



**Unity**

Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities  
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



# Annual Report to Tenants 2014/15



APPROVED BY OUR TENANT PANEL  
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### May 2014

Every few years, Unity checks how happy tenants are with the service we provide. We undertook a full Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2014 and are pleased to report that 82.2% of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided by Unity.



### July 2014

We attended the annual Holbeck Gala to promote shared-ownership opportunities on our new development, Brown Lane East. The scheme has since provided homes for 42 families.



### September 2014

Little London residents were visited by Housing Officers and Police Community Support Officers as part of an 'Action Day' to offer them free advice on crime and anti-social behaviour.



### June 2014

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

### August 2014

Work is underway on Stratford Court, a redevelopment on a council scheme, providing 28 homes for people over the age of 55 in the heart of Chapel Allerton.



### October 2014

Unity achieves the Customer Service Excellence Award. An independent assessor examined all areas of the business and spoke to our Tenant Panel. Unity met and exceeded the standard required.



## September 2014

Unity celebrates another year of providing housing choice, improving life opportunities and addressing inequalities at our AGM where Hardeep Singh Kohli is chief guest.

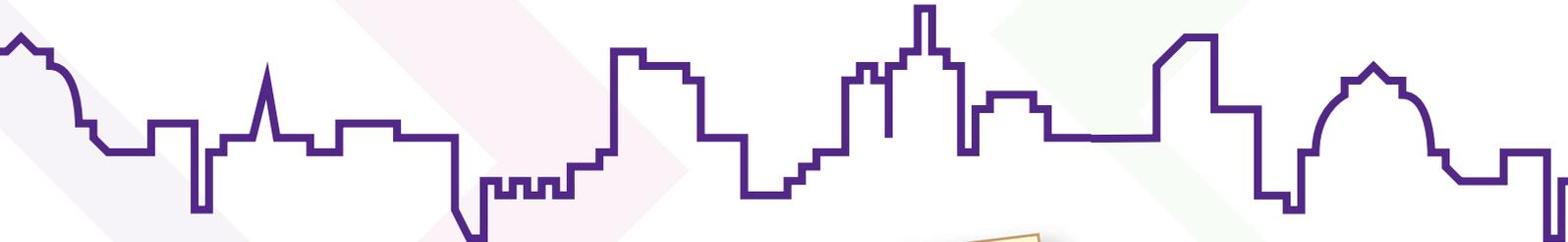


## February 2015

Tenants moving into the new housing on and around Brown Lane East were welcomed to community at an event at Holbeck Working Men's Club.

## March 2015

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.



## November 2014

Work begins on Unity's first development outside of Leeds. Trinity Court is a scheme of ten flats aimed at people over the age of 55 with recognised support needs, in the area of Fartown, Huddersfield.



## March 2015

Spring kicked off with a series of gardening workshops, aimed at encouraging tenants to grow their own produce at home by giving away free pots, seeds and soil.



## January 2015

The flats on Brown Lane East are named 'Harding Villas' by children at the nearby primary school, after industrialist Sir Thomas Walter Harding.

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## Foreword from our Tenant Panel

Over the past year, we have played a key role in helping Unity to meet its objectives and the ambitious targets Unity aims for. As such, we are proud to present the 'Annual Report to Tenants' which highlights Unity's achievements in 2014/15 and explains how these outcomes have been achieved, in many cases with the support of the Tenant Panel.

Highlights of being involved on the Tenant Panel include being involved in the tendering process for Unity's new gardening contractors and more recently serving on the Judging Panel for the 'Unity in Bloom' gardening

competition. We have also enjoyed visiting void properties before and after works had been carried out to get a better understanding of how Unity manages its budgets. Each of these exercises have helped us to understand the wide and diverse needs and aspirations of our tenants.

The main benefit of being on the Tenant Panel is having the opportunity to influence the service that you and other tenants receive. Sometimes, you will notice an direct effect on the estate on which you live as a result of your recommendation, but it is just as satisfying to see improvements in neighbourhoods other than our own. We work for the benefit of all our tenants – rather than our own.

Aside from having the opportunity to express your opinions, we have each improved our confidence and skills and learned a great deal about the housing sector. We understand how the business works at an operational level and how its practices are determined by the Government and the regulating bodies. This helps us to see things from Unity's perspective and gives us a balanced approach.

We would welcome anyone who has an interest in influencing the service they receive, in learning more about the housing sector and would simply like to meet with like-minded people in a fun and friendly environment to consider joining the Tenant Panel.

We hope you enjoy finding out Unity's performance and the work we do, in the Annual Report to Tenants.





# Home Standard



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## Highlights

100% of properties were gas-safety compliant as at the end of March 2015.

The Average SAP rating (a rating out of 100 which denotes how energy-efficient your property is) of our properties was 73.7 against a target of 73

36 properties were adapted to meet the needs of the tenants living there

A further 84 Energy Performance Certificates were attained in 2014/15. We now hold accurate energy performance information on 95% of our properties.

All our homes continue to meet the 'Decent Homes Standard'.

Our repairs contractor, Forrest, attended a Tenant Panel meeting so that tenants had the opportunity to express any concerns they had about their performance.

## Our Performance

	Actual 2013/14	Actual 2014/15	Target 2014/15	Meeting target	New target 2015/16
<b>Repairs, servicing and condition</b>					
Emergency	99%	99.9%	99%	✓	99%
Urgent	98.6%	99.4%	99%	✓	99%
Routine	99.1%	99%	99%	✓	99%
First-time fix	98.9%	95.8%	95%	✓	95%
Appointments made and kept	99.7%	99.1%	99%	✓	99%
Gas servicing	100%	100%	100%	✓	100%
Average rd SAP rating	73	73	73	✓	73
<b>Tenant Satisfaction</b>					
Monthly maintenance Satisfaction		98.4%	95%	✓	95%

## Planned Maintenance Satisfaction

	Satisfaction with service from Unity	Satisfaction with service from contractor	Satisfaction with quality of work	Satisfaction with quality of materials
Kitchens	100%	100%	100%	100%
Doors	93%	91%	92%	91%
Boilers	89%	89%	89%	89%
Bathrooms	96%	96%	96%	96%
Painting	99%	100%	100%	n/a
Gas servicing	99%	99%	99%	n/a





# Tenancy Standard



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## Highlights

We supported 13 successful appeals against the 'bedroom-tax' to help tenants remain in their properties.

We helped 16 tenants move to a smaller home, so as to become exempt from the under-occupation subsidy. We continue to support and promote the national mutual exchange scheme.

The number of tenants under-occupying their home has fallen to 138, down from 205 in 2013

We are in the process of carrying out a Tenant Census to identify those likely to be affected by the shift to Universal Credit in December 2015.

We have partnered with 'MyHomeEnergySwitch' to help tenants identify where they could be saving money on their fuel bills by switching to cheaper tariffs

We've been helping tenants to adjust to the digital age at our weekly workshops. Using the Internet will become an essential skill as benefit claims and job applications are shifted online.

We are carrying out further research into which tenants are likely to be affected by benefit changes through our 2015 Census with a view to offering them the support and guidance they may need.



## 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 providers throughout the region to ensure that our standards are similar to other organisations.

## Our Performance

	Actual 2013/14	Actual 2014/15	Target 2014/15	Meeting target	New target 2015/16
<b>Arrears</b>					
Arrears (actual)	£338,911	£336,344			
Arrears (%)	6.84%	6.36%	6.75%	✓	5.75%
Rent collected (%)	100.18%	103.09%	100%	✓	100%
Former tenant arrears (actual)	£224,524	£249,346			
<b>Voids &amp; Lettings</b>					
% rent loss through voids	0.81%	0.95%	<2%	✓	<1.25%
Turnover of stock	5.84%	5.72%	<10%	✓	<10%
General needs re-let time	23.4 days	21.6 days	24 days	✓	22 days
% lets to nominations	60.56%	75.36%	50%	✓	50%
% General needs lets to BME tenants	67.69%	78.26%	50%	✓	50%

**151** appointments made with our Financial Inclusion Officer

**9** Personal Independence applications made

**64** successful bids for Discretionary Housing Payments

**12** customers referred to debt advice

**7** JSA and Income Support applications made

**67** fewer under-occupiers than 2013

**13** Trust and Grant applications made

**51** food vouchers issued



## Partnership Working - Green Doctor

As part of our commitment to help tenants lower their fuel bills, Unity has partnered with Groundwork's Green Doctor service to offer tenants energy saving devices.

They can install simple energy-saving devices in your home free of charge including:

- ✓ Energy-efficient lightbulbs
- ✓ Reflective radiator panels
- ✓ Draught proofing on external wooden doors
- ✓ Pipe lagging
- ✓ Hot water tank jackets
- ✓ Water saving devices

They can help you understand how best to use your heating system, so you do not waste money by having the water and heating on too much or too high. They can also give you advice on where to get energy-saving gadgets and more information about switching services to help you find a cheaper tariff.

The Green Doctor contacts all of Unity's new tenants to find out if they would like some help and advice about saving money on utility bills.

If you think you could benefit from a visit from the Green Doctor, why not contact them today? Explain that you are a Unity tenant and they will be happy to help!



0113 238 0601



[greendoctorleeds@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:greendoctorleeds@groundwork.org.uk)





# Tenant Involvement Standard



Supporting BME Communities and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

## Highlights

We carried out a full Tenant Satisfaction Survey to help us identify areas for service improvement and to bring to our attention any issues affecting our residents' homes and neighbourhoods.

We encouraged residents to take pride in their estates by taking part in the 'Unity in Bloom' gardening competition. We provided opportunities for tenants to be on the Judging Panel.

We conducted research into our tenants' preferences to find out if tenants would find it more convenient to communicate with us by email and social media. We anticipate value for money savings, in instances where tenants are happy to do this.

Our Tenant Panel have been involved in inspecting void properties in order to better understand how Unity's budget is spent and to make suggestions as to where we could be saving money bringing empty properties back into use.

Our Tenant Panel have been involved in monitoring the performance of our repairs contractor and assessing tenders from other contractors.

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.



## 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.

As well as attending meetings, the Tenant Panel get involved with practical on-site inspections, mystery shopping exercises and interviewing and assessing our contractors to help us monitor their performance.



## Scrutiny Panel

If you want to challenge and influence how Unity's housing services are delivered then join our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Tenant Scrutiny of services is a cornerstone of ensuring that Unity is properly run. Our Scrutiny Panel meets every three months to closely examine how Unity is performing. Because it is a more committed role that requires particular skills, you have to apply to join the Scrutiny Panel.



The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel is to:

- ✓ Scrutinise the services Unity Housing provides, whilst promoting 'Value for Money'
- ✓ Scrutinise the performance of individual contractors
- ✓ Ensure our policies and procedures meet the diverse needs of our tenants
- ✓ Enable our tenants to challenge our performance and plans
- ✓ Provide the Board with a clearer understanding of tenants' priorities and views in order to inform our business planning



## 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.



Key investigations the group have carried out this year include:

- ✓ Tenants' use of pre-payment meters and whether or not landlords are doing enough to support tenants from migrating from expensive tariffs
- ✓ What happens to household items left behind by tenants when vacating their properties; whether it is recycled, gifted to another tenant or collected by a charity
- ✓ What strategies landlords have in place to support victims of domestic violence
- ✓ Landlords' communication with their tenants, including printed media, email bulletins and social media and whether their choices matches with tenants' preferences

## Case Study - Unity in Bloom

Each of Unity's residents has been invited to enter their garden or outdoor space into the 'Unity in Bloom' gardening competition. For the first time, there were two categories; meaning that those who grow their own fruit and vegetables benefitted from the rewards on offer.

The aim of the competition was to encourage residents to take pride in the appearance of their estates, and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging tenants to grow fruit and vegetables at home.

Some of Unity's tenants went to extraordinary lengths to bring up the appearance of their estates.

The Tenant Panel took two full days out of their busy schedule to visit properties across Leeds. They had very hard task in selecting the winners.

To celebrate the success of the competition, each of the participants was invited to an Awards Ceremony in which the winners and runners up were offered prizes. Such was the variety of the gardens entered that Unity's Tenant Panel have suggested that more categories be introduced in next year's competition.

## Case Study - Tenants attend Domestic Violence Conference

Some members of the Tenant Panel, who were particularly concerned about the issue of domestic violence, attended a conference aimed at raising awareness of the issue in Leeds.

Following the conference, Unity looked into the possibility of arranging training for staff on 'supporting potential victims of domestic violence' living in our properties.



We revisited our policies and procedures with help from our Tenant Panel to make sure that we are fully equipped to deal with a domestic violence situation.

One tenant who attended is interested in becoming an ambassador for protecting victims of domestic violence within her community and plans to seek a training opportunity to enable her to do this.

Unity also issued advice for victims and friends and relatives of victims in our quarterly newsletter.

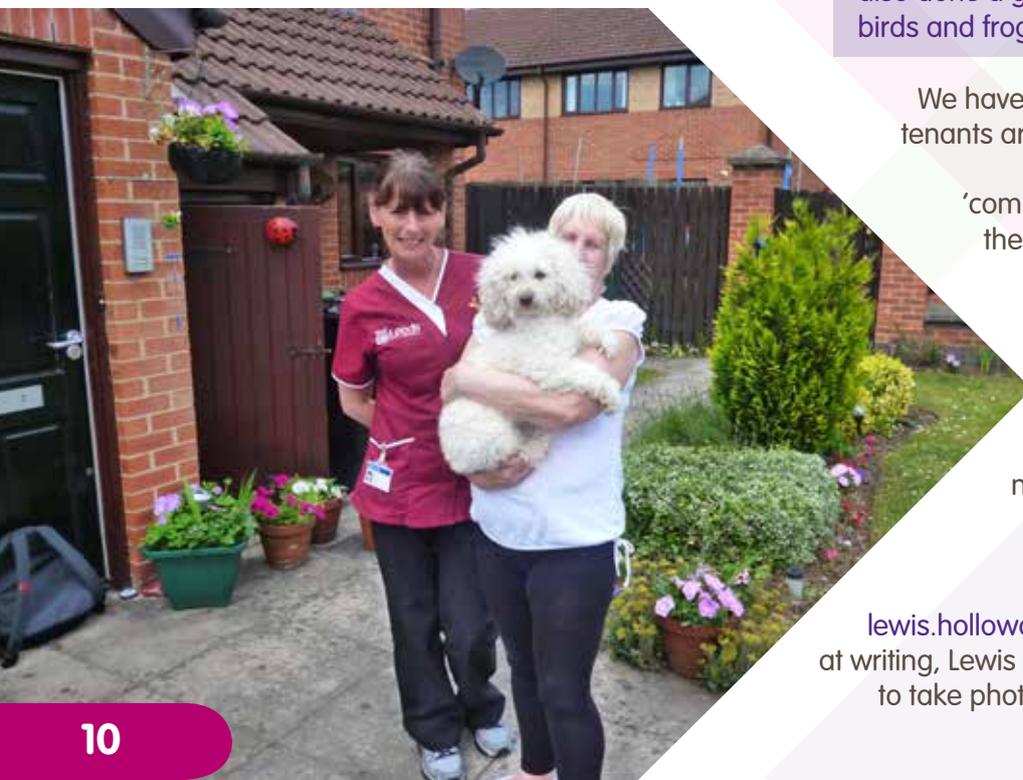
## Case Study - Become a community reporter

These neighbours (pictured) living in Crossgates regularly pick up litter on their estate and surrounding areas. They take great pride in the appearance of their neighbourhood. They have also done a great deal to attract wildlife such as birds and frogs and hedgehogs to the area.

We have heard about the wonderful things Unity tenants are doing to benefit their neighbourhoods and communities including organising 'community action days', attracting wildlife to their area and organising children's events.

We'd like to help tenants spread the word about what is happening in their communities, by encouraging them to become 'community reporters' and submit their news stories for inclusion in our quarterly newsletter 'Unity News'.

Please send your stories and photos to [lewis.holloway@unityha.co.uk](mailto:lewis.holloway@unityha.co.uk). If you're not confident at writing, Lewis can visit your community group or event to take photos and help you put the article together.





# Neighbourhood & Community Standard



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## Highlights

We completed two major new housing developments in the areas of Holbeck and Chapel Allerton, which have provided 70 new homes. The building of these new homes provided a total of 16 work experience opportunities with our contractors.

We refurbished two of our three business centres, Unity Business Centre and Chapeltown Enterprise Centre to improve the offer to new and existing tenants.

We employed a Network Business Advisor to assist tenants and the wider community in setting up their own businesses.

Our Employment Service Team helped a further 60 people access work opportunities and 61 people find training opportunities.

Following a suggestion from the Tenant Panel, we have made a change to way in which anti-social behaviour is recorded and monitored. Each case is now logged formally and reported to our Operations Committee.

The Leeds Collaborative Group, a collective of involved residents from four different Yorkshire housing associations have compared landlords' approaches to dealing with anti-social behaviour and as a result Unity is better-equipped to deal with any complaints.



## Stratford Court

Stratford Court is a redevelopment of a council scheme featuring 24 flats and 4 bungalows, exclusively for those over the age of 55. It is in the convenient location of Chapel Allerton, close to shops, cafes and local amenities.

Design features such as wet-room showers and lift access make it suitable for older people or those with disabilities. Properties are equipped with energy-efficient boilers to help keep fuel bills to a minimum.

## Brown Lane East

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

Children from the nearby Ingram Road Primary School were responsible for choosing the name 'Harding Villas' for the flats, after finding out that Colonel Thomas Walter Harding was an industrialist who lived and worked in the area.

## 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.



## Unity Business Centre Refurbishment

Through our subsidiary company, Unity Enterprise, Unity Business Centre and Chapeltown Enterprise Centre provide office and workshop units for small businesses and voluntary sector organisations.

Located on the edge of Leeds City Centre, our business centres offer a wide range of accommodation and support at affordable prices.

Unity Business Centre and Chapeltown Enterprise Centre underwent major refurbishments to improve the services that we are able to offer our business tenants.

Works included re-cladding roofs, new doors and windows, new lifts, new signage and data cabling for faster broadband. The improvements were paid for with £1.4 million of Government and Unity funding.



## New Businesses Triumph

New tenants include Petals 3, a florist on the ever busy Chapeltown Road, providing fresh flowers and bouquets for all occasions.

Existing tenants, LEEP 1 - a self-advocacy group aimed at encouraging adults with learning difficulties to stand up for themselves – converted an office unit into a café which attracts workers from the centre as well as passing trade.

Nadeen Strachan is an independent, graduate fashion designer and seamstress. All of her clothing and accessories are designed and made in the UK by herself. She offers a tailoring service to make clothes to suit your requirements as an individual and is able to customise and perform alterations on your existing garments.

## Case Study, Network Business Advice

We employed a Network Business Advisor to support people in the local community wanting to start or grow their own businesses.

Our Network Business Advisor helped Michael\* to develop his business by helping him to access finance to purchase much needed equipment for his auto-repair workshop and develop a business plan to give him a clear guideline to follow.

Our Network Business Advisor connected with suppliers of products at much more affordable prices than other suppliers had quoted. He advised him on how to market his business and develop his brand. Our Network Business Advisor is also helping him to develop a database system for his growing clients.





## Unity's Employment Services Team

Unity Employment Services 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 you with practical job skills such as preparing your CV, guidance for job searching and applications, and practising your interview technique. Since they joined Unity they have helped hundreds of people!

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
<b>Employment</b>	35	44	60	177
<b>Training</b>	36	45	61	211
<b>Voluntary work</b>	14	12	20	48

### Case Study: Jack\*, Married, 27

Before meeting The Employment Team Jack was in work but wanted to progress in his career by learning a new trade.

Unity Housing is pleased to offer local people work experience opportunities through the building of new homes. The Team sent Jack information on how to apply and he responded straightaway. He was invited for interview and was successful in securing a six month placement.

Jack's enthusiasm for his job meant that he was invited to work after the six months had ended, until the building work was complete. Since leaving the site Jack has successfully found alternative employment and is hoping to buy a home for him and his family.

### Case Study: Sharon\*, Single Mother, 40

Before meeting The Employment Team Sharon was struggling with alcohol addiction and had a small child at home as well as an older child. She was sinking into depression and wanted to do something with her life.

On the first meeting with the Employment Team Sharon opened up about her addiction and how she was feeling. The Team got her an appointment at the local addiction unit where she was put on a programme for 9 weeks to help her get out of old habits and make new healthier ones.

After the programme had finished The Team referred her to the Volunteer Centre where she got a better idea of what she wanted to do. Sharon is now volunteering at her local food bank.

### Case Study: Ben\*, Single, 34

Before meeting The Employment Team Ben was on disability benefits and was severely depressed. He hadn't worked for thirteen years. He had recently been made homeless and had nowhere to stay.

In the first meeting the Team offered to refer Ben for housing advice. The following week, Ben went to view a Unity property and accepted straight away. He was referred to the Financial Inclusion Officer for advice about where to find affordable furniture.

Ben returned to the Employment Team, wanting to brush up his IT skills. The Team were running courses at the Employment Hub, which he joined. He successfully completed the course which gave him the confidence to start applying for jobs.

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





# Value For Money Standard



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## Highlights

We tendered new suppliers for our utilities at our offices and business centres. Opus Energy became our new supplier on 1st April 2015.

Keepmoat carried out external wall insulation on our properties in Carlton Grove. Keepmoat were carrying out work in the area and delivered a value for money saving against our regular contractors.

We negotiated a 5% discount on our Internet monitoring software by taking out a 3 year contract

We negotiated a new insurance policy which covered some of the items we were charged separately for in the past

Due to late billing from our solicitor, we negotiated a discount of 50% for some items

Instead of printing and posting the Annual Report to Tenants, we uploaded it our website and included instructions of how to download it in our newsletter. Hard copies were only sent to tenants who requested one.

We were advised that we could reclaim VAT on fees related to the cash machine outside our office.

We utilised the design skills of our in-house staff to create signage which we would usually outsource

We achieved loan interest savings

Insurance rates remained the same. The only increment was due to the increased value of our properties.

## Savings

**£7,500** over the lifespan of the contract

**£2,400** on this particular job

**£1,248** over the lifespan of the contract

**£6,588** against expected cost

**£1,292** one-off discount

**£1,128** one-off saving

**£275** one-off saving

**£236** one-off saving

**£3,075** one-off saving

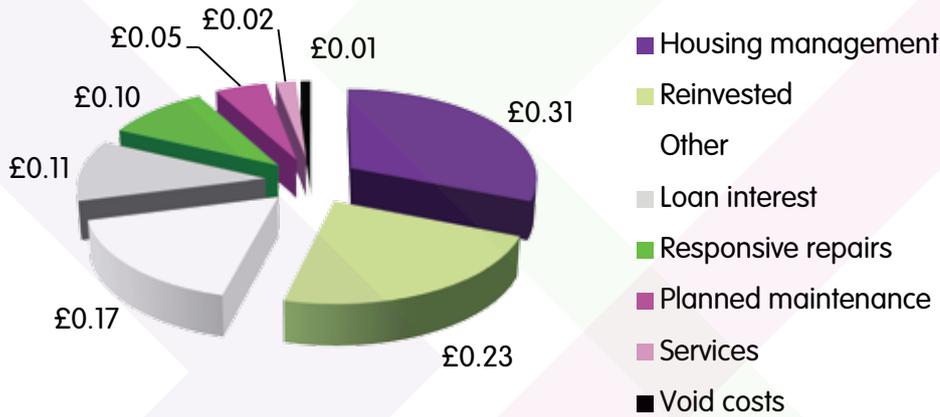
**£2,971** against expected cost

**£26,713**

# Total Savings:

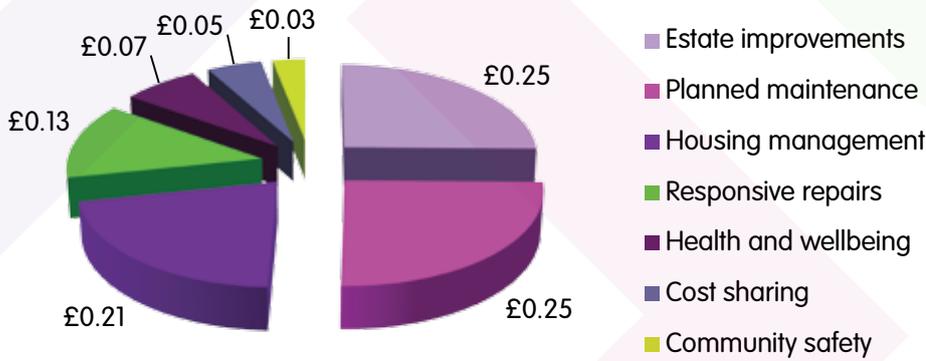
## How each £1 of rent was spent in 2014/15

### Unity Housing Association



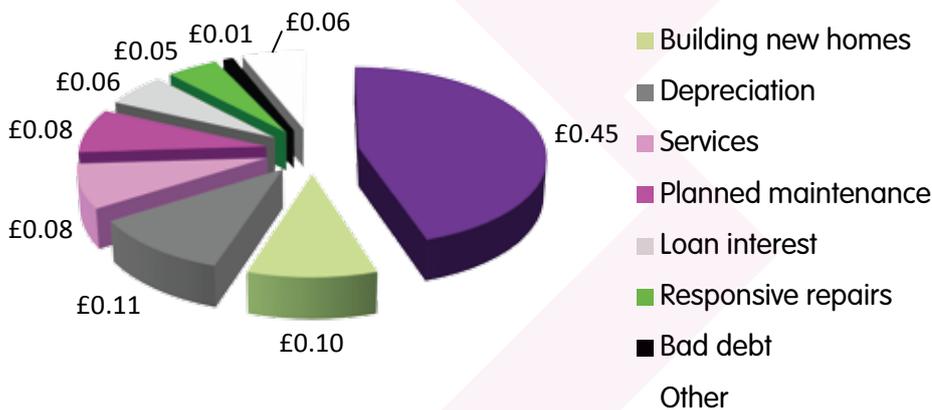
## How each £1 of rent was spent in 2014/15

### Wakefield District Housing



## How each £1 of rent was spent in 2013/14

### Leeds & Yorkshire Housing



## How each £1 of rent was spent in 2013/14

### Incommunities



## Financial Performance

	2014/15 Target	2014/15 Actual
<b>GROSS TURNOVER</b>		
Unity Housing	£5,325k	£5,237k
Unity Enterprise	£550k	£510k
<b>REINVESTED INTO THE COMPANY</b>		
Unity Housing	£584k	£1,117k
Unity Enterprise	£(37)k	£(31)k
Interest cover	344%	427%
Gearing ratio	40%	39%
Rent arrears	6.5%	6.36%
Former tenant arrears	6%	4.71%
Bad debt	£261k	£97k

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 Lewis 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 Lewis on **0113 200 7751**. Alternatively, you can download our 2014/15 Self-Assessment from [unityha.co.uk](http://unityha.co.uk) which has more detail.

