

# Voice Annual Report Supplement 2009–2010

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Summary assessment against the standards  
set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA)





Customer  
Service  
Charter



# Voice Annual Report Supplement

This is a summary report to residents on our 'Self Assessment' against the TSA's standards. This report has been produced with residents for residents.

## **Our residents told us that they wanted this report to:**

- Demonstrate the process we have gone through to ensure that the full 'Self Assessment' is an accurate view of where we are against the standards, this is covered in the introduction.
- Include a brief statement on how we comply with each standard.
- Include information about how our performance and costs compare with other organisations.
- Concentrate on where we need to improve by making 'Service Offers' against each standard.

For consistency we have chosen the latest available HouseMark Annual Comparison Report (2008/2009) for this summary report which compares Muir Group against up to 34 housing providers in the North. Where we are not performing as well as we should be we may have already taken action and improved. Where we still need to improve we have included a 'Service Offer' to deal with this. More up to date and detailed comparison information can be seen at the end of the full 'Self Assessment' in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

You can view the full 'Self Assessment's' including the requirements of each standard, full evidence of how we comply and detailed actions of how we intend to improve, on our website [www.muir.org.uk](http://www.muir.org.uk). Alternatively you can request a paper copy by contacting us on **0300 1231222**.

# 2009– 2010

## Dear Resident

This report sets out the six standards our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), expects all housing associations to meet as part of the 'Regulatory Framework'. It explains how Muir Group Housing Association (Muir Group) meets these standards, where we do not, what we will do about it and confirms where we need to improve by committing to a number of 'Service Offers' against each standard. The circulation of this report to all residents also complies with the deadline set by the TSA of the 1st October 2010.

More information about the Tenant Services Authority, the Regulatory Framework and the standards can be found on its website at [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)

This report should be read alongside the 'Voice' Annual Report which contains lots of information about our performance and what we have done in 2009-2010 to improve our services, communities and neighbourhoods.

What are the six TSA standards and what else does the TSA expect?

These standards and what they mean are covered in more detail in the following pages but the six standards are:

### STANDARDS

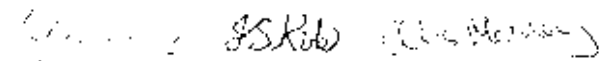
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Value for Money
- Governance and Financial Viability

In addition to these standards Muir Group are required to agree 'Local Offers' with our residents. It is for residents to determine what is Local, what the offers are and agree how these will be delivered and monitored. At the back of this report is an action plan of how we intend to deliver 'Local Offers' by the deadline of the 1st April 2011.

How do I know that Muir Group comply with the standards, that this summary report and the full 'Self Assessment' is accurate and that the evidence has been checked?

- Our accounts are audited by an independent company of auditors, Beevers and Struthers.
- The banks that lend us money check our financial position at regular intervals.
- Our approach to such issues as gas safety, fire safety, asbestos safety and legionella is checked by independent specialists.
- A specialist housing consultancy, Enlighten, has independently reviewed the 'Full Self Assessment' and this report. They have reviewed the methods used in determining the statements that have been made and provided a challenge to the outcomes of the report. In their opinion this is a true reflection of the Association's position against the standards.
- Our services are continually checked by Quality Housing Services (QHS) against their 'Excellence Criteria'. We have achieved enhanced certification against this criteria.
- The full self assessment and this summary report have been scrutinised, challenged and approved by our two Regional Resident Forums. The Regional Resident Forums have determined the format and content of this report:

- Our five Service Improvement Groups, made-up entirely of residents, have scrutinised, challenged and commented on the self assessment:
  - Access & Customer Care Service Improvement Group
  - Maintenance Improvement Group
  - Leasehold Service Improvement Group
  - Housing Services Service Improvement Group
  - Supported Housing Service Improvement Group
- Our main Board of Management, including our three democratically elected Resident Board Members have approved the self assessment and this summary report:



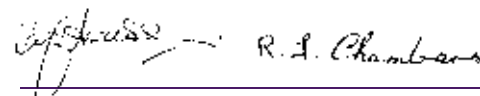
**Martyn Delaney**  
Resident Board  
Member North

**Janet Seymour Kirk**  
Resident Board  
Member North

**Chris Mosley**  
Resident Board  
Member South


- This report and the self assessment will be sent to the TSA. They will examine it and raise any queries with us.

If you are not happy with anything in this report, our statements about how we meet the TSA standards or we are not meeting the standards set out in our Customer Services Charter (available on our website, by request and in our tenants' handbook) then please contact us on **0300 1231222**. We have an open and accessible complaints process to try and resolve your concerns. Delivery and scrutiny of our 'Service Offers' will be undertaken by our 'Resident Scrutiny Panel' with regular progress reports presented to our Board.



**Tony Hodson**  
Chair, North Regional  
Resident Forum

**Ron Chambers**  
Chair, South Regional  
Resident Forum



**John Bellis**  
Chief Executive

**Anthony Diggle**  
Chairman of the Board

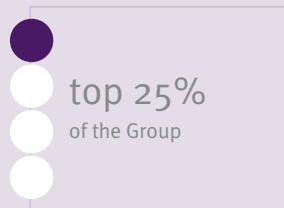


# tenant involvement and empowerment standard

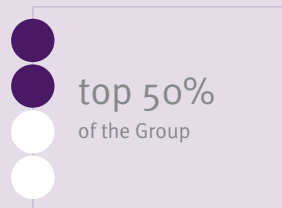
THIS STANDARD COVERS:	BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS	OUR 'SERVICE OFFER' BY 31ST MARCH 2011. WE WILL:
CUSTOMER SERVICE, CHOICE AND HOW WE DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our information is comprehensive and widely available in alternative formats</li> <li>✓ Our services are accessible, meet customers' needs and our standards are clearly set out in our Customer Service Charter</li> <li>✓ We have a published complaints policy and procedure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the information to residents on how we are performing and explain what we will do if we are not performing</li> <li>• Look at new ways to communicate with customers</li> <li>• Apply our services and standards consistently in all areas</li> <li>• Look at ways in which we can introduce additional service choices</li> <li>• Commence a full review with residents of how we deal with complaints</li> </ul>
HOW WE INVOLVE, ENGAGE AND EMPOWER OUR RESIDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We have a wide range of ways in which residents can get involved and be empowered at all levels</li> <li>✓ We have a plan to deliver 'Local Offers' based on resident feedback and priorities</li> <li>✓ We have a new governance structure that has increased resident involvement in how Muir Group is run and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the ways in which residents influence our high level priorities</li> <li>• Introduce, train and support an independent resident 'Scrutiny Panel'</li> <li>• Ensure that the residents involved in our management arrangements, including the 'Scrutiny Panel', continue to be supported and trained</li> </ul>
HOW WE UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE DIFFERENT NEEDS OF RESIDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All staff and contractors have been trained on treating residents fairly and with respect</li> <li>✓ We use our customer information to deal with residents appropriately according to their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use our customer information to help inform high level decisions</li> <li>• Ensure that our customer information is used to further improve and tailor our services</li> <li>• Ensure that our staff and contractors are fully equipped and trained to respond to our residents needs</li> </ul>

## HOW OUR PERFORMANCE AND COSTS COMPARE – HOUSEMARK COMPARISON GROUP 2008/2009 STATISTICS (NORTH)

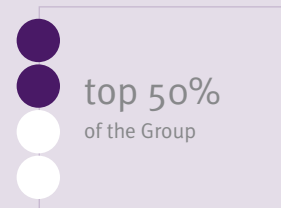
Direct cost per property of Resident Involvement £22.19



Percentage of tenants satisfied that views are taken into account 69%



Percentage of tenants who felt that staff were able to deal with their problem 78%



has awarded us 'Enhanced Certification' for Customer Information, Opening and Reception, Telephone Accessibility, Complaints Handling, Participation and Diversity and Equality.

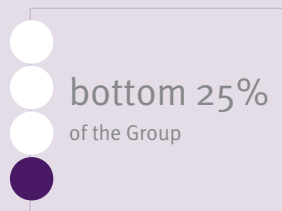


# home standard

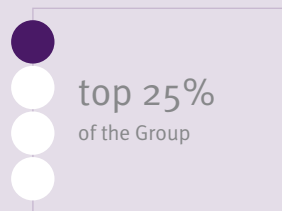
<p>THIS STANDARD COVERS:</p> <p>THE QUALITY OF YOUR ACCOMMODATION</p>	<p>BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All of our homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>✓ We have a Muir Property Standard, agreed with residents, that exceeds the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>✓ We monitor, and are committed, to improving the energy efficiency of our homes</li> </ul>	<p>OUR 'SERVICE OFFER' BY 31ST MARCH 2011. WE WILL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Muir Property Standard with residents</li> <li>• Develop a plan to improve the energy efficiency of our homes</li> <li>• Improve the way that residents influence the money we spend on our planned improvement programme e.g. kitchens and bathrooms</li> </ul>
<p>REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We use external repair companies to maintain our homes, all contracts and services are awarded following a competitive process to ensure value for money</li> <li>✓ Residents are involved in choosing contractors</li> <li>✓ We have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that the health and safety of our residents is a high priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commence a full review of the day-to-day repairs service with residents including a review of the 'resident journey'</li> <li>• Carry out a full review with residents of how we deliver aids and adaptations</li> <li>• Improve fire safety in our homes, our information to residents on asbestos and review our process for carrying out annual gas servicing checks</li> </ul>

## HOW OUR PERFORMANCE AND COSTS COMPARE – HOUSEMARK COMPARISON GROUP 2008/2009 STATISTICS (NORTH)

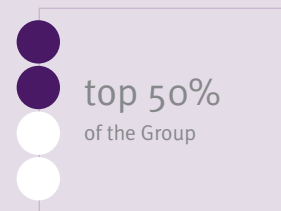
Direct cost per property of responsive repairs and void works **£773**



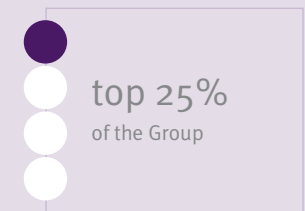
Direct cost per property of major works and cyclical maintenance **£686**



Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service **81%**



Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall quality of their home **89%**



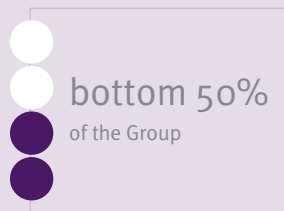


# tenancy standard

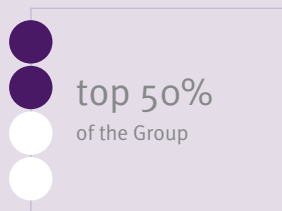
<p>THIS STANDARD COVERS:</p> <p>HOW WE LET OUR HOMES</p>	<p>BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We let 42% of our homes through 'Choice Based Lettings Schemes' which provide increased choice to people seeking housing</li> <li>✓ Our residents can swap homes with other tenants through 'Homeswapper'</li> <li>✓ We make every effort to let our adapted homes to people that need them</li> <li>✓ We house many people from Local Authority waiting lists to help Local Authorities meet their obligations</li> </ul>	<p>OUR 'SERVICE OFFER' BY 31ST MARCH 2011. WE WILL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a new lettings policy for all areas where we are not part of a 'Choice Based Lettings Scheme'</li> <li>• Increase the use of 'Choice Based Lettings Schemes' following consultation with applicants and where it represents value for money</li> <li>• Improve the information available to people seeking housing</li> <li>• Encourage people to move if they have room to spare in their home and provide extra help to those that are over-crowded</li> </ul>
<p>HOW WE SET OUR RENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Our rents are set in-line with Government guidelines called 'Target Rents'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the information to residents on how we set rents</li> <li>• Commence a full review of service charges with residents</li> </ul>
<p>OUR APPROACH TO THE USE OF TENANCY AGREEMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We agreed with Local Authorities and our residents to use 'Starter Tenancies' for all new lettings from June 2009</li> <li>✓ We carry out 'Homechecks' every two years to check who is living in our homes and if they need any extra help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the use and effectiveness of starter tenancies</li> <li>• Commence a full review with residents of how we deal with anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Improve the way we publicise our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and our successes</li> </ul>

## HOW OUR PERFORMANCE AND COSTS COMPARE – HOUSEMARK COMPARISON GROUP 2008/2009 STATISTICS (NORTH)

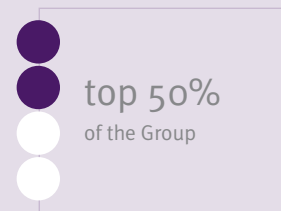
Direct cost per property of housing management  
£289



Average time in days to re-let empty properties  
28.3 days



Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall services provided 86%



Current tenant rent arrears as a percentage of rent due 5.9%



has awarded us 'Enhanced Certification' for Dealing with Housing Seekers and Rent Payment and Collection

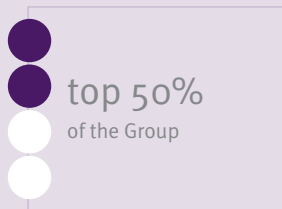


# neighbourhood and community standard

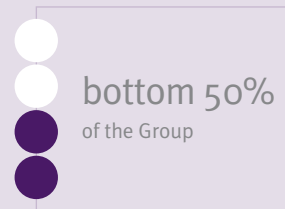
THIS STANDARD COVERS:  NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT	BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS	OUR 'SERVICE OFFER' BY 31ST MARCH 2011. WE WILL:
HOW WE WORK WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that our neighbourhoods and common areas are clean and tidy</li> <li>✓ We publicise 'estate walkabouts' with residents to check our neighbourhoods</li> <li>✓ We have a specific budget to improve neighbourhoods. Residents decide where this money is spent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that our approach to working with other organisations to improve neighbourhoods is included in our 'Local Offers'</li> <li>• Review our approach to maintaining and improving neighbourhoods with residents</li> </ul>
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ We work with and support many organisations to improve our neighbourhoods and communities. Many examples of this are already highlighted in the 'Local Plans'</li> <li>✓ The Association's charity, Friends of Muir Group, allocates funds specifically to improve neighbourhoods, communities and peoples' lives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show how we will work with other organisations to tackle neighbourhood and community issues in our 'Local Offers'</li> <li>• Start to reduce our impact on the environment with a detailed environmental plan</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commence a full review with residents of how we deal with anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Improve the way we publicise our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and our successes</li> </ul>

## HOW OUR PERFORMANCE AND COSTS COMPARE – HOUSEMARK COMPARISON GROUP 2008/2009 STATISTICS (NORTH)

Direct cost per property of estate services **£101**



Percentage of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live **80%**





# value for money standard

## THIS STANDARD COVERS:

HOW WE PROVIDE COST-EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, QUALITY SERVICES AND HOMES

## BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS

- ✓ Value for Money is given a high priority by the Directors and the Board
- ✓ We have a 'Value For Money Group' that considers and approves entries into the Value For Money Register
- ✓ Our main cost areas are regularly cost tested to ensure they provide value for money, residents are involved in these processes
- ✓ Where possible savings are re-invested in services to residents
- ✓ We regularly compare our costs with other housing associations to see where we can improve
- ✓ We have a programme of full service reviews for all main service areas to ensure we are providing value for money; residents are involved in these reviews.

## OUR 'SERVICE OFFER' BY 31ST MARCH 2011. WE WILL:

- Improve the ways that residents influence where we spend and save money, how we assess value for money and the priority areas for service reviews
- Improve the information to residents on the quality of services they receive the costs of those services and how they compare with other housing associations
- Work with our main contractors to identify where we can reduce our costs but still maintain high level services



# governance and financial viability standard

## THIS STANDARD COVERS:

HOW MUIR GROUP IS MANAGED AS AN ORGANISATION

## BRIEF COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS

- ✓ We have adopted an industry standard code of how Muir Group should be governed at a high level. The Board considers that we meet this code in all main areas except for one guideline relating to the maximum period of Board membership. It is believed to be in the Association's best interest to adopt a more flexible approach rather than state a maximum term. A full explanation of the Board's reason for its decision is included in the self assessment
- ✓ We meet all legal and regulatory requirements appropriate to housing associations which are checked regularly by independent and professional advisers
- ✓ We have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that Muir Group is managed appropriately, with residents involved at all levels

The 'Regulatory Framework' does not require us to include a specific 'Service Offer' for this standard. Whilst there are detailed improvement actions for this standard in the full 'Self Assessment', residents have not identified any specific 'Service Offers' to be included during the consultation process.

HOW FINANCIALLY STRONG WE ARE

- ✓ The Association's independent auditors have reported that our Annual Financial Statement for the year to 31 March 2010 show a true and fair view of the state of our affairs. Copies of our Financial Statements can be found on our website
- ✓ Our surplus for the year was in excess of £1 million
- ✓ We continue to meet all financial commitments agreed with our funders



# our action plan to deliver local offers by the 1st april 2011

ACTION	TARGET TIME
Consult with the Regional Resident Forums on the proposed framework for delivery of Local Offers	August 2010
Outbound telephone survey to consult on current approach to Customer Service Charter (standards) and Local Plans to determine if this is appropriate or can be improved / amended to meet residents' needs in respect of Local Offers	August 2010
Consult with the 'Think Tank' & 'Service Improvement Groups' on the proposed approach to Local Offers	August 2010
Based on feedback and consultation with 'involved groups' and the wider tenant body finalise the framework on which to deliver Local Offers	September 2010
Commence detailed consultation with residents to determine the Local Offers based on residents priorities and feedback. This to include detailed analysis of the STATUS satisfaction survey results and feedback from the 'Resident Priority Survey' to be sent out with the Local Plan Update in November 2010	October 2010 / January 2011
Develop 'Local Offers' based on feedback and priorities and determine appropriate performance measures and outcomes to monitor success / impact	February 2011
Develop a system to ensure that the Regional Resident Forums have the mechanism to appropriately monitor and scrutinise performance, impact and outcomes of the Local Offers.	February 2011
Present draft Local Offers and evidence to the Regional Resident Forums for comment, challenge and approval to ensure that the Local Offers are appropriate and meet resident priorities as per feedback	February 2011
Present the Local Offers to the Board for approval	February / March 2011
Finalise the content, design and format of the Local Offers and distribute and publicise to residents appropriately	March 2011
Local Offers 'Go Live'	1st April 2011





Muir Group Housing Association Limited

**You can contact us:**

- By telephoning our customer services team on: 0300 123 1222
- By Facsimile to: 01928 404026

- By Textphone (Minicom) on: 0300 123 3005 or by using the Text Relay service on 18001 followed by the number you wish to contact
- Via our website at [www.muir.org.uk](http://www.muir.org.uk)
- By email to [info@muir.org.uk](mailto:info@muir.org.uk)
- In person by speaking to any member of staff
- By requesting a home visit
- By writing to us at: Muir Group Housing Association Ltd, PO BOX 136, Frodsham WA6 1AW
- Or, you can visit us at one of our offices below:

**Registered Head Office** – Old Government House, Dee Hills Park, Chester, Cheshire CH3 5AR *Open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm*

**Area Offices** Blackpool – 67 Chepstow Rd, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7PH *Open Mon-Thurs, 9am-5pm, Fri 9am-4.30pm*

Burnley – Second Floor, Lodge House, Lodge Square, Cow Lane, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 1NW *Open Mon, Wed, Fri 9am-5pm Closed Tues & Thurs*

Glebe Green – 28 Vauxhall Way, Glebe Green, Winsford CW7 1NG *Open Mon, Tues & Thurs, 10am-5pm*

Helsby – Oakmere House, Mere's Edge, Chester Road, Helsby, Cheshire WA6 0DJ *Open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm*

Huntingdon – Stable Court, Ferrars Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 3DH *Open Mon, Wed, Fri 9am-5pm Closed Tues & Thurs*



**"Making diversity part of our culture"**

## Do you need help to read this?

Please contact us:  
tel: 0300 123 1222 or  
textphone(minicom):  
0300 123 3005



**Arabic** المجلة الصوتية  
مساعدة لقراءة هذا؟ يرجى منك الإتصال بنا  
هل تحتاج إلى

**Polish** Magazyn głosowy  
Potrzebujesz pomocy, aby to przeczytać?  
Skontaktuj się z nami.

**Portuguese** Voice Magazine  
Necessita de ajuda para ler isto?  
Entre em contacto conosco

**Punjabi** ਆਵਾਜ਼ੀ ਰਸਾਲਾ  
ਕੀ ਇਹਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਈ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਮਦਦ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ?  
ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰੋ।

**Somali** Majallad Maqal ah  
Ma u baahan tahay in lagaa kaalmeeyo  
akhrinta feylkan? Fadlan nala soo xiriir.

**Turkish** Voice Dergisi  
Bunu okumak için yardima ihtiyaciniz  
var mı? Lütfen bizimle kontak kurunuz

**This document is also available in large print, audio or any other language upon request.**

**Could you translate information for us?**

The six languages above are the ones most commonly used by our residents apart from English. If you have translation abilities in any of these languages, we want to hear from you, contact Kathryn Smith on **0300 123 1222**.