



# ANNUAL REPORT



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# WELCOME

## Welcome to Aspire Housing's annual report to customers for 2013/14.

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As customers who work with Aspire to improve services we have scrutinised and, in some cases, challenged the information in here.

Involved customers have agreed priorities with Aspire Housing over the services that need to improve.

Whether you agree or disagree please let us know what you think.

**Steve Meakin, MBE**

*Aspire Housing Customer Panel Chair*

Aspire Housing's annual report gives an update on how we are performing against the six national standards that all social landlords must follow.

I hope you find the report interesting and useful. If you have a view about how we could do things better, please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

**Philippa Holland**

*Aspire Housing Board Chair*

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# YOUR HOME

## INVOLVED CUSTOMER PRIORITIES:

- are customers satisfied with repairs and maintenance?
- do we get repairs right first time?
- are customers satisfied with the overall quality of their home?

## REPAIRS – HOW WE DID

**37,000**

repairs completed  
(1 every 13 minutes)



emergency repairs  
responded to within  
4 hours (target 100%)



appointments made for  
responsive repairs  
(target 95%)

**98%**

of appointments for  
non-emergency repairs  
were kept (target 97%)

**79%**

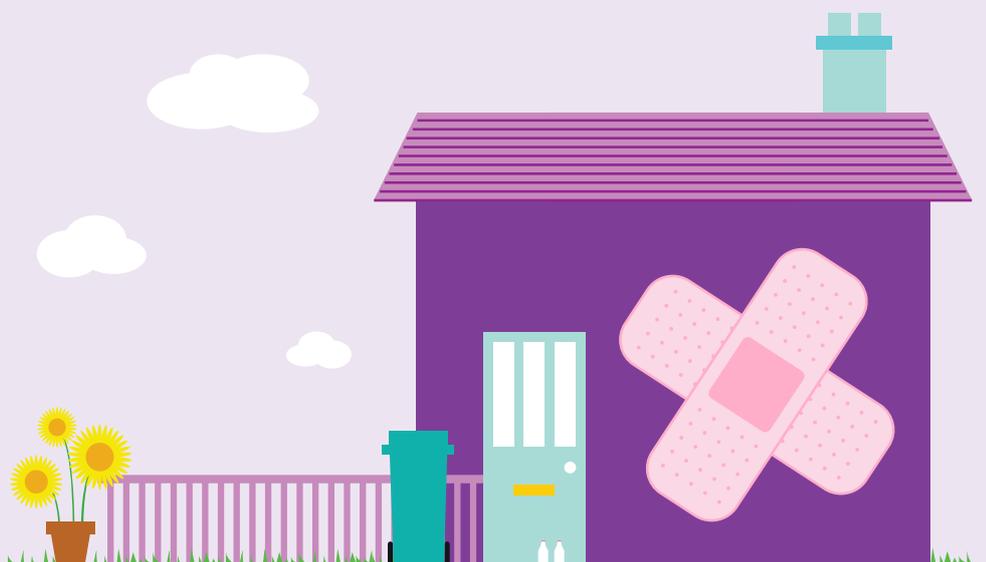
of repairs completed on  
first visit (target 80%)



of homes meet "decent  
homes standard". The  
remaining 1.4% will be  
programmed for work to  
bring them up to standard

## EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

- We have introduced a property "MoT" – checking more than 900 properties a year for problems before they arise and fixing items before they break
- We cut the time taken in fitting both kitchens and bathrooms from 11 days to five for each – providing a quicker and better service for customers, in a more efficient way



## EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

We have invested £965,000 improving gardens, boundary walls, fencing and driveways of 195 homes



## IMPROVEMENTS AND NEW HOMES – HOW WE DID



146 homes fitted with new central heating, 408 homes with energy efficient boilers, plus complete refurbishment of 53 Airey-type properties to reduce heating costs



flats received 'facelift' improvements in response to consultation with residents



minor adaptations such as ramps and handrails



new homes completed at Ingestre Square, Blurton



homes bought at Beaconside, Stafford



new homes started at 5 Aspire land and garage sites



helped 25 people onto the property ladder through shared ownership

## YOU HAVE TOLD US

	2012 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS	2013 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS	TOP HOUSING ASSOCIATION PERFORMERS
SATISFACTION WITH REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE	86%	81%	85%
SATISFACTION WITH THE OVERALL QUALITY OF YOUR HOME	85%	82%	87%

## WE ARE WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE BY:

- cutting the time taken to complete repairs
- making appointments available after 3.30pm and on Saturdays
- improving the quality of customer service
- dealing with damp, mould and condensation
- replacing windows that have failed
- providing sound insulation in flats
- investing £1.5million per year over the next 25 years to provide improvements outside the home



# YOUR SAY

## INVOLVED CUSTOMER PRIORITIES:

- does Aspire listen to views?
- does Aspire keep customers informed?

## CUSTOMER CONTACT



services available in Newcastle town centre and community locations including Chesterton One Stop Shop, Kidsgrove Town Hall, Andrew Place and Cornerstone Cafe in Silverdale



phone calls answered

# HELLO

text messaging introduced



"likes" on Facebook – 95% response within 24 hours



face to face enquiries

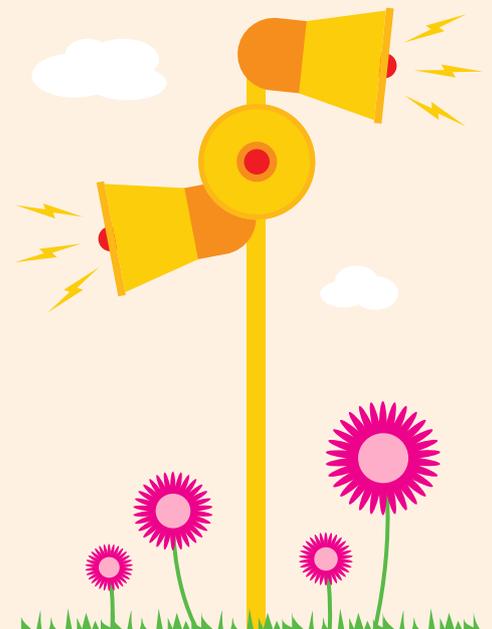
## EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

- 1,195 customers on Your Account, our interactive personal tenancy account service



## LISTENING TO VIEWS

- News n Views, plus newsletters for involved customers and local areas
- customer workshops
- exchange of views on Facebook and neighbourhood blogs
- "information days" to explain projects
- environmental estate officer visits
- we dealt with 163 formal complaints
- engaging with residents' associations
- "local offers" – our pledges to customers from 2010 – are now complete. New pledges have been made in our strategic plan





## SURVEY METHODS

We were disappointed with the results from our 2013 written survey of 3,000 customers, so in 2014 we began ringing a sample of customers immediately after a service had been provided, so we could identify issues and address them straight away.

The results from these phone surveys have been more positive than the written survey.

**87%**

**were satisfied with their repair**

**96%**

**were satisfied with improvement works**



**were satisfied with the way their phone or face to face contact was dealt with**

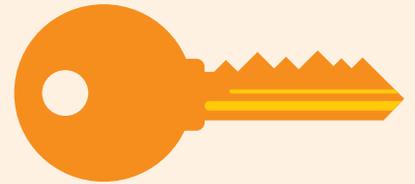
## SCRUTINY AND INFLUENCE FROM CUSTOMERS

The scrutiny panel reviews services by examining evidence, carrying out inspections and challenging the way things are done. The customer panel and other customer groups work with Aspire to make customers' voices heard and to improve services.

1. planned repairs appointment system – carried out review, identified issues and made recommendations that were accepted by the Aspire Housing Board
2. planned improvements programme – looked at the way customers are informed about work such as new kitchens and bathrooms, identified improvements and made recommendations that were accepted by the Aspire Housing Board
3. created a priority plan and performance measures
4. developed new ways of preventing antisocial behaviour; improving social activities in sheltered housing schemes
5. dealing with welfare reform through advice and support
6. review of estate caretaking, leading to improved service

### WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON:

- dealing with more enquiries at first point of contact and getting it right first time
- building on our Facebook, Twitter, Your Account, email and text customer contact methods to be more convenient and cost effective
- improving scrutiny arrangements and focusing involvement on customer priorities
- engaging more at a local level



### KEY ISSUES FOR INVOLVED CUSTOMERS

- ways to communicate with customers about services and activities
- what services are "standard" and what there will be an extra charge for
- how we will get repairs right first time
- how customers are expected to look after their homes and neighbourhoods

# YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

## NEIGHBOURHOODS

The 2013 survey of 3,000 customers said the top five neighbourhood problems were:



car parking



drunken or rowdy behaviour



litter & rubbish



noisy neighbours



perception of disruptive children & teenagers

**WE TAKE ACTION AGAINST CUSTOMERS WHO BREACH THEIR TENANCY CONDITIONS. THE MOST FREQUENT TYPES OF TENANCY BREACH INVOLVED:**

- noise
- verbal / harassment / intimidation
- poorly maintained gardens
- pets and animals

## WHAT WE DID



action against 290 customers for poor property or garden condition



weekly meetings with council, police & fire service to deal with antisocial behaviour and ensure a joined up and rapid approach we are in our third year of neighbourhood plans for Crackley and Poolfields and we have developed a further plan in the past year for Chesterton



managed more than 650 cases of antisocial behaviour

## EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

- we secured over £140,000 from 19 different organisations to support activities such as football, dance, theatre skills, confidence building, tree planting, community allotment scheme and help for the Chesterton One Stop Shop

## ENVIRONMENTAL ESTATE OFFICERS

Our new team carried out



**inspections of  
blocks of flats**



**We expanded the communal  
cleaning service to 170 blocks  
of flats since April 2013,  
benefiting 1,600 customers  
who had not previously  
received this service**

### EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

Services provided for customers who have particular needs included:

- 1,320 handyman jobs
- 776 painting and decoration jobs
- 278 soft furnishing jobs
- 400 gardens maintained



**estates issues identified  
and resolved**



**caretaking jobs completed**

## YOU HAVE TOLD US

### WE ARE TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS AND WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE:

- better partnership working in Silverdale and town centre
- Information to customers over community initiatives, involvement and impact
- a recognition scheme that rewards the positive contribution customers have made and takes action against those in breach of their tenancy agreement
- helping people to resolve and manage their own neighbour issues
- prevention activities at hotspots
- dealing with antisocial behaviour hotspots

**2012  
SURVEY  
OF 3,000  
CUSTOMERS**

**2013  
SURVEY  
OF 3,000  
CUSTOMERS**

**TOP HOUSING  
ASSOCIATION  
PERFORMERS**

**SATISFACTION  
WITH  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
AS A PLACE  
TO LIVE**

**88%**

**83%**

**86%**

How Aspire compares in regular surveys of customers

# YOUR TENANCY

## YOUR TENANCY

2,146

customers on the housing register 31 March 2014, down from 2,344 the year before

37.5

days was the average time we took to let an empty property

0.82%

of homes were empty on average, a slight improvement on last year

60

customers registered with Homeswapper, our mutual exchange scheme, leading to 58 moves

70

we assisted 70 customers to transfer to a smaller property where they were either under-occupying their home or affected by the bedroom tax

849

we let 849 properties - 71 more than the previous year. 49 of these were homes that Aspire built or acquired.

## EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

- introducing a new way to allocate our empty homes that are not subject to an agreement with the council. This policy will recognise customers who make a community contribution who work, volunteers or are in training
- highlighting the benefits of living in an Aspire home – this will help us to let our empty homes quickly

## YOUR RENT

2012 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS

2013 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS

TOP HOUSING ASSOCIATION PERFORMERS

SATISFACTION THAT RENT PROVIDES VALUE FOR MONEY

82%

75%

86%

How Aspire compares in regular surveys of customers

**WE ARE WORKING HARD TO IMPROVE VALUE FOR MONEY.**

## AVERAGE RENT LEVELS

NO OF BEDROOMS	AVERAGE RENT 48 WEEKS	AVERAGE RENT 52 WEEKS
BEDSIT	£77.42	£71.46
1	£80.92	£74.70
2	£87.36	£80.64
3	£94.14	£86.90
4	£106.04	£97.88
5	£147.52	£136.17
OVERALL AVERAGE	£87.92	£81.16

Note: Aspire charges rent on a 48 week basis, the figures are shown for 52 weeks to allow comparison with other landlords.

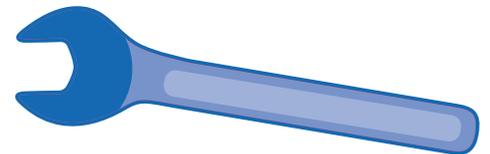
## ASPIRE'S RENTS REMAIN MUCH LOWER THAN NATIONAL AND LOCAL AVERAGES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING.

### HOW DID WE DO?

- £408,000 - outstanding rent arrears on 31 March, compared to total rent charges for the year of £34.4 million (1.19%).
- 60% of customers affected by the bedroom tax have no arrears on 31 March
- 2,702 arrears cases pursued and support offered, but only 34 customers were evicted for non-payment of rent
- customers had told us previously that they weren't clear what services charges paid for, so in March for the first time, service charge information was sent out with rent notification statements. As a result there was a dramatic fall in the number of enquiries about service charges.

## WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

We are preparing to support customers with the introduction of universal credit, which is expected to be rolled out into this area within the next 12 months.



### EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

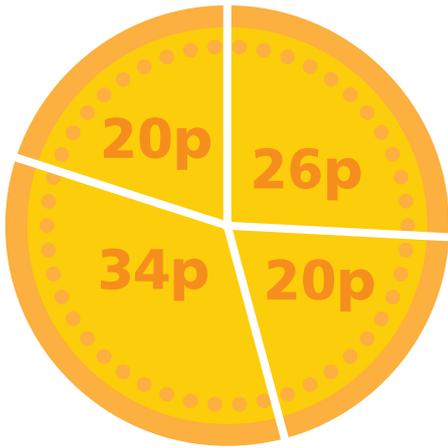
Our involved customers suggested we should be more proactive in chasing non-payment through phone calls and texts. So we cut the number of letters sent in a month from 1,047 to 83, compared to the previous year, and saved £800 in postage and other costs. This has freed time to allow our revenue offices to work more in communities.

### EXTRA VALUE FOR MONEY

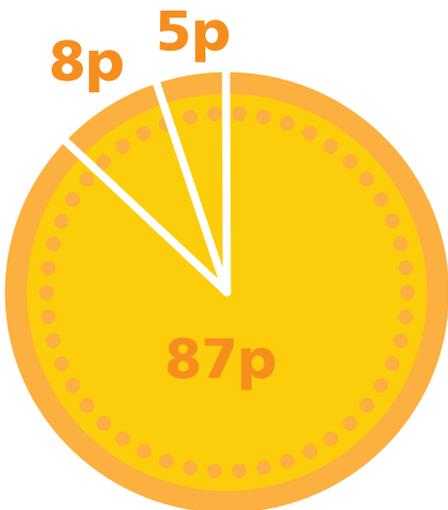
- 531 customers supported with money advice
- £2.4m debt rescheduled or written off
- 85 customers supported at benefit tribunals, of whom 75% were successful
- £414,000 gained in benefits for customers through money advice



## HOW YOUR RENT IS SPENT



PER £1 SPENT	PENCE
MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE COSTS	26
REPAIRS	20
INVESTING IN MAINTENANCE OF OUR HOMES	34
INTEREST ON BORROWING	20
	100



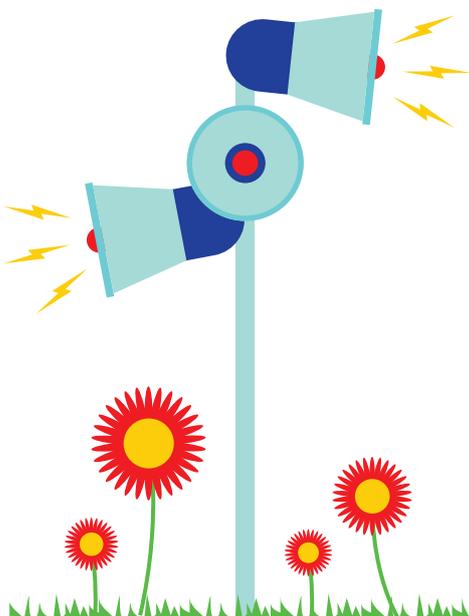
## WHERE ASPIRE HOUSING'S MONEY COMES FROM

INCOME	PENCE IN THE £
RENT & SERVICE CHARGES	87
PROPERTY SALES	8
OTHER	5
	100

## YOU HAVE TOLD US

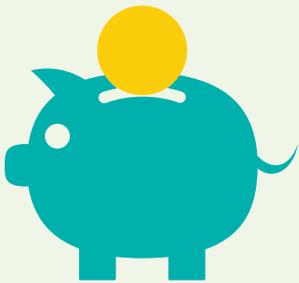
	2012 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS	2013 SURVEY OF 3,000 CUSTOMERS	TOP HOUSING ASSOCIATION PERFORMERS
SATISFACTION WITH OVERALL SERVICE PROVIDED	89%	85%	89%

How Aspire compares in regular surveys of How Aspire compares in regular surveys of customers



# VALUE FOR MONEY

## WHAT WE HAVE DONE



we have strategies in place for value for money and procurement. These include comparing ourselves against similar organisations and working with customers to identify efficiencies and value



we measure the cost, quality and performance of what we buy and how we provide services – and we use the savings to provide better services



we renegotiated our contract for grounds maintenance to provide better value and we chose a new provider for our van fleet



our front line staff are being equipped with the mobile technology to work in neighbourhoods, freeing desk space and saving time in the office



we made £164,000 from land sales and got £400,000 from property sales – with the proceeds used for building of new homes



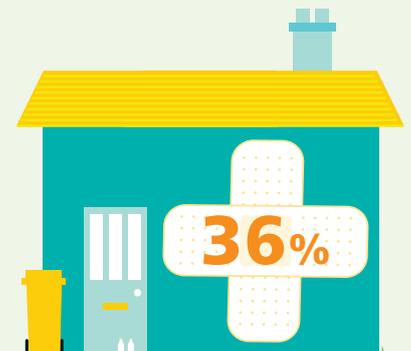
£1/2m cost savings made last year and £1/4m identified for this year



additional funds secured through grants and other support



brought in more than £3m of government grant funding to help build new homes



Costs on the 50 homes that have the highest number of repairs cut by 36%

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# HOW WE ARE RUN

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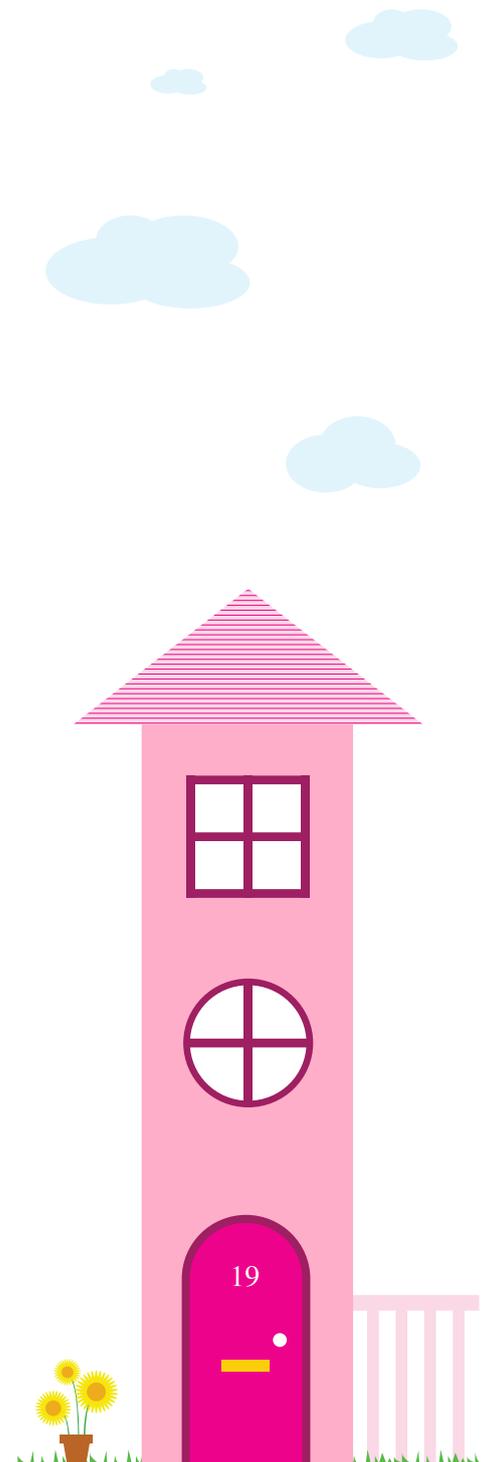
**Aspire Housing is part of the Aspire Group, which includes PM Training, Furniture Mine, Social Enterprise West Midlands and the Realise Foundation, our unique regeneration charity.**

**Over the past year a new 2014-19 corporate strategy has been developed for the Aspire Group and for Aspire Housing.**

**Aspire Housing has received the highest possible ratings for governance and financial viability from the national regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency.**

**Being part of a group brings many benefits to Aspire Housing customers, including:**

- 124 customers were on apprenticeships with PM Training in the academic year 2012/13
- 379 tonnes of furniture collected through Furniture Mine for sale at low cost or to help people set up home
- 398 customers supported with jobs advice, leading to 105 going on to training, volunteering or employment
- 109 customers trained to help Aspire improve services
- 117 customers received employment and skills training
- 208 customers received tenancy sustainability training
- Environmental improvements, training and learning through our charity



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# CONTACT US

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## In person

At our customer service centre -  
43 - 45 Merrial Street,  
Newcastle-under-Lyme,  
ST5 2AE

Monday 9am – 5pm  
Tuesday 9am – 5pm  
Wednesday 9am – 5pm  
Thursday 11am – 5pm  
Friday 9am – 5pm  
Saturday 9am – 12 noon

## By Phone

01782 635200

Monday 8am – 5pm  
Tuesday 8am – 5pm  
Wednesday 8am – 5pm  
Thursday 8am - 8.45am  
then 11am – 5pm  
Friday 8am – 5pm  
Saturday 9am – 12 noon

## By Email

[enquiries@aspirehousing.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@aspirehousing.co.uk)

## Out of hours

Emergency housing advice  
01782 615599

Emergency repairs  
01782 854999

Antisocial behaviour hotline:  
0845 6803758

## By Post

Aspire Housing  
Kingsley  
The Brampton  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
ST5 0QW



