

Kemble Customer Annual Report 2009 - 2010



“Creating places where people are **proud** to live and work”



Kemble Customer Annual Report 2009 - 2010

Our customers have played a vital role in both producing and scrutinising this Annual Report.

The report gives some examples of the many ways in which customers have been involved in the development of services and agreeing plans for improvement.

For more details about Kemble or WM Housing Group (formerly West Mercia Housing Group), please go to our websites at www.kemblehousing.co.uk and www.wmhousing.co.uk.



CONTENTS

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard	pg 4
Home Standard	pg 6
Tenancy Standard	pg 9
Neighbourhood and Community Standard	pg 11
Value for Money Standard	pg 13

Welcome from Kemble

Chair Kemble Customer Panel - Ros Williams

I am Chair of the Kemble Customer Panel, as well as Vice-Chair and tenant representative of the Kemble Board of Management and Chair of Flights Residents Association.

I am also a member of the new Joint Group Customer Panel, which we hope will be able to bring further improvements across WM (formerly West Mercia) Housing Group. The first year has mainly been about becoming established. There are representatives from all four WM Housing Associations (Harden, Kemble, Nexus and Whitefriars) on the panel – a maximum of six from each, together with members of the Customer Involvement Team.

It has been a steep learning curve. Major areas of work during the year have been working on the Vision and Values for the new WM Housing Group and advising the individual Customer Panels on the integration of Whitefriars into the Group, inputting into many new Group wide policies and being involved in the selection process of the new Executive Management team. We have also done a lot of work on the implications of the setting up of the Tenant Services Authority (the TSA). We want to encourage more customers to become involved and we are looking at setting up customer training to give people the skills to feel more comfortable about becoming involved.

We are also looking at increased communication between the Customer Panels to help in the exchange of ideas. We are also looking at how we can deliver effective feedback on activities between the Customer Panels.

This Annual Report is the first to be produced in line with the TSA guidance, which makes it clear that the TSA wants customers to be involved in producing and scrutinising this report. As the Joint Group Customer Panel, we can help ensure that it is a useful report, addressing the issues that are important to customers and have been highlighted by the TSA. We have held a number of special meetings looking at these requirements and we hope that you will find this report both informative and helpful.

Ros Williams

Kemble Chair – Andy Johnson

The last year has seen Kemble Housing continuing to move forward both in terms of the range of services we provide, new homes and how we operate.

We are delighted to see the completion of some important developments in the villages of Woolhope and Wigmore. We have also acquired homes offering both rented and shared ownership homes in Kington.

During the year there have been improvements in the area of customer involvement with the most significant being the launch of our Customer Scrutiny Panel which has the ability to make suggestions and comments, with a view to improving how we operate.

The Government's rent setting formula, to which we have to adhere, meant that there was a large increase in rent for several customers just when many people were losing their jobs or going on to part time working and at a time when inflation was falling. Government policy at the time meant we could not average the rent change over two years, and so we established a financial advice service which sought to help increase customers' income. This looked at issues such as budgeting, unclaimed benefits and rescheduling loans and we believe led to an increase of £126,000 in income as a whole for our customers over a six month period. We are hoping to continue this service in some form in the future.

We made useful changes to the repair ordering Contact Centre, which has led to further improvements in service and more recently to extended hours of operation.

SHYPP has continued its positive work with Herefordshire Council to expand its services to groups of vulnerable young people, whilst its volunteering activities have also helped many others in the community.

We have started a regular series of meetings with Councillors and Council staff to work more closely together on delivering homes and services in Herefordshire. My thanks to all who have worked to deliver so much.

Andy Johnson

What is this report about?

The regulator for housing, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), now requires us to issue an annual report to customers. This annual report must give customers an honest and helpful view about how well Kemble is performing against the TSA standards for:

- Tenant involvement and customer care
- Maintaining your home
- Allocating homes and setting rents
- Looking after the neighbourhood and communal areas
- Value for money

How well we do on meeting these standards is checked by the TSA (www.tenantservicesauthority.org).

Local Offers

We want our services to be based on what customers actually want. The TSA expects this to happen and that this should be discussed, and agreed locally with customers. Our first local offers will be ready by April 2011.

The Joint Group Customer Panel considered a process for how customers will be involved in developing local offers on the 8th June. They are keen to see approaches that respond to local needs and improve outcomes for customers. They also want to see other agencies like the Police and Council, working with Kemble to meet local needs and priorities.

Kemble and WM Housing Group's approach to developing local offers will be driven by customers. Our framework to develop local offers is set over a three year period. In year one (leading to April 2011), we will look at what customers have already told us through the many feedback opportunities we offer and agree with our involved customers a set of areas for developing local offers, over a two year period.

The first round of offers will be developed in 2011 and we will continue to consult with our customers to develop additional local offers in 2012. This will include the customers' priority areas of repairs and anti-social behaviour.

Local offers will set out what is to be delivered and to what standard, how Kemble can be held accountable for delivering that, how it will improve things for customers and how customers can be involved in monitoring the agreed service.



// We see local offers as a way of making further improvements in services that are based on local needs and priorities. //

Denise Shuker, Executive Director, Housing and Communities

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment



// I think all services are excellent. 11 out of 10 for range of payment options. //

Kemble customer, Spring 2010

What the standard says

We should provide our customers with choices, information and communications that meet their diverse needs. We should offer a range of ways to make a complaint and provide opportunities for you to be involved in the management of your home.

How do we do this?

Customer Service, Choice and Complaints

We provide information through newsletters, leaflets, policies and handbooks, our web site, through our offices and staff.

Customer care and access is important to us. We listen carefully to our customers and we have developed a Customer Excellence Strategy to ensure we develop our services in consultation with customers.

Our service standards are minimum standards we will meet in key areas of our work. Each standard is monitored on a regular basis and we report to our customers on how we are doing. The table shows our performance in meeting these standards for 2009/10.

Customer Satisfaction (Status Survey 2009)	Kemble
With overall service provided	87%
With views being taken into account	66%
With repairs and maintenance service	82%

Complaints

We also have a clear and easy-to-use complaints service which we have recently reviewed with the help of our customers.

2009/10	Received
Complaints	49
Dealt with 'on the spot'	8
Compliments	410

Understanding our Customers

Customer profile

Male	Female	White British	BME* Black and Minority Ethnic	Ethnicity Not known
41.37%	58.63%	79.13%	2.02%	18.85%

Our Customer Profiling project has provided us with key information on our customers which is being used to improve services and meet customer needs to ensure we treat all customers with fairness and respect.

A group-wide strategy sets out our objectives for equality and diversity over the next three years. Customers were able to influence the development of the strategy, as well as our new policy.

Involvement and Empowerment

We involve customers through surveys, our newsletter, informal events, estate walkabouts and through residents groups, customer panels, groups and forums.

Some of the ways customers have contributed to our services during the year include:

- our Disability and Equality Group helped shape our Aids and Adaptations policy
- our Environmental Improvement Panel has been assessing and approving bids for projects which provide value for money and improve local neighbourhoods
- Scrutiny Panel members were involved with customer website portal trials
- customers have helped choose contractors and recruit staff
- several Kemble customers turned detectives to become Mystery Shoppers to test our Contact Centre service



Plans for Improvement - We will:

Work with the Joint Group Customer Panel to determine what our customers consider as "excellence".

Work to understand our customers' needs even better and we are looking to improve records of where aids and adaptations have taken place.

Help more customers feel comfortable about becoming involved in our many customer groups and initiatives by

developing a package of customer training.

Continue the development of customer scrutiny arrangements.

Continue to build our understanding of our customers and say what changes we have made to our services, and the involvement activities we offer.

Improve how we work with partners like the Police and voluntary agencies, on issues affecting our communities.

Work to involve more customers in what we do, particularly those from the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and disability groups.

Work with customers to develop and publish local offers.

Demonstrate how we will involve customers in monitoring these offers and the national housing standards.



What the standard says

We should make sure our homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 31 December 2010 and provide a cost effective repairs and maintenance service to our homes and communal areas.

How do we do this?

Decent Homes Standard

Kemble already meets the Standard for all our homes and we plan to maintain our properties to continue to meet or exceed the standard.

Customers have contributed to the Decent Homes programme through customer surveys, by feeding back on our Group Asset Management Strategy 2009-13, and by choosing layouts and styles, where appropriate.

New Homes

During 2009/2010, Kemble developed 19 new homes across Herefordshire. All our homes are built to meet high levels of energy efficiency - the Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 3 - and relevant Design and Quality Standards and National Building Regulations.

A number of energy efficiency features have been incorporated in new homes. For example, at a four-home development at Woolhope, near Hereford, we used an air source heat pump. This is the first time that we have used this technology and we will be closely monitoring the fuel bills of our customers to see how much can be saved.

Customers are surveyed when their new home is six months old. They are also visited after the first year to obtain information about the home to deal with any problems and to learn from this information for future builds. Since 2005, customer satisfaction with our new homes has been maintained at 95% or above.

Repairs and Maintenance

Our Repairs and Maintenance service covers day to day repairs to homes and communal areas, and planned repairs, such as gas servicing, etc. We have a Repairs Right First Time policy and monitor our repairs performance against our targets. All customers are encouraged to complete feedback forms for repairs, gas servicing and planned works, such as painting so that we can continue to improve our service.

Our Contact Centre has extended its opening hours from 8am to 8pm, to make it easier for our customers to contact us, and we have developed our appointment times to meet customer needs. Outside these hours, customers can report emergency repairs direct to a team working on Kemble's behalf. We are continuing to develop the Contact Centre service with the help of our customers.

We spent £226,323 on day to day repairs during the year, a further £4,304 on decoration and £630,510 on planned repairs and maintenance.

Our Environmental Improvements Customer Group has a budget to approve bids which provide positive benefits for the local neighbourhood. During the year, £21,514 was spent on improvements which included: fencing, paving, bollards, ramps, anti-vandal paint, signs, and a shed for a communal area.

Aids and Adaptations

Our Customer Disability Equality Group has been involved in developing a new policy, and a new information leaflet is now available.

In 2009/10 we spent £18,836 on aids and adaptations, including:

- 50 grab rails
- 4 ramps
- wheelchair access for three homes
- doors and widening frames for four homes,
- 1 level access shower
- 23 chairs for showers
- 1 level access shower
- resurfaced footpaths at a sheltered scheme
- lever taps at 2 properties

Voids

Voids are empty properties. Our Lettable Standards Customer Group monitors how much we spend on these properties, and customer members accompany our maintenance surveyors on empty property inspections to make sure they meet standards for new customers.

The average amount of days that a vacated property was empty last year was 12 days which is an even better performance than the year before.



// It's a grand job, excellent. The new ramp makes access to the communal areas so much smoother for me. //

*Kemble wheelchair user,
Winter 2009*

Plans for improvement - We will:

Undertake a significant review of our repairs service - the single most important aspect of our service in the eyes of our customers. A major part of this review will be extensive consultation with customers to arrive at a new repairs service offer.

Monitor homes fitted with energy saving features to ensure they are financially benefiting the customer and minimising any effects on the environment.

Update our asset management database so that we know what work needs doing and when we need to do it.

Consult with customers, the Council, energy providers and government agencies about improving standards for existing properties and new properties.

Update our customers' New Build Design Review Questionnaire.

Involve customers in developing local offers.

Involve customers more by:

- offering better incentives to return our repairs satisfaction surveys
- increasing consultation on how our Planned Repairs programme is developed
- simplifying and clarifying how to qualify for a decorations allowance
- increasing customers awareness of all of the services offered, especially Health and Safety
- establishing a Repairs and Maintenance Customer Complaints Forum
- looking at options for our Contact Centre telephone number



To find out more
about getting
involved go to
kemblehousing.co.uk

You can also pick up
a leaflet from one of
our offices or
call your housing
officer on
01432 377 900

What the standard says

The TSA wants to see that we let and rent our homes in a fair and efficient way.

How do we do this?

Allocations

We use the common waiting list for Herefordshire and advertise all our available properties via the choice-based lettings agency Home Point, apart from supported housing which is let through special referral arrangements.

We actively help:

- customers looking to move by using a home swap scheme
- young people aged 16-25 through our Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) which provides three foyers and other supported housing and support services
- to reduce homelessness in Herefordshire by providing temporary accommodation as well as in new and existing homes.



Number of Homes let 09/10	Empty homes at as 31 March 09/10	Average days to relet a property 09/10	New homes built for rent 09/10
105	5	12	15

Rents

Our rents are set out in a Government formula which aims to set similar rents for similar sizes of property in an area. Compared to other Housing Associations in Herefordshire, our rents are one of the lowest.

We have a wide choice of methods available for paying rents; the details are published in our leaflet 'Rent and Service Charge payment advice'.

Average Rents 2009/10 (£s per week)

Bedsit	55.48
1 bed	67.55
2 bed	75.69
3 bed	79.05
4 bed	86.1



// If SHYPP (Supported Housing for Young People Project) was not here, I do not know what I would have done. SHYPP quite literally saved my life. They are brilliant, helpful, friendly, knowledgeable and much needed in Herefordshire. //

*Young SHYPP customer Hugo,
Aug 2010*

We have agreements with agencies which provide additional services to our customers to help budget for rent and other payments. These include: Citizens Advice for debt advice; Credit Union for savings and loans and Housing Benefit to ensure claims are processed quickly.

In October 2009 we introduced a financial advice project. Over the last six months this has helped our customers to gain £126,000 of additional income through extra benefits or re-profiling of loans.

Where possible we make affordable payment arrangements with customers who are struggling to pay their rent and any arrears.

We have got better at collecting rents, meaning more money is available to spend on services.

Tenure

We provide the most secure form of tenancy for the home and the sustainability of the community, and we meet all legal requirements.

We give Starter tenancies to a majority of our new residents with a probation period of 12 months after which a fully assured tenancy is granted unless there is good reason not to.

We work closely with a range of support providers in our Care and Supported Housing schemes to ensure that services are delivered to a high standard to these customers.

At the exchange of contracts meeting (Sign Up), new customers are made aware of their rights, responsibilities, and conditions of tenancy, as well as what we must do as the landlord.

Plans for Improvement

We will be consulting with customers to tackle issues of under occupation and overcrowding.

We are developing a more robust system to ensure that homes continue to be lived in by the tenant to whom it was let.

We are focussed on keeping rents affordable and providing support to our customers to maximise their ability to pay.

We have set challenging local targets for our rent teams to maximise rental income and continue to improve our performance.

Neighbourhood and Community

What the standard says

The TSA wants to see that we give customers a say in shaping their local area, and tackling anti-social behaviour.

How do we do this?

Neighbourhood Management

Kemble aims to create a peaceful, safe and quality living environment for our customers.

To do this we manage empty properties; deal with abandoned vehicles; set cleaning standards; manage communal areas, landscapes and tree maintenance; tackle vandalism and graffiti; make environmental improvements; improve security, rubbish disposal, etc.

We do this through:

- our Customer Environmental Improvements Panel which assesses bids to fund projects which will benefit local communities, including some which address anti-social behaviour issues.
- working with the Credenhill Residents Association to provide fencing and a communal storage shed, and funding a £3,000 local football project to provide coaching and training for local youngsters, helping to promote healthy lifestyles
- a range of scheme-based management services, such as, cleaning, window cleaning and grounds maintenance. Our customer Contract Monitors feedback on service performance
- regular scheme Walkabouts by Housing Officers with customers to highlight areas of local concern
- a Tree Management Programme to ensure that trees are well kept and health and safety risks are minimised

Our Customer Satisfaction Status Survey tells us we are doing well, placing Kemble in the top 25% for neighbourhood management services compared to other local similar sized social landlords.

Local Area Co-operation

Hereford has a local partnership which is made up of a group of organisations who want to make a difference to the lives of people who live and work in Herefordshire. Kemble and our Supported Herefordshire Young People Project (SHYPP) are committed to this partnership and are members of groups that work towards these goals.



// The football project in Credenhill continues to be an incentive to help young people be more aware of their behaviour on the estate and stay out of trouble. //

*Kemble customer Ros,
August 2010*



// Herefordshire CAB is delighted to be working with Kemble on its Financial Inclusion Project. This work is enabling the CAB to reach clients who would not have been able to access advice. This project is one of the best examples of partnership working Herefordshire CAB has been involved in. //

Claire Keetch, Chief Executive, Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureaux

In addition we:

- work with key agencies such as Police, council, probation, social services
- are part of the Domestic Abuse Forum for Herefordshire
- aim to help our customers maximise their incomes through the Financial Advice Project set up with Citizen Advice Bureau
- support young people between 16 and 25 years old through our SHYPP team, helping 99% to keep their tenancies

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

We are signed up to the National Respect Standard for Housing Management and are committed to delivering good quality services to help stop anti-social behaviour.

We ensure that our customers know their responsibilities in terms of anti-social behaviour and that we have a strong focus on preventative measures. The tenancy agreement sets out clear tenancy conditions. The majority of new residents have starter tenancies which convert to more secure tenancies if no problems have arisen after a year.

In addition we:

- are members of the Social Landlord's Crime and Nuisance Group
- work with others to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we have homes. Our Credenhill football project, is one example
- use a range of ASB remedies, taking account of the complainant's views
- respond quickly to environmental problems such as graffiti and abandoned cars
- have an out of hours anti-social behaviour reporting service
- support victims of domestic abuse

Plans for improvement - We will:

Aim to develop a pet's policy with customers to clarify an issue which can cause disputes.

Make better use of the Housing Officer walkabouts and we will be trialling customer suggestions for specific pre-arranged walkabouts.

More effectively address anti-social behaviour:

- work with our Scrutiny Panel to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure our performance
- develop a customer/staff panel to decide on case closure - when there is no further practical action that Kemble can take in dealing with a complaint of ASB
- improve our estate inspection procedure with the help of our Customer Panel

Value for Money

What the standard says

The TSA wants to see cost-effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet customers' and potential customers' needs.

How do we do this?

For the past decade, WM Housing Group and partner associations have prioritised resources to ensure that the quality of our accommodation meets the Government's Decent Home Standards.

In 2009/10, 45% of the Group's expenditure was on repairs, maintenance and improvement programmes to our properties. All of this expenditure is subject to careful checks to maximise the value for money of our programmes.

Maintaining local accountability and customer choice impacts on operating costs, and 43% of our expenditure in 2009/10 was spent on estate based services, care and support and the management and running costs of the Group.

At Kemble our customer group reviews costs of each environmental improvement bid to ensure that we are achieving the best value for money.

In the light of changing grant conditions for supported housing we have been focussing on the most effective ways to support these services. We have produced an in-house quality toolkit for our Sheltered Housing to make sure we are delivering a value for money service, and this has been externally validated.

In April 2008, our in-house repairs Contact Centre was established as a more cost effective option to using external providers, and to give a more customer focused service based on a better understanding of our customers' needs. A Mystery Shopping exercise, and other feedback involving Harden, Kemble and Nexus customers has confirmed that they are broadly happy with the service provided by the Contact Centre. Their feedback is helping to further develop these services.

At Kemble, Customer Service teams have been reorganised to free up Customer Services Assistants from arrears work to respond better to customers during busy periods.

Our Anti-Social Behaviour out of hours service has been implemented at a minimal cost per property but provides the essential cover our customers require.



“ There will be some difficult financial times ahead so getting the best value we can for every pound of customers rent income is one of my top priorities. ”

Kevin Rodgers, Executive Director, Finance and Resources



We are continuing to be involved in community based projects to provide young people with sports and healthy living training. At Kemble, Football Foundation coaching projects are ongoing.

There are also projects to help customers into employment. Both Kemble and the Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) have accessed funding for three Future Jobs Fund posts, which will look at helping customers to access training and other opportunities.

Plans for improvement - We will:

Work with customers over the next 12 months on how we can improve the Value for Money of our services.

Establish a team to make sure that we get the best value for money from what we do.

Continue development of effective partnership working to bring added benefits to local communities.

// We cannot believe how lucky we are as the house is fantastic. We have been really surprised by the high level of attention that has gone into the development.

Kemble Housing has really thought about the green credentials by installing triple glazing, extra insulation, air source heating, and wooden window frames and doors which look nicer than PVC. //

Kemble customer Rachael, December 2009

Kemble Board Members



Andy Johnson
Chair

Andy is a self-employed Writer, Publisher and Consultant. He has been a Member of Kemble Board since 1995.



Ros Williams
Vice Chair

Ros is a Kemble resident and participates enthusiastically in customer involvement activities. She has been a Board Member since 2008.



James Knipe

James is a self-employed Accountant and has been a Member of Kemble's Board since 1990.



Jenny Dereham MBE

Jenny has been a Board Member since 1999. She is a member of the Regional Assembly Housing Partnership.



David King

David is a retired Director of Housing for Hereford City Council. He has been a Board Member since 1998.



Rose Stimson

Rose joined the Kemble Board in 2003 and is employed as a Business Analyst.



Peter England

Peter is a former Chair of Kemble Housing. Peter joined Kemble's Board in 1975 and is a retired Industrial Strategic Planning Manager.



Roland Summers
Chair of Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP)

Roland has been a Member of the Kemble Board since 1990 and is a retired Teacher.



Richard Grainger

Richard joined the Kemble Board in 2006. He is the Chair and Managing Director of a firm of Auctioneers, Valuers and Estate Agents.



Cheryl Dawes

Cheryl became a Member of the Board in 2009. She is a former Kemble resident and is an active member of the local Down Syndrome Group.

Need help in your own language?

Arabic

"هل تحتاج إلى مساعدة بلغتك"

French

« Vous avez besoin d'aide dans votre propre langue »

Kurdish

ئابا پێویستت به یارمهتی به زمانی خۆت ههیه.

Portuguese

Precisa de assistência na sua própria língua?

Bengali

আপনার নিজের ভাষায় সহায়তা প্রয়োজন।

Russian

Требуется ли Вам помощь на Вашем языке?

Czech

Potřebujete pomoc ve svém jazyce?

Turkish

Kendi dilinizde yardıma mı ihtiyacınız var?

Farsi

آیا به زبان خودتان به کمک نیاز دارید؟

Polish

Wymagają Państwo pomocy w swoim języku?

Urdu

اپنی زبان میں مدد کی ضرورت ہے۔

Somali

“Ma’u baahantahay in lagugu caawiyo luuqadaadda”

Cantonese

需要母語幫助

Lithuanian

Reikia pagalbos gimtąja kalba?

Spanish

¿Necesita ayuda en su propio idioma?

Albanian

Keni nevojë për ndihmë në gjuhën tuaj

☎ 01432 377 900

Do you need this document in a different format?

If you need this document in audio, braille or large print format contact

☎ 01432 377 900



44 Berrington Street, Hereford HR4 0BJ
Tel: 01432 377 900 Email: kemble@wmhousing.co.uk