

Annual Report to Tenants 2015/16





April 2015

The first tenants moved into our Brown Lane East development, Holbeck. The site is comprised of 26 properties for affordable rent and 16 shared ownership properties.

June 2015



Unity welcomed the first tenants into Stratford Court, Chapel Allerton. The redevelopment is a council scheme, and has provided 28 homes for people over the age of 55 in the heart of Chapel Allerton; including shared ownership properties.



September 2015

Unity conducted a Census amongst all of our tenants. The aim was to gain better understanding of tenants' preferences, especially with regards to communications and our services.



June 2015



We sponsored the annual Beeston Festival to provide our tenants and the wider community free advice on housing, employment and welfare.



August 2015

Leep 1, a self advocacy group who help adults with disabilities, opened a cafe at Unity Business Centre. Their mission is to help adults with learning disabilities speak up for themselves in the community, to share experiences and information to help each other do new things in our lives.

September 2015



Unity celebrates another year of providing housing choice, improving life opportunities and addressing inequalities at our AGM with olympian Nicola Adam our chief guest.

October 2015



Unity had its first supervision visit from the Customer Service Excellence Award. Unity met and exceeded the standard required; maintaining our award.



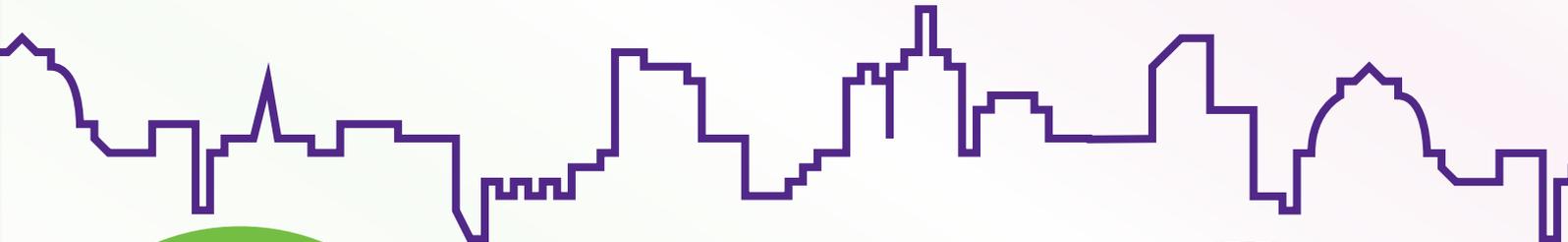
February 2016

Unity was acknowledged as being GIVI (Governance and Viability standard) by the Homes and Communities Agency. .

March 2016



Residents were invited to take part in the 'Unity in Bloom' gardening competition to encourage tenants to raise the appearance of their estates. We provided opportunities for residents to be on the Judging Panel.



December 2015

Unity achieved silver accreditation from Investors in People's new 6th generation standard.

February 2016



Universal Credit was introduced into Leeds, changing the way that people received their benefits. In response, Unity hired a new Income Management Officer to support tenants and ensure they are still able to pay rent.



March 2016

We announced our upcoming developments, as we are set to build 120 new properties before 2018; including Parkwood Road, Rocheford Court and Holborn Court. This emphasised our determination to deliver affordable housing, regenerate local communities and help small businesses grow.

Contents



Tenancy Standard 6

... includes how much rent we lose by having empty properties (voids) and how long it takes us to let empty properties to someone else, as well as whether our homes are let to those who most need them.



Home Standard 7

... covers our performance on repairs satisfaction, repairs expenditure, gas safety, and the energy efficiency of our properties.



Neighbourhood & Community Standard 8

... covers how we deal with anti-social behaviour, how many tenants we help access employment and our involvement in the communities we have properties.



Tenant Involvement Standard 11

... covers how well tenant's views are taken into consideration and our handling of complaints.



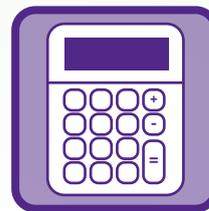
Value for Money Standard 14

... covers initiatives we are using to save the company money and the number of tenants who are satisfied their rent and service charges are fair.



Governance & Viability Standard 15

... examines to what extent our business is properly run by our managers and governed by our boards.



Rent Standard 15

... confirms that we adhere to rent charges set in accordance to the government.

A few words from our Tenant Panel...

2015/16 has been another engaging and educational year for the Tenant Panel. Through the monthly meetings we have been able to improve our understanding of the housing sector, as well as welfare reform, and had our voices heard regarding the services that Unity delivers.

In this last year Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap moved closer and closer towards the Leeds area. Meetings with the Income Management Team and Housing Officers provided a clear explanation as to how tenants will be affected, as well as how Unity could then help. We've also visited new developments, been involved in estate walkabouts and acted as the Judging Panel for Unity in Bloom.

The meetings and discussions that take place within the Tenant Panel continue to be effective and a lot of the input that we mention gets taken on by staff. Our opinion is recognised as valuable and we play a key role in shaping Unity's services. Gaining new members from our new development sites has allowed us to better understand the process

that is involved in new tenancies and developed our knowledge of best practice in certain situations.

With all the cuts that have been taking place this past year amongst other housing associations in Yorkshire, we are proud to say that Unity have not had to cut any jobs or services. Instead, Unity created the Income Management Team, which concentrates on collecting rent on time and allows for Housing Officers to spend more time on their designated estates. The addition of another Income Management Officer has improved Unity's financial performance, therefore improving the services that have been provided.

Following a turbulent year littered with cuts and changes to welfare, we would like to send our sincere thanks to the Unity staff for their hard work. We are proud of the influence that we have had this year and we hope we can continue to represent tenants to the best of our ability.

Kind regards,
Unity's Tenant Panel

A Message from our CEO and Chair of Board...

We're delighted to report on another excellent performance which has seen us add more affordable homes to the local housing stock, continue our work on regeneration and, in a number of ways, provide support to our tenants.

Understandably the Government is keen that we build more homes. Over the year this has presented us with an interesting challenge – marrying the national agenda to what we're doing at a local level to more closely meet the needs of our tenants.

We are delivering on both. Perhaps, most impressive, is that this has been achieved against a far from easy working environment. The Government's ruling on gradual rent reductions came into force this year; add to that, 'right-to-buy'. As a result we are expected to build more homes with less income and much less availability of grant funding.

The good news is that, in spite of these strong head winds, Unity has delivered 'business as usual' to our tenants and partners. We are delivering on the national house building agenda whilst continuing to deliver a first rate housing management service to our tenants. This has been achieved through a mix of prudent management over a number of years and continued strong demand for our properties.

We also made changes to the way we work, enabling us to do more with existing resource – a case of working smarter.

Of course, partnerships are a key component of our success. Over the last year we've worked closely with Leeds City Council. We're in the Accent Consortium, the Homes & Communities Agency's regional development partner. We're also a member of the Leeds Housing Alliance, a collaborative partnership of Leeds social housing providers which, along with Unity, includes Connect, Leeds Federated, Leeds Jewish, Leeds & Yorkshire and St Anne's.

On the development front, as you'll read elsewhere in the report, during 2015/16 as part of

the Homes & Communities Agency programme, Unity completed 28 new homes. And that's just the start; we've a further 120 scheduled with a total of 200 over the current 5/6 year cycle. It's the biggest house building programme in our 30 year history. We're also creating the capacity to do more without negatively impacting on the creation of sustainable communities that enhance the lives of our tenants.

Before we finish, in what has been a busy and hectic year at Unity, we were delighted to receive Investors in People Silver Standard accreditation. It's a real feather in our cap and signifies that we value our staff by recognising and rewarding good performance and that we deliver continuous improvement.

Finally we'd like to offer our thanks for another successful year to our partners and our committed staff and Board. This year Michelle Anderson, Tom English and Andrea Tara-Chand will be standing down from Unity Housing Board. We want to take this opportunity to thank them for all their dedicated service to Unity over the years.

Ali Akbor
Shruti Bhargava





Tenancy Standard



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Highlights:

- ✓ We have appointed another Income Support Officer as part of our drive to reduce rent arrears. This increased the number of officers to 3 and has seen a decrease in rent arrears.
- ✓ We continue to offer a wide range of services to help our tenants manage their finances such as recommending courses and providing food vouchers
- ✓ We have supported tenants in acquiring new essential appliances for their homes in order to sustain new tenancies.



- ✓ From the results of the 2015 census, we have developed Tenancy Health Checks which aims to gain more information regarding tenants and their needs, better knowledge of the properties and a greater relationship with tenants. They are due to commence 2016/17.
- ✓ Financial inclusion services is solely down to the Income Management Team. This gives tenants better access to information and more time on estates for housing officers.
- ✓ Arrears cases have reduced by 52 over the course of 15/16 and the debt figure reduced in the year by £17,552.

KPI Benchmarking

We want to provide you with the best service possible, which is why we constantly monitor our performance. Unity Housing benchmarks its' performance against other housing associations throughout the region to ensure that our standards are similar to other organisations.

Our Performance

	Actual 2014/15	Actual 2015/16	Target 2015/16	Meeting Target	New Target 2016/17
Arrears					
Arrears (actual)	£336,344	£310,310	£323,860	✓	£269,113
Arrears (%)	6.40%	5.60%	5.75%	✓	4.75%
Rent collected (%)	103.10%	102.10%	100%	✓	100%
Former tenant arrears (actual)	£249,346	£230,260	£337,940		£338,669

Voids & Lettings

% rent loss through voids	0.95%	0.79%	1%	✓	1%
Turnover of stock	5.72%	4.25%	<10%	✓	<10%
General needs re-let time	21.6 days	20.02 days	22 days	✓	20 days
% lets to nominations	75.36%	85.7%	50%	✓	50%
% general needs lets to BME tenants	78.26%	67.10%	50%	✓	50%



Home Standard



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Highlights:

- ✓ Once again, 100% of our properties were gas-safety compliant as at the end of March 2016. Throughout the year 16 properties came out of certification, however 15 of those were serviced within a week, with the other due to difficulty gaining access.
- ✓ Our repairs contractor, Forrest, now have their manager based in our office to ensure that repairs are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- ✓ Unity fitted SMART meters into all of our communal areas in order to reduce costs in respect of meter readings and verifications.



- ✓ 32 properties were adapted to meet the needs of the tenants living there.
- ✓ We carried out a stock condition survey on most of our properties to check that the planned maintenance schedule is accurate and viable from a financial point of view. All properties remain compliant with the 'Decent Homes Standard' and Health and Safety regulations.
- ✓ A further 94 Energy Performance Certificates were attained in 2015/16. We now hold accurate energy performance information on 99% of our properties.

Our Performance

	Actual 2014/15	Actual 2015/16	Target 2015/16	Meeting Target	New Target 2016/17
Repairs, Servicing and Conditions					
Emergency	99.9%	99.2%	99%	✓	99%
Urgent	99.4%	99.1%	99%	✓	99%
Routine	99%	99%	99%	✓	99%
First time fix	95.8%	95.7%	95%	✓	95%
Appointments made and kept	99.1%	99.4%	99%	✓	99%
Gas servicing	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%
Average rd SAP rating	73	73.7	73	✓	73

Tenant satisfaction

Monthly maintenance satisfaction	98.4%	99.5%	95%	✓	95%
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Neighbourhood & Community Standard



Highlights:

- ✓ Our Employment Services Team helped a further 77 people get into work and 120 people access training opportunities
- ✓ We set up a Regeneration Task Group, made up of board members from Unity Housing and Unity Enterprise, to generate employment training and regeneration benefits.
- ✓ We established an 'Employment Hub' at our Enterprise building. The hub acts as an outreach centre for dedicated employment services and financial inclusion.



- ✓ We announced our upcoming developments, as we are set to build 120 new properties before 2018; including Parkwood Road, Rocheford Court and Holborn Court. This will provide work opportunities for the community.
- ✓ Our Employment Services Team started jointly running ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) classes at our Employment Hub to improve the employability of our tenants and the wider community.
- ✓ We employed a Administration Apprentice to assist the Employment Services Team in delivering their services.

Unity's Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18

Over the past decade, Unity's development and regeneration programme work has extended beyond our traditional Chapeltown and Harehills heartland. Following our successful bid to build 120 new homes on sites across Leeds, the following progress has been made:

Parkwood Road



A £2.3m project. The contractors on this site, Strategic Team Group, are due to complete this development of 18 houses in January 2017.

Rocheford Court



A £1.2m project. Contractors, Esh Construction, started work in December 2015. Completion of the development, which comprises nine houses and two bungalows, is due in November 2016.

Holborn Court



A £1.8m project. The contractors on this site, Jack Lunn Construction, started work in December 2015 and will complete the 15 flats and two bungalows in November 2016.

Completed Developments



Stratford Court

Stratford Court is a redevelopment of a council scheme featuring 24 flats and 5 bungalows, exclusively for those over the age of 55. It is placed in a convenient location of Chapel Allerton, close to shops, cafes and local amenities.



Brown Lane East

Brown Lane East is a development comprising of 26 properties for affordable rent and 16 shared-ownership properties. This development aimed at promoting the wider regeneration of Beeston and Holbeck.



Trinity Court

Trinity Court is Unity's first development outside of Leeds; in the neighbourhood of Fartown, Huddersfield. It features ten refurbished flats for those over the age of 55 with recognised support needs.

New Business Tenants

Unity Business Centre welcomed **SK Nailz**, an exclusive nail studio with an extensive range of treatments provided for men and women. Specialties include: Manicures, Pedicures, Shellac and UV Gel manicures, Acrylic Enhancements and Nail Art.

As part of their national commitment, **JDRF** have acquired a unit as Unity Business Centre to continue their mission of eradicating type 1 diabetes. They gain funding, encourage research and provide support.

GRT Hospitality Recruitment Ltd is a dedicated fast growing recruitment agency specialising in catering and warehouse industry. They cover various prestigious events nationwide.



Leeds Media Centre Refurbishment

In 2015, the ground cafeteria area of Leeds Media Centre had a huge refurbishment in preparation for new tenants. **Kamboh**, an authentic Indian and Pakistani buffet, began renting the unit in order to deliver their unique dining experience.

Located to the rear of Unity Housing's building, Leeds Media Centre hosts a wide range of business tenants with a focus on creative industries due to our media facilities.

The ground has had a drastic transformation, changing from a cafe bar into a restaurant. The refurb included; completely new interior design, signage, furniture, and the input of a new service area.



Unity's Employment Services

Unity's Employment Services team was set up in May 2011 to support Unity tenants and the communities in which they live to get back into employment and training. The Team can help tenants with practical job skills such as preparing a CV, guidance for job searching and applications and practising interview. Since they joined Unity they have helped hundreds of people! In 2015/16, Employment Services added another member to their Team in order to improve their sessions and increase the number of tenants that they can assist.

	13/14	14/15	15/16	Total
Employment	44	60	77	181
Training	45	61	120	226
Voluntary work	12	20	15	47

Case Study: Molly*

When Molly first approached Unity's Employment Services team, she had just been in the UK for not long and was struggling with English Language. Molly met with an advisor who spoke to her about the different classes available in the community and local college. Within a few weeks, Molly had registered at a community centre and accessed some short term activities.

Due to Molly's determination to find work she signed up to Unity's digital inclusion course and drop-in job club. Her enthusiasm to get a job soon paid off and she successfully attained two cleaning jobs. In between working Molly still attends our ESOL classes to continue developing her English skills.



Case Study: Emily*

Emily came from a referral from our Income Support team and wanted to progress in her job as a support worker. She had ambitions to do nursing qualifications but did not have GCSE's in English and Maths which is required. The Employment Services team supported Emily to access Learn Direct and get on a course to acquire the GCSEs. With the help from the team, Emily was accepted onto the course at Leeds City College and started September 2015.

Following one year of studying, she had the qualifications to apply for the nursing course. Employment Services gave further assistance to Emily with her UCAS application.



Case Study: Mike*

Before meeting the employment team Mike had been in trouble with the police and was struggling to get into college to study plumbing. He had dropped out of school and didn't have any qualifications. Mike had seen an advertisement and applied. When the employment team received Mike's CV they contacted him for an informal chat, he came to the office and had a mock interview.

Mark was put on a two-week training course and then went for his CSCS test. On second attempt, Mike passed the test and began a two week placement on one of Unity's development sites. When his contract was coming to an end, the employment team helped him apply for further jobs and he was accepted on a plumbing apprenticeship for 2 years.

* Names have been changed to protect the identities of those concerned. Images do not represent those in the case studies.



Tenant Involvement Standard

Highlights:

- ✓ We carried out a tenant census to acquire further information regarding communication preferences and service requirements.
- ✓ Following on from last year's success, Unity hosted another Unity in Bloom gardening competition. This encouraged tenants to take pride in their estates for a chance of winning prizes. Our Tenant Panel were involved as the Judging Panel.
- ✓ Our Tenant Panel was involved in scutinising Unity's arrears process. They provided inputs and improvements on processes such communication i.e. arrears letters.



- ✓ We continue to sponsor the annual Beeston Festival to raise awareness of our services and provide free housing, employment and welfare advice to local people
- ✓ We are currently assessing the structure of the Tenant Panel, in particular the frequency of meetings in regards to Value for Money.
- ✓ Alongside Unity in Bloom, we distributed free plants, pots, seeds, soil and tips at a series of gardening workshops. This encouraged tenants to grow their own fruit and veg, saving money and improving their diet.

Tenant Panel

Unity's Tenant Panel has been established since 2010 and is open to all tenants. Our Tenant Panel is a fun, friendly group of Unity residents that meets up monthly to discuss issues affecting the business, our homes and our tenants.

The past year has been another busy one for our Tenant Panel. They've been involved in a mystery shopping exercise, testing Unity's housing management service and how we protect personal data supplied to us by tenants. They also looked at gardening and cleaning service in communal areas and were involved in setting criteria for new and existing supplier service contracts.



Leeds Collaborative Group

Tenants from four housing associations attend this six weekly-forum, supported by their respective involvement officers to compare approaches and share best-practice.

It is currently attended by two Unity tenants, which according to the Group's terms of reference, is the maximum allowed.

Co-operation with other housing associations allows Unity and our tenants to acknowledge alternative approaches to delivery of services. It also gives an opportunity for Unity to influence how other housing associations operate.



'Achieving Excellence'

Investors in People

Investors in People is an institution that sets the standard for better people management within organisations. Their internationally recognised accreditation is held by 14,000 organisations across the world. The Standard defines what it takes to lead, support and manage people well for sustainable results.

Despite already possessing a silver accreditation, a change in standard meant that Unity targetted a more lucrative status. After spending a day speaking to staff, an assessor from Investors in People attended a Tenant Panel meeting to find out more about opportunities to influence service delivery. She liked what she heard, helping Unity to achieve Silver Standard.



Customer Service Excellence

Customer Service Excellence aims to bring professional, high-level customer service concepts into common currency with every customer service by offering a unique improvement tool to help those delivering services put their customers at the core of what they do. These are the types of values that Unity aims to embed with its' services, therefore we undertook an assessment to see if we meet the criteria.

Following a day working alongside Unity staff to see how tenants were treated, an assessor from Customer Service Excellence attended a Tenant Panel meeting to evaluate how customers were treated. He then had a session with the Panel, querying them on their opinions regarding customer service at Unity. The assessor was very satisfied with the overall service provided by Unity and we achieved Customer Service Excellence.



2015 Tenant Census

The Census took place in 2015 as we aimed to acquire more in depth data to assist our communication with our tenants. Overall, we received 617 responses. In the 2015 Census Survey we asked tenants about whether they would like to take advantage of their right to influence service delivery at Unity Housing, and have been using this as a starting point for expanding our Tenant Panel and such like.

Another aim of the 2015 Census Survey was to ensure that tenants' contact details are up to date and/or whether tenants would prefer to be communicated with in a different way. Unity largely relies on post and telephone contact to communicate with tenants, however if Unity was able to make more efficient use of email it could not only save the organisation money but also provide tenants with a means of sharing their views (by completing online surveys, for instance) without having to leave their home. Here is an overview of the data we received:



77% of tenants who responded (541) said that they are happy to be contacted via text.



55% of tenants who responded (457) said that they are happy to be contacted via email.



18% of tenants who responded (201) said that they or someone they live with would like some free help or training from our Employment Services Team.



46% of tenants who responded (200) said that they would like more details about how they can share their views.



16% of tenants who responded (229) said that they are happy to be contacted via Facebook.



4% of tenants who responded (208) said that they are happy to be contacted via Twitter.

Unity in Bloom 2015

Following the success of last year's competition, Unity invited every tenant to enter their garden or outdoor space into our 'Unity in Bloom' gardening competition. Due to the high amount of fantastic entries in the previous years, we decided to add three new categories into this year's competition, so now

eco-friendly gardens and smaller gardens also had a chance of winning. The Tenant Panel took two full days out of their busy schedule to visit properties across Leeds and had the difficult task of selecting a winner.

To congratulate the participants on their efforts, Unity held an Awards Ceremony in which winners and runners up were awarded prizes.





Value for Money Standard



Description

Made better use of own multi-lingual staff & cancelled annual contract with Language Line, therefore lowering costs on interpreters.

Interest savings due to variable rates.

We negotiated with gas suppliers via our energy broker, Inenco, to reduce costs.

We received interest from managing surplus cash and short term fixed deposits.

We reviewed our telephone lines are service, making sure that we are only paying for what we are using.

We reviewed our Leeds City Council cleaning contract. We checked works done and pricing of contract over five year period from inception.

Working with Manningham HA enabled a reduction in the cost of each gas servicing audit by £5.

We obtained a better tariff from changing the supplier for LMC's half hour meter to Total.

We had an independent review of risk map and corporate operations by Zurich, requested by the Audit Committee.

Saving

£354

on this particular job

£31,764

one-off saving

£5,376

one-off discount

£44,609

one-off saving

£4,210

one-off saving

£17,475

over the lifespan of the contract

£545

annual saving

£1,324

over the lifespan of the contract

£3,500

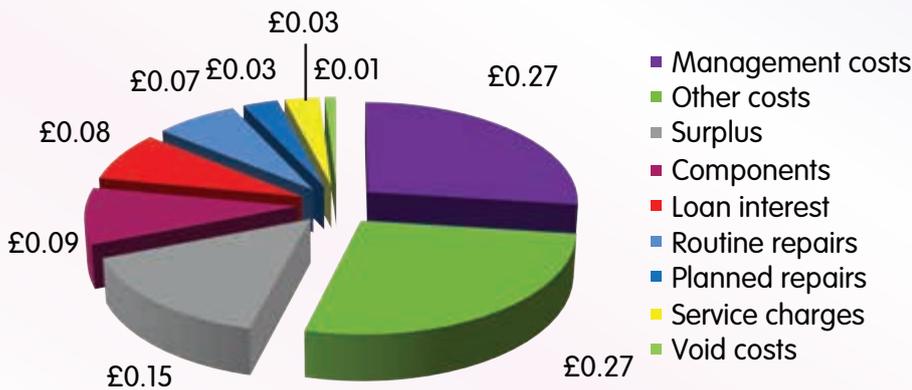
on this particular job

Total Savings:

£218,337

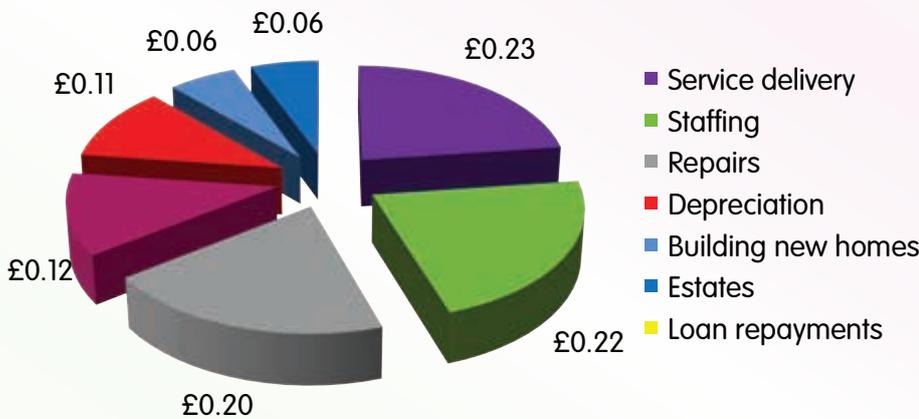
How each £1 of rent was spent in 2015/16

Unity Housing Association



How each £1 of rent was spent in 2015/16

Leeds and Yorkshire Housing



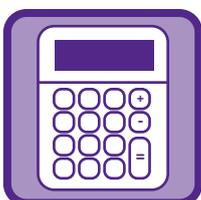
Governance & Viability Standard

Unity as a registered provider has to ensure it complies with all the requirements of the Homes & Communities Agency.

- ✓ Ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place
- ✓ Effective risk management, ensuring all assets are protected
- ✓ Being accountable to tenants, regulator and stakeholders
- ✓ Unity's current status with the regulator remains:

Viability - 1

Governance - 1



Rent Standard

Unity charges its rents in accordance to the governments direction to the regulator.

Financial Performance

	2015/16 Target	2015/16 Actual
GROSS TURNOVER		
Unity Housing	£5,823k	£7,576k
Unity Enterprise	£536k	£485k
REINVESTED INTO THE COMPANY		
Unity Housing	£989k	£1,636k
	£(37)k	£(40)k
Interest cover	424%	341%
Gearing ratio	37%	39%
Rent arrears	5.75%	5.56%
Voids	1%	1.04%
Bad debt	2%	0.41%

As a not-for-profit organisation, any money that Unity has left over at the end of the year is reinvested back into the company.

This goes towards improving services and the building of new homes.

Your suggestions for Value for Money

If you have any ideas about how Unity could save money, we'd be very keen to hear from you. One of the ways you can tell us your ideas is by joining the Tenant Panel.

The Tenant Panel are very good at keeping an eye on how Unity spends its money and have already come up with some great suggestions. Call Nathan on **0113 200 7751** for more information.

Want more detail?

If you require any more information or clarification on anything in this report, or would like a hard copy to be sent to you, please call Nathan on **0113 200 7751**. Alternatively, you can download our 2015/16 Self-Assessment from unityha.co.uk which has more detail.

Our mission

Provide housing choice, improve life opportunities and address inequalities.

Our objectives

- Provide and continue to develop good quality mixed tenure housing which reflects needs and aspirations.
- Provide high quality affordable housing services.
- Involve and work with our tenants and the communities we serve to inform and improve services.
- Work with our partners to encourage the regeneration of our target neighbourhoods.
- Provide and facilitate business support services and encourage local enterprise.
- Be a progressive and expanding business with a sound resource base.

Our values

Integrity – being honest, transparent and sincere with strong principles

Respect – in the way we treat people, service users and each other

Flexible – in how we work for the benefit of our tenants, other people, the organisation and each other

Commitment – to provide services to meet the needs of our tenants, local people and local neighbourhoods.

Business focused – continually review and adopt best practice and ensure we operate efficiently and effectively in order to make the best use of resources

Equality and fairness -- in the way we work and deliver our services



Unity Housing and Enterprise

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