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Inspection of Cardiff Community
Housing Association: a Summary
Report

**Cardiff Community Housing
Association**



The Welsh Assembly Government (the Assembly Government) has appointed the Auditor General for Wales to carry out the inspection of housing associations in Wales under Section 96c of the Government of Wales Act 1998.

Inspections assess how an association is meeting the expectations of the Assembly Government as set out in the current Welsh Assembly Government's *Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales* (the Regulatory Code). Inspectors assess the quality of service provided in a range of service areas. They also assess how the Association secures continuous improvement in the Association as a whole and in relation to inspected services.

The inspection of the Cardiff Community Housing Association (the Association) was undertaken in **January 2006**. The full report is available from:

Wales Audit Office,
2-4 Park Grove,
Cardiff CF10 3PA
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Within eight weeks of the publication date, the Association should circulate this summary of the report to tenants and key stakeholders and produce a brief commentary and action plan setting out how it will respond to the inspection findings. The commentary will then be published on the Wales Audit Office website.

The Lead Inspector will review the action plan and confirm whether it is acceptable or identify any necessary changes. The Lead Inspector will make recommendations to the Assembly Government regarding the frequency of progress reviews. The Assembly Government's Regulation Co-ordinator assigned to the Association will undertake progress reviews, and in consultation with the Lead Inspector will 'sign off' completion of the action plan.

The inspectors found that Cardiff Community Housing Association (CCHA) was providing good and satisfactory services in the majority of service areas and excellent services in respect of providing housing. CCHA's approach to securing continuous improvement was raising standards in service delivery.

- 1. CCHA had good arrangements in place for its relationship with residents.** CCHA encouraged resident involvement. It had a clear framework agreed with residents and involved residents in shaping the policy and future direction of the Association. CCHA produced clear and accurate information and advice for residents and asked for, listened to, and acted on of the views of residents. It was answerable to residents for the quality of services it provided, but it needed to do more to make it easier for residents to access and make use of its service standards and Customer Pledge.
- 2. CCHA had satisfactory equal opportunities arrangements in place for service users and staff.** CCHA was involved in a range of activities which aimed to promote respect for diversity and equality of opportunity. It was working to improve information and advice in an appropriate range of formats and languages and to develop its approach to monitoring equalities data. The Association was developing a Welsh Language Scheme but did not have appropriate arrangements in place for dealing with requests for a service in Welsh.
- 3. CCHA had an excellent approach to providing housing and meeting local needs.** The Association worked as an effective, valued and creative partner with Cardiff Council and other agencies to identify and provide for the housing-related needs of the communities it served. It was leading and participating in a range of community development, neighbourhood renewal and regeneration initiatives.
- 4. CCHA was providing a good rents service to tenants.** The Association had effective arrangements for debt prevention although it needed to do more to publicise these arrangements and assess how well they were working. CCHA had effective arrangements in place for the control and recovery of rent arrears.
- 5. CCHA's letting service was satisfactory.** The Association was letting properties to a high standard. Whilst it could have let properties more quickly, it had identified what needed to be done to improve its performance. CCHA ensured that people in housing need were aware of and had good access to its housing. It worked effectively in partnership with Cardiff Council on the allocation of housing. CCHA ensured that the people it housed were fairly selected and had effective systems in place to ensure that it achieved a balance in housing allocation.
- 6. CCHA was providing a good housing management service.** It ensured that residents were offered the most secure form of occupancy, and was helping to safeguard the quality of life of residents and neighbours through its approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

7. **CCHA was providing a good maintenance service.** It was effectively carrying out responsive repairs, statutory gas servicing and cyclical and planned maintenance. CCHA had a clear plan to fully identify the maintenance and improvements necessary to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and to put in place programmes of work to meet the standard by 2012.
8. **CCHA has good arrangements in place for people with support needs.** It made housing available for people with a wide range of support needs and made sure that they had access to appropriate services. CCHA was applying key expectations equitably to customers who needed support and was tailoring its service delivery to meet their specific needs. However, it needed to improve its systems for identifying customers who need support.
9. **CCHA's approach to securing continuous improvement was raising standards in service delivery.** CCHA was implementing a new approach to performance management and continuous improvement and it recognised that it needed to do more work to develop this approach to be fully effective and to provide more robust plans for further improvement. It was able to show evidence of service improvements in a variety of service areas as a result of successfully managed and implemented improvement processes. The Association needed to be realistic about the range and scope of improvement activity which it can tackle effectively.

Examples of good practice demonstrated by Cardiff Community Housing Association included the following:

Relationship with residents: involving residents in the work of the Association.

The Association worked with its residents to produce a Welcome Home Pack which provided attractive, user-friendly information on how to get involved in the work of the Association.

Providing housing: matching clients to adapted properties. The Association was host to the Cardiff Accessible Homes partnership of housing, social care, health and voluntary agencies in the City of Cardiff. The partnership had identified the housing needs and preferences of clients, and had developed a database of existing adapted properties across all social landlords in Cardiff and a 'matching' process to allocate adapted properties.

Providing housing: the Young Builders project. The Association's Cardiff Young Builders project had developed a multi-agency approach to deliver sustainable outcomes for young people by breaking the 'no job, no home cycle'. The project provided young people with a training programme with support, self-contained housing with support, and the opportunity to secure permanent employment and permanent accommodation at the end of their participation.

Providing housing: the Association's schools project. As part of its neighbourhood renewal work, the Association's schools project had engaged with four local schools in a project offering safety advice on building sites to children, as well as encouraging them to learn about the construction industry and their environment.

Housing management: dealing with anti-social behaviour. The Association's Community Solutions team had developed a highly effective approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour. The team was effective in involving residents in the development and delivery of the service and provided information on how the Association dealt with complaints of anti-social behaviour. Systems and documentation had been developed which ensured a consistent approach and the involvement of relevant local agencies. Management information systems allowed review and evaluation of the impact of action taken.

Examples of good practice demonstrated by Cardiff Community Housing Association included the following:

Housing maintenance: managing gas statutory servicing. The Association had developed highly effective procedures for managing statutory servicing. The Association and its contractor worked jointly to achieve timely servicing. A database was used to manage servicing and this was supported by robust and creative approaches to gaining access which were informed by local knowledge and the involvement of, and good co-ordination between, all parts of the Association. The system emphasised the importance of personal contact with residents. The IT system ensured that access issues could be raised when residents made contact for other repairs. Senior staff and the Board regularly monitored the up-to-date position on servicing and regular information was provided to residents emphasising the importance of giving access to allow servicing to be carried out.

Housing maintenance: involving residents in assessing housing standards. The Association had surveyed all residents to get their input into its programmes of work to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. As well as finding out about residents' views of standards within their homes, the Association was using the survey to take account of cultural and physical aids which might be required and issues such as affordable warmth.

Cardiff Community Housing Association (the Association) was established in 1976 and is a registered social landlord and Industrial Provident Society registered under charitable rules. At 30 September 2005, the Association managed 2,296 properties serving communities in Cardiff. A significant proportion, 17%, of the Association's customers identified themselves as 'non-white'. The Association's head office was in Ocean Way, Cardiff but most customer contact was via its two community offices in Adamsdown and Splott. The Association was managed by a Board of Management of 15 including five tenant Board members. The Chief Executive led a Directors' Team, comprising himself and three Directors which met monthly. A Management Team which included senior managers met bi-monthly. At the point of inspection, the Association employed 85 staff.



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