



ANNUAL REPORT 2007/8



# Welcome

I would like to begin this report by thanking all of our staff, customers, partner organisations and my fellow Non Executive Directors for yet another successful year at Aspire Housing.



March 2007 saw the launch of our new Corporate Plan: an ambitious programme that will take the Company forward over the next three years. The first twelve months of that journey are described within these pages.

During the year, the whole organisation raised its performance to deliver a visible change at Aspire Housing.

This is clearly evidenced through our key performance indicator results across all areas of the business, our impressive record in external awards and recent validation and the start on site at Mill Rise - our biggest ever development.

These highlights and more are covered in detail within these pages.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share our latest news.

Aspire Housing has become a group structure, with the merger of local training provider Project Management - creating the largest rsl-led social enterprises in the Country.

Project Management, based in Stoke-on-Trent, has supported more than 8,000 people into employment since it was formed in 1982.

We are keen to ensure that as a progressive social business, we do all that we can to help improve the quality of lives for our customers and everyone living in the local area.

With the combination of our talents, we are determined to take every action we can to will each go from strength to strength and continue to make a positive impact for the people of North Staffordshire.

I hope you enjoy reading about our year. If you would like any further information about our work, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Jane Price**

CHAIRMAN - Aspire Housing Group



# About us

The Aspire Housing Group provides more than 20,000 customers with quality affordable homes and services across North Staffordshire and South Cheshire.

Our diverse range of properties and services reflect the individual needs of our customers. We aim to provide real lifestyle choices.

We are passionate about improving the environment in which people live, using our regeneration expertise to improve communities.

We are proud to be the Country's largest rsl-led social enterprise run social enterprise, delivering training and employment opportunities for young disadvantaged people living in the local area, through Project Management Training.

## Corporate aims

Our goals are to: **Deliver excellent services** • **Grow the business** • **Enhance our reputation**

## Our vision

Excellent services, supporting sustainable communities, valued by all.

## Our values

**Appreciating our customers** - we value our customers because our success depends on listening to them and involving them in shaping our services.

**Skilled staff** - our employees and members are Aspire people and we recognise that committed, motivated and highly skilled people are essential to our success.

**Partnerships** - we will enhance our services by working with partners.

**Integrity** - we will manage our business in an honest, open and accountable way.

**Respect** - we will treat everyone with respect and fairness and will value and celebrate diversity.

**Excellence** - we strive for excellence and provide value for money in everything we do.



# Delivering excellent services

Our services will equal or exceed the expectations of our customers. Our aspiration is to be recognised as one of the top housing service providers in the country.



A key objective in 2007/8 was to achieve a validated 2\* rating, so we commissioned external consultants to independently assess our services using the same process as the Audit Commission's Short Notice Inspection Pilot.

We were delighted to achieve a 2\* with excellent prospects for improvement rating.

Another important goal was to achieve top quartile performance in 70% of our KPIs. In March 2007 we achieved 18%. This had improved to 55% by March 2008.

Feedback from customers is essential to show how we are achieving year-on-year improvements in customer satisfaction.

Our 2007 survey demonstrated significant improvements compared with the previous survey in 2004. The percentage of customers who were fairly or very satisfied with the overall service increased from 81% to 87%, putting us in the top quartile for the first time in our history.

Our largest modernisation programme – the Direct Services Continuous Improvement Programme saw the introduction of handheld technology to increase performance efficiency and offer repairs appointments to our customers for the first time.

'I have been an Aspire Housing resident for eight years and I'm now fully involved as a customer representative on a number of groups. The opportunities for customers to get involved have increased considerably over the last year - and all offer exciting and interesting challenges.

I feel able to make a real difference to the community and the environment with my ideas and opinions listened to, and acted upon.'

Christine Gozzard -  
*Aspire Housing Customer*



# Growing the business

We will grow our business through the development of new affordable housing, providing shared ownership and diversifying our commercial activity. We will use our existing asset base to grow and recycle surpluses into our communities.



During the year we received confirmed Housing Corporation funding for 2008/11 to develop 233 new homes.

Work started on site at Mill Rise - a £15 million Extra Care scheme with 60 apartments for rent and shared ownership and an onsite health centre. This major new development heralds the start of the rebuild programme in the area as we work in partnership with English Partnerships, Bellway Homes, Renew North Staffordshire and Newcastle Borough Council.

We successfully rehomed 72 households in areas of their choice as demolition began in Lower Milehouse. The clearance of 188 properties will make way for new mixed-tenure homes planned for 2011-14.

Our regeneration work extends into a number of key projects in Blurton, Stoke on Trent.

Work started on site at Denham Gardens, a development of 17 new bungalows. In nearby Ingestre Square, we are planning a new mixed use development including homes, commercial units and community buildings in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council.



**Realise**  
PROPERTY ■ ■ ■

  
**MILL RISE**

# Enhancing our reputation

We will establish a reputation both regionally and nationally for providing excellent services, so that our key stakeholders will value their relationship with Aspire Housing.

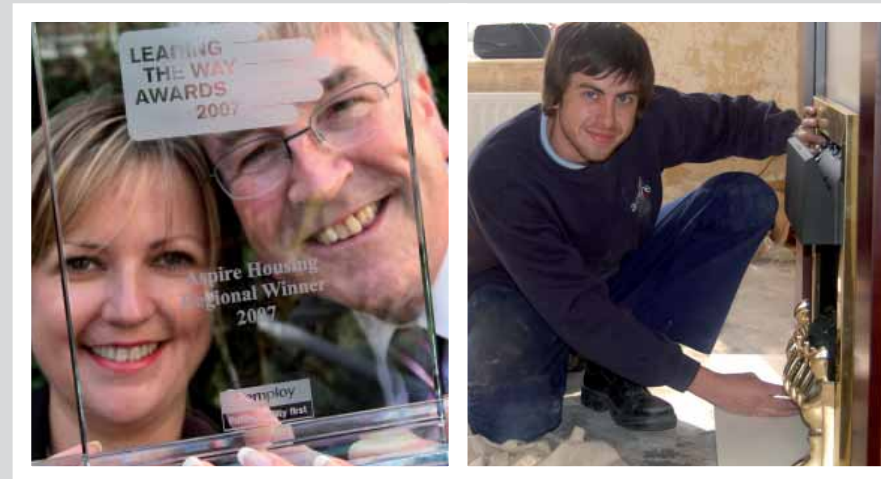


During the year we achieved:

- Investors in People standard for our commitment to learning, development and sharing best practice.
- Remploy 'Leading the Way' national award for our work to enable colleagues with disabilities to continue working or to return to the workplace.
- West Midlands Centre of Construction Excellence 'Leadership in People' awarded after demonstrating a genuine commitment to staff development.
- CORGI Gas Safety Awards - national finalist for Gas Safety Initiative

Our annual staff survey results show that average positive staff responses continue to improve.

The trajectory of staff survey improvements are positive - up by 89% since its launch in 2004.



# Our executive team



**Sinéad Butters – Chief Executive**

Sinéad was appointed as Chief Executive in 2006, having previously headed the company's business development and operations teams.

Sinéad is passionate in her belief that colleagues should be inspired and empowered to deliver an exceptional service to every customer.

*'I am particularly proud of how colleagues have risen magnificently to the challenges of achieving our ambitious corporate objectives. I hope that the results contained in this report speak for themselves.'*



**John Lindsay – Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Resources**

John joined Aspire Housing in 2000, having previously worked as Director of Finance for fch Housing and care.

He is responsible for finance, information systems, organisational development and business assurance. He is also the group's Company Secretary.

*'The response from colleagues to our value for money strategy has been tremendous, and we have achieved some real successes, releasing resources for investment into our key corporate priorities.'*



**Caroline Simpson - Director of Business Development**

Caroline joined the Company in 2006 from the North West Regional Development Agency where she was Head of Policy and Partnerships.

She is responsible for diversifying commercial interests and generating new business, development, regeneration and all marketing and communication activity.

*'2007/8 saw our development and regeneration activities reach new heights. The creation of a new Commercial arm, Realise Property, is really exciting and proves our commitment to creating a range of new business opportunities.'*



**Will Nixon - Director of Operations**

Will joined Aspire Housing in 2007, having previously led the successful recovery of the Urban Living (Birmingham and Sandwell) Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder.

Will is responsible for housing and maintenance operations – ensuring that properties and housing services are of an excellent quality. In 2008, he also became Chief Executive of Project Management – the social enterprise arm of Aspire Housing.

*'It's fantastic to have been recognised for the quality of our staff and the services that we deliver, through our success in awards and our 2\* excellent rating. Now, with Project Management as part of the group, we can build on this result and help to improve life changes for young people.'*

# Our board

In line with Housing Corporation best practice, we changed the composition of our Board during 2007/8



Three customer Non Executive Directors. These members are elected through our Customer Panel and serve for a minimum of three years.

Joan Winfield

Steve Meakin MBE

Paul Davies

Five independent Non Executive Directors who bring skills and experience from housing organisations, other professions and businesses. Vacancies are openly advertised and members serve for a minimum of three years.

Jane Price (Chair)

Jim Washington (Vice Chair)

Ron Dougan

Philip Sunderland

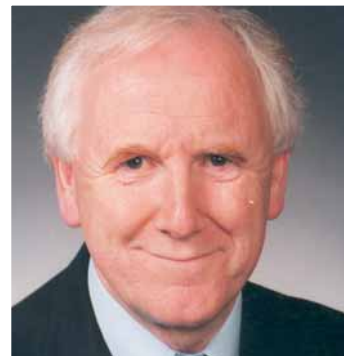
Vacancy

Three members nominated by Newcastle Borough Council each year.

Brian Tomkins

Andrew Cooley

Marion Reddish



# Our performance

Aspire Housing's average rent remained the lowest within the Registered Social Landlords sector (Housing Corporation published data).

Bedsit	£38.16
1 bed	£43.63
2 bed	£49.47
3 bed	£53.34
4+ bed	£56.43

The amount of income lost through empty properties fell from £207,000 to £162,000 during the year (0.4% of our properties were empty and available for letting compared to 0.7% for the previous year).

Rent collected as a % of Net Rental Income:  
**Target: 100% Achieved: 98.6%**  
(2006/7: 99.3%)

Rent arrears of current residential tenants:  
**Target: 6% Achieved: 6.7%**

Average re-let time (excluding voids that involved major works):  
**18 days (2006/7: 34 days)**

Rent loss due to void dwellings:  
**Target: 0.8% Achieved: 0.9%**

## Our social housing stock

As at 31.03.08:

4558 houses

743 bungalows

2528 flats/maisonettes

363 sheltered bungalows

188 sheltered flats

**Total stock 8380**

By size:

229 Bedsits

2366 1 bed

2849 2 bed

2741 3 bed

195 4 or more bed

We also own or manage:

1990 lock up garages

119 shops/commercial units

242 leasehold flats



# The year at a glance

It's been a momentous year at aspire - here is just a taster of what's been going on!

## 2007

### April

New Corporate Plan launched

Investors in People accreditation achieved

Equality and Diversity strategy launched



### May

Wimbourne Avenue – event held to formally open the environmental work in the area (Rob Flello and Jan Williams) *pictured*

First Colleague Celebration event held at Keele Hall.

Adult Learners Week

TSA accreditation achieved for Care CALL service



### June

Denham Gardens – work started on-site redevelopment of the Blurton site to create 17 new bungalows

Planning permission granted for Mill Rise – our first Extra Care scheme. 60 apartments for rent and shared ownership with an onsite health centre.



### July

Aspire teams joined the emergency services to deal with flash floods that hit Kidsgrove



### August

Signed up to the Beacon Peer Mentoring scheme – to help further improve customer involvement activity



### September

Half year performance figures place company in top 25% of housing organisations nationally

Aspire signs up to the Audit Commission's short notice inspection pilot



## October

National winner of Remploy Leading the Way award – for our work to enable colleagues with disabilities to continue working or to return back to work

Launch of intranet site, improving internal communication between colleagues



## November

Aspire Housing launches Government's 'Respect' Standard for Housing Management

National Construction week. Trades taster sessions hosted for local school pupils



## December

Plans submitted for Beasley Place (40 homes)

Joined forces with local primary schools to plant 240 trees during National Tree week



# 2008

## January

Planning approval received for the development of a site at Halmerend to built 10 units

Results of customer service report announced placing the company's performance comfortably in the top 25% of housing organisations in the country

Care CALL – our telecare service – celebrates its £20th Birthday



## February

Mill Rise turf cut – celebration to recognise the start of the MR development and partnership working and work commenced on site

£5million partnership agreement signed with Glendale Managed Services



## March

Town Centre location plans announced. Aspire Housing services will be delivered in Newcastle town centre at our new shop in Merrial Street.



# Repairs and maintenance

During 2007/8 we completed 35,056 responsive repairs



'In the last year I have had new kitchen units fitted and the whole central heating system renewed.

I can't praise Aspire Housing enough. All staff have been extremely polite and tidy. They worked efficiently to a very high standard and have provided a truly excellent service.'

Mrs Gladys Collingwood  
Porthill Green

Our response time performance continues to achieve top quartile performance:

- Routine repairs completed on target  
98.4% (95.1% in 2006/07)
- Urgent repairs completed on target  
99.1% (95.9% in 2006/07)
- Emergency repairs completed on target  
99.4% (99.0% in 2006/07)

Our level of failing decent homes reduced from 8.7% at 31.03.07 to 5.9% at 31.03.08 (target 6.0%)

### Home improvements completed during 2007-8

During the year we invested £12.6 million improving the quality of lives of our customers by enhancing their homes and environment.

Work included:

- 670 homes - new central heating systems**
- 733 homes - kitchen refurbishments**
- 497 homes - bathroom refurbishments**
- 293 homes - electrical upgrades and rewires**
- 19 disabled bathrooms**
- 84 walk-in showers**
- 8 specially adapted thermostats for customers with disabilities**

During 2007-8, overall satisfaction levels were:

<b>Bathrooms</b>	<b>92.8%</b>
<b>Kitchens</b>	<b>94.4%</b>
<b>Security doors</b>	<b>94.8%</b>
<b>Outhouse roofs</b>	<b>84.0%</b>
<b>Heating installation</b>	<b>97.7%</b>
<b>Disabled adaptations</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Electrical rewires</b>	<b>62.5%</b>
<b>Loft insulation</b>	<b>95.5%</b>
<b>Combination boiler renewal</b>	<b>92.3%</b>
<b>Re-roofing</b>	<b>84.1%</b>
<b>Re-pointing</b>	<b>72.7%</b>
<b>Cavity wall</b>	<b>92.9%</b>
<b>Cladding</b>	<b>93.1%</b>

### Customer satisfaction - our improvements survey

Every customer who has improvement work carried out is asked to complete a satisfaction survey.

#### Overall satisfaction with improvements (all types):

**2007-8: 93.8%**

**2006-7: 94.6%**



# Our housing register

We administer the housing register on behalf of Newcastle Borough Council. The Register includes households applying to be housed for the first time and those wishing to move from one home to another.



### Housing register

The housing register at 31.03.08:

<b>Waiting list</b>	<b>2818</b>
<b>Transfer</b>	<b>603</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3421</b>

Demand by property type:

<b>1 bedroom</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>2 bedroom</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>3+ bedroom</b>	<b>19%</b>

On 31.03.08, 4.0% of applicants on the housing register were from BME households, compared with 3.1% at 31.03.07.

### New customers

**During 2007/8 there were 667 new lettings**  
(compared with 803 in 2006/7).

Letting property type:

<b>1 Bedroom</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>2 Bedroom</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>3+ Bedroom</b>	<b>18%</b>

### Household composition

<b>Single over 60</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Single under 60</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Couple over 60</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Couple under 60</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Families</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>8%</b>

Lettings to BME\* households

<b>2007-8</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
<b>2006-7</b>	<b>3.7%</b>

\*we regard BME as anyone who does not classify themselves as belonging to the white British group.



# Our people

The talent, ambition and hard work of our staff drive the success of Aspire Housing. In return, we strive to create an environment in which everyone can enjoy the rewards, recognition and development they need to thrive.



Mark Brookes joined us in 2004 as a Marketing Assistant and has since developed to become a Marketing Coordinator.

'Aspire Housing has fully supported my training and development. Over the last 12 months I have undertaken a number of short courses to develop my skills, including photography and marketing workshops.

I have recently completed my Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Professional Certificate and am looking forward to continuing with the CIM Professional Diploma during 2008/09.'

Aspire Housing's people at a glance:

Part time	30	Male	225
Full time	341	Female	146
		Disabled	4.09%

2007/08 Learning budget	£195,000
Internal promotions/career moves	21
Average number of learning days per colleague	3.7

In 2007 we held our first Excellence in Leadership conference - 'Inspiring our Leaders'. This focused on the role leadership plays in our drive for excellence throughout the business.

The conference was one of many initiatives introduced as part of our leadership engagement framework. Our goal is to ensure a consistent approach that empowers, inspires and motivates colleagues and teams across the business.

## Our leadership values - an inspirational communicator:

- with belief and passion
- who empowers and motivates
- is visible and approachable
- operates with honesty and trust
- is a role model
- who recognises the value of uniqueness
- and is driven to action.

# Our financial performance

## Income and Expenditure Account For the year ending 31st March 2008

	2008 £'000	2007 £'000
Turnover: continuing activities	26,505	23,335
Operating costs	(27,460)	(22,748)
<b>Operating (deficit)/surplus: continuing activities</b>	<b>(955)</b>	<b>587</b>
Surplus on sale of fixed assets - housing properties	116	233
Interest receivable and other income	65	26
Interest payable and similar charges	(5,343)	(4,519)
Other finance income	275	241
<b>Deficit on ordinary activities before taxation</b>	<b>(5,842)</b>	<b>(3,432)</b>
Tax on surplus on ordinary activities	-	-
<b>Deficit for the financial year</b>	<b>(5,842)</b>	<b>(3,432)</b>



# Our financial performance

## Balance Sheet As at 31 March 2008

	2008 £'000	2007 £'000
<b>Tangible fixed assets</b>		
Housing properties	68,048	61,570
Social housing grant	(5,931)	(3,321)
Other grants	(2,465)	(1,624)
	59,652	56,625
Other tangible fixed assets	7,651	7,635
	67,303	64,260
<b>Current assets</b>		
Property developed for sale	72	-
Stocks	282	306
Debtors	4,107	2,640
Cash at bank and in hand	2,072	1,024
	6,533	3,970
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	(9,534)	(7,431)
<b>Net current liabilities</b>	(3,001)	(3,461)
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	64,302	60,799
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	86,541	77,268
<b>Net pension liability</b>	1,459	2,973
	88,000	80,241
<b>Capital and reserves</b>		
Non-equity share capital	-	-
Revenue reserve	(23,698)	(19,442)
<b>Company's funds</b>	(23,698)	(19,442)
	64,302	60,799

Full set of accounts available upon request.

# The final word

Sinéad Butters  
Chief Executive

## What an amazing year!

I am so proud of what we achieved during 2007-8, and I hope that you have enjoyed sharing some of our highlights through this report.

None of our successes could have been achieved without the unending support and dedication of colleagues, Non-Executive Directors and partner organisations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all for their input during the year.

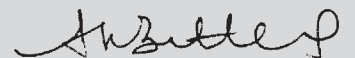
I would also like to thank the growing number of customers who give up their time to provide feedback, attend group meetings and help shape the future direction of Aspire Housing.

This time and dedication means that our customers are truly placed at the heart of all decisions we make as a business.

Upward trends in customer satisfaction and top quartile performance demonstrate that Aspire Housing continues to go from strength to strength, which is particularly noteworthy at a time when we are entering new markets and launching ambitious new developments.

Finally, we are now delighted to be in a position to drive the worklessness agenda locally with the creation of our new group structure.

The merger with Project Management unequivocally signals our intention to help regenerate North Staffordshire – making it a better place to live for all.



Sinéad



This information can be made available in

- Other languages • Large print • Braille • Audio tape • Computer disc.

If you would like information in another language or format, please ask us.

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे - Hindi

اگر این اطلاعات را به زبانی دیگر و یا در فرمتی دیگر میخواستید لطفاً از ما درخواست کنید - Farsi

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔ - Urdu

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie,  
prosimy dać nam znać. - Polish

ئەگەر زانیاریت بە زمانیکی که یا بە فۆرمیکی که دەوی تکایه داوامان لی بکه - Kurdish



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