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk) including information on future planned work programmes.
- Engage tenants to get involved with local sustainability schemes and eco projects.
- Continue to increase the uptake of tenants receiving energy efficiency advice.
- Conclude the review on the aids and adaptations service.
- Make a further 3,393 homes decent during 2015-16.

## Sustainability and Improving Lives

South Tyneside Homes is committed to improving both the properties and the lives of our customers. The Development team has been involved in a number of projects which aim to improve environmental impact and save money for the organisation and customers. Some of the key projects which the team have been involved with include:

- replacing failed cavity wall insulation in 200 properties on The Lonnen estate
- continued work with local universities around understanding the impact of home improvements on health and wellbeing
- installation of solar panels on 224 properties which will reduce carbon emissions by 200 tonnes and help to tackle fuel poverty

#### Criteria used to identify properties suitable for solar panel installation:

- Received either a Decent Homes or 'one off' electrical upgrade within the last 10 years
- Appropriate roof orientation (due south)
- Roof size (ample amount of panels to make installation affordable)
- The roof must either be new or have at least a remaining lifespan of 30 years
- There must be no roof obstacles (for example flues)
- There must be no shading issues
- The installation must be approved by Northern Power Grid



## Aids and Adaptations

Customer satisfaction with the aids and adaptations service has increased to 97.48% from last year's figure of 96.67%. Last year 490 aids and adaptations were fitted enabling resident to continue living independently in their home.

#### Did you know?

**£37m** was spent on Decent Homes during 2014/15, the second largest year of the programme.

**3,812** properties were made decent.

**224** properties were fitted with solar panels.

**65,000** visits were carried out to properties by 24 South Tyneside Homes Decent Homes team members to support tenants during work.

**3,770** customers responded to the energy survey.



# Repairs and Property Maintenance

## Key Projects and Achievements Repairs and Maintenance Progress

The Repairs and Maintenance team has continued to make progress against their targets and the recommendations which were made by the Tenant Inspection team in order to drive improvements across the service. Customer satisfaction with the service was at 97.44% for the year.

Working with the Tenant Inspectors, the team has improved timescales for repair inspections, resulting in customers being able to book an appointment for a more timely inspection. New staff training has been undertaken to improve consistency of information when repairs are recorded.

A "What's Next?" card has been introduced to inform customers receiving repairs of any additional or follow-up work needed with a likely timescale for completion. Initial feedback from customers so far has been positive.

South Tyneside Homes has created a series of "Maintaining Your Home" educational film clips. These are aimed at helping tenants to manage their own property, where it is simpler for them to do so, and will contribute towards a reduction in responsive repairs. The film clips are available at [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk)



The Repairs and Maintenance team has a 97.44% customer satisfaction rating

### Did you know?

**114,491** repairs were raised by tenants last year.

**97.44%** of customers were satisfied with repairs service, up from 94.9%.

**99.78%** of routine repairs were completed within the 20 day timescale.

**99.41%** of emergency repairs were completed within the four hour timescale.

You may be charged up to **£200** if further action is needed when access cannot be gained to carry out your gas service.

## Gas Servicing



Once again, every single property received its yearly gas safety check and has a valid gas safety certificate. The Annual Report Working Group would like to congratulate the Gas team for its fantastic achievement. This can only be achieved with the help and co-operation of our tenants. However, where tenants do not allow access to their properties, the team works in partnership with South Tyneside Council and the Magistrates Court to gain entry into these properties and ensure that the gas appliances are safe.

"As a Gas Auditor it is my job to ensure that all gas work is carried out correctly, safely and to a high standard, to do this I inspect work across the Gas Servicing, Gas Repairs and Heating Installation teams."

Ian, Gas Auditor

"As part of the Gas Servicing team it is our responsibility to ensure that all appliances are serviced at the correct time each year. This ensures that the appliances are safe to use and prevents unwanted breakdowns. This also keeps the appliances working as efficiently as possible, saving money for our customers"

Adam, Gas Service Engineer



### Tips to keep you safe in your home

- Never block any air vents in walls or doors; this could jeopardise your safety.
- If you see changes in the gas flame, which is normally blue to a yellow/orange flame, switch off the appliance and call South Tyneside Homes on 0300 123 66 33.
- If you see sooting or discolouration around the gas appliance, switch off the appliance and call South Tyneside Homes on 0300 123 66 33.
- Always allow access for the annual gas service.
- Ensure any work carried out is completed by a Gas Safe Registered Engineer.

### Things to do

- Reduce occasions where jobs are not completed at the first visit.
- Develop a robust planned work programme to reduce the number of repairs undertaken.
- Explore ways of measuring the use of "What's Next?" cards and the effect on communication between repairs teams and customers.
- Consult with tenant groups on designing a pictorial gas service leaflet which will be distributed to tenants so they know what should happen as part of their annual gas safety check.
- Put mobile working in place across the Gas Servicing team.
- Explore the possibility of sending gas certificates to customers electronically.



# Neighbourhood and Communities Standard

## Key Projects and Achievements

### Changes to Area Management services

Following a significant review of Housing and Area Management by South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes in 2014, major changes have been made to join-up services and work in a more efficient way.

These changes mean that South Tyneside Homes now manage areas as a whole, rather than just the Council's housing stock, creating a "tenure-blind" service which includes all private properties alongside Council housing.

Following the changes, staff are more visible in areas, dealing with local area problems in a much more proactive way.

The changes also brought the street cleaning and anti-social behaviour services into South Tyneside Homes, enabling Housing and Area Management teams to work together more efficiently to improve local areas.

The framework says your landlord should:

- Keep the neighbourhood and communal areas clean and safe.
- Co-operate with tenants and other partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing.
- Prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods.



## Boldon "Month of Action" Pilot Scheme

In March, South Tyneside Homes piloted a "Month of Action" which aimed to promote the changes to area management and promote the proactive presence across the borough. Boldon residents were surveyed, asking what they thought about their area and what improvements they would like to see. The team used the results to tailor services in the Boldon area.

The scheme included a two-week programme of positive engagement, where South Tyneside Homes worked in partnership with the fire service, local police officers and the Community Safety teams to build relationships with local residents and promote the new way of working. A number of activities were also set up for young people.

Overall the scheme was a success and the Area Management team is currently looking to roll this out in other areas across the borough.



Before



After

Housing and Area Management teams will be out and about looking at ways to improve your local area







The Trinity Community Garden has been a huge success with local residents

## Trinity Community Garden

In last year's report, there was an article on the Trinity Community Garden scheme in the Trinity Laygate area of South Shields. This was a scheme where South Tyneside Homes and South Tyneside Council worked with local residents to transform a piece of open land into a community garden.

This has been a huge success in transforming the local area, providing a much needed location for both residents and local schools to learn gardening skills, develop a hobby and grow friendships as well as flowers, fruits and vegetables. In addition, the scheme has had huge benefits on the health and wellbeing of those involved, bringing communities together and developing, life-skills and healthy lifestyles.

## Things to do:

- Promote contact details for all relevant services following the Area Management changes to ensure residents know who to contact.
- Finalise the new Area Management policies following service changes.
- Improve information on [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk) about Area Management, Enforcement and Handy Estates services.
- Train Area Management and Handy Estates staff and empower them to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and littering.
- Introduce body cameras that staff will wear and record evidence of anti-social behaviour and support fixed penalty notices.
- Carry out further staff training to ensure that hate crimes are reported and monitored.
- Amend working patterns of Handy Estates teams to address the demand of the service.
- Promote environmental cleansing campaigns.
- Develop ICT systems to improve communication between South Tyneside Homes, South Tyneside Council and customers on environmental issues.
- Put mobile working in place for area based offices that will allow them to give tenants a more improved and timely service.

## Keeping your Estates Safe Community Safety

In December 2014, the Tenancy Enforcement team at South Tyneside Homes and the Community Safety team at South Tyneside Council merged as part of the commitment to join-up working and deliver improved services. The new service will continue to work as part of the Safer Neighbourhoods Partnership with partners (including Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire Service and Environmental Health) to share information and plan how best to deal with anti-social behaviour issues on estates and meet joint targets. There have been a number of policy changes by the Government which have streamlined previous powers and allowed organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour more quickly, using tools such as injunctions where needed. As part of the new approach, the team will attend local residents' meetings where there is a specific concern about anti-social behaviour to engage with the local communities and deal with issues in the first instance, preventing these from escalating.



## Did you know?

Your Housing Management Officer is now known as your **Delivery Officer** and is your first point of contact to deal with any area-based issues.

Between December 2014 and March 2015, the Handy Estates team collected **360** tonnes of rubbish across the borough.

**318** warning letters were issued to tenants for anti-social behaviour.

**1,200** gardens are maintained as part of the Council's garden tidy scheme which aims to assist vulnerable people in managing their garden.

**844** enforcement cases were opened by the Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement team.

**38.1%** of household waste is currently recycled. The target is 50% by 2020.





Housing Plus tenants socialise in the communal lounge



## Key Projects and Achievements Housing Plus Investment and Improvements

During 2014/15, Housing Plus teams have been working hard, together with contractors, to deliver a number of projects after securing £8.4million in funding to transform the Housing Plus schemes. It is hoped that the work will improve independent living and promote health and wellbeing of residents as well as provide access to technology including the internet.

The work included:

- construction of 19 conservatories/sky rooms
- installation of four sensory rooms
- new CCTV systems in 26 schemes
- upgraded telecare in 26 schemes
- installation of internet access and Wi-Fi in schemes to promote digital inclusion
- communal touch screens and printers
- "Smart Boards" installed in communal entrances
- providing scooter stores, where provision was inadequate



### Progress update

The next phase of the project will involve promoting the new facilities and working with residents to make best use of the technology to promote digital inclusion. This will make sure no-one is left to feel isolated.

Residents of Housing Plus schemes have received improvements which have not been seen anywhere else in the country, demonstrating the commitment to improving the lives of residents. South Tyneside Homes would like to thank all Housing Plus residents for their co-operation during the works at schemes.

### Service charges

South Tyneside Homes is aware of customers' concerns about service charges and the charging for communal halls. A working group of staff and tenants are continuing to work on this issue with representatives from South Tyneside Council. It is hoped that a resolution for this will be reached during the next 12 months. South Tyneside Homes has also committed to changing the Housing Plus tenancy agreement to better explain all charges relating to residents of schemes and ensure that they are fully informed from the outset.

### Did you know?

**Two** Housing Plus officers have received additional, in-depth training in recognising and dealing with mental health issues such as Alzheimer's.

**70%** of tenants living in social housing do not have the skills, knowledge or access to computers, therefore may be excluded from this technology.

### Things to do:

- Amend Housing Plus Tenancy Agreements to better explain all service and support charges to Housing Plus tenants.
- Continue work on service charge issues for communal halls.

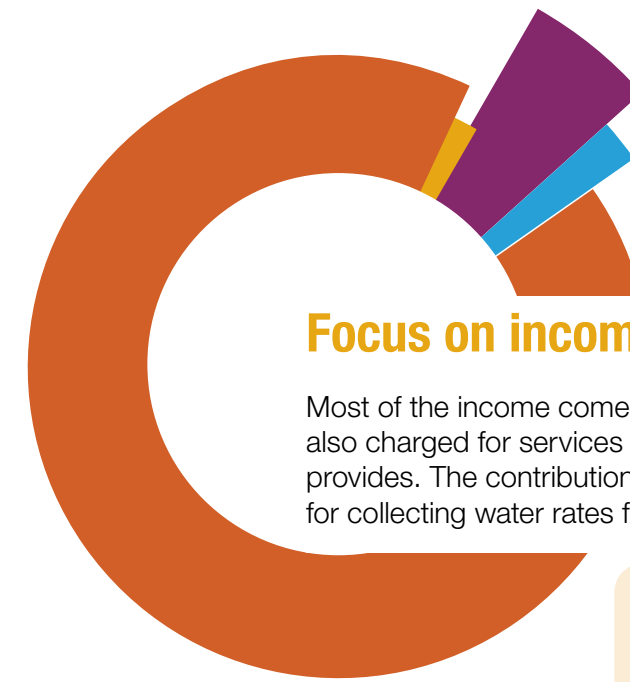
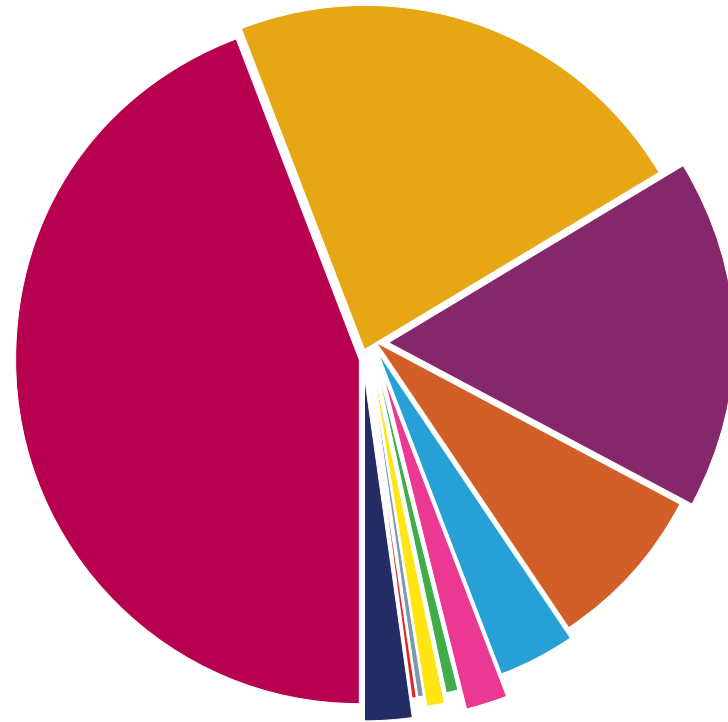


# Making Sense of the Money

South Tyneside Homes manages around 18,000 homes on behalf of South Tyneside Council. In 2014/15 the income was £70.1million.

Below is an overview of how your rent was spent during the year.

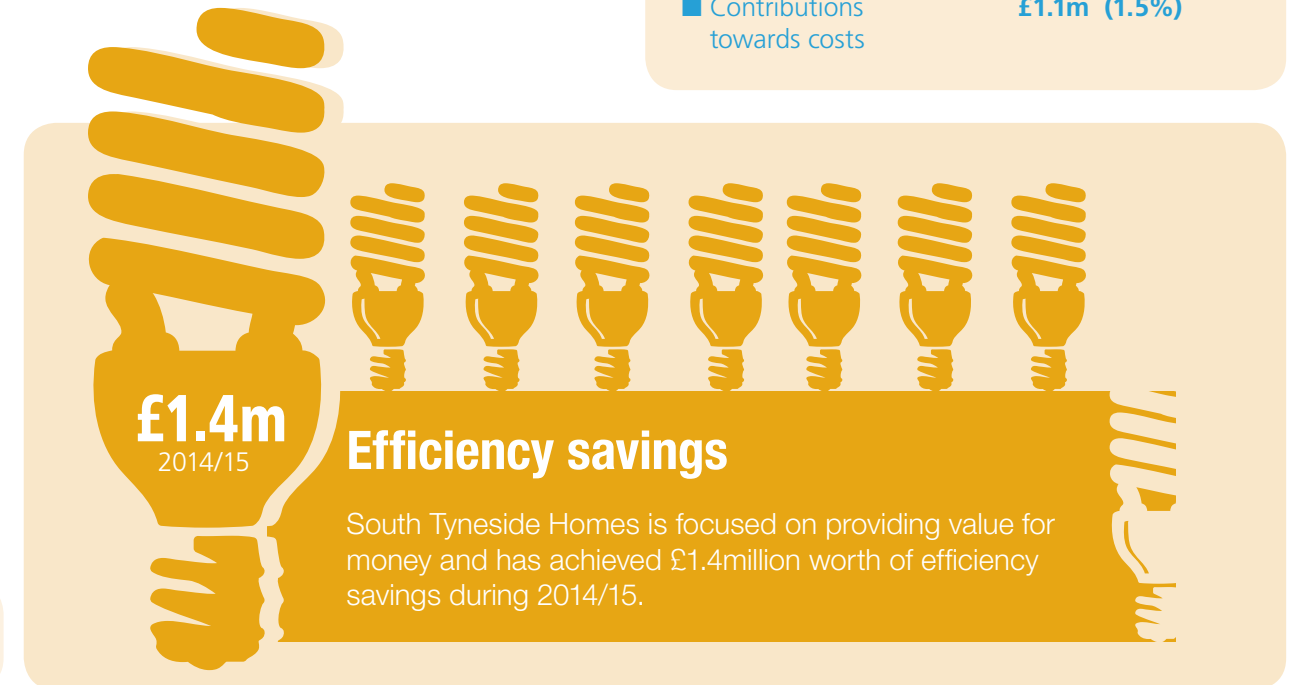
Capital Charges	£29.8m	44.3%
Repairs and Maintenance	£14.9m	22.1%
Housing Management	£11.2m	16.6%
Central Services	£5.2m	7.7%
Rents Rates and Taxes	£2.4m	3.6%
Estate Management	£1.3m	1.9%
Anti-social Behaviour	£0.4m	0.6%
Income Management	£0.5m	0.7%
Empty Homes	£0.2m	0.3%
Tenant Involvement	£0.1m	0.2%
Other	1.3m	2.0%
	<b>£67.3m</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Focus on income

Most of the income comes from rent but tenants and leaseholders are also charged for services and facilities that South Tyneside Homes provides. The contributions come from various sources such as the fee for collecting water rates from tenants:

House rents	£64.6m (92.2%)
Garage and shop rents	£0.9m (1.3%)
Charges for services and facilities	£3.5m (5.0%)
Contributions towards costs	£1.1m (1.5%)



## For every £1 of rent you pay...



**44p** is paid out for capital charges (this is the interest paid on borrowing the money to provide the houses)



**22p** is spent on repairing the houses



**17p** is spent on managing the tenancies



**4p** is the cost of specialist housing services



**8p** is spent on central services such as the warden call service



**5p** is spent on miscellaneous costs including rent, rates and taxes





# Get involved!

Contact the Involvement Team

☎ | 0300 123 6633

🌐 | [www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk)

📍 | Visit any local Housing Office

If you know someone who needs this information in a different format, for example large print, Braille or a different language, please call Marketing and Communications on 0191 427 1717.