

# Value for Money assessment 2016



Golden Lane Housing

working in partnership with  mencap

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# 1

## The organisation and operating environment

Golden Lane Housing (GLH) was set up in 1998 by Mencap to provide much needed housing for people with a learning disability. Our high quality, community based housing is almost always a lower cost and higher quality alternative to the large, often remote institutions in which many people with a learning disability still have to live.

At GLH, we believe that we provide value for money and this self assessment sets out how we do this. It shows the steps we have taken over the past year to deliver on our VFM commitments and sets a clear plan with targets for delivering further efficiency gains in the current year and beyond. It also touches on the social benefits which our housing provides and demonstrates the savings which our housing is providing to the public purse.

However, we know we can further improve and we are committed to delivering VFM in all its forms in the wide range of communities in which we have properties.

Being part of the Mencap group harnesses the strengths of both GLH and Mencap to ensure we deliver high quality and innovative services efficiently and effectively, working in collaboration with a range of partners.

One of our business objectives is to operate as one organisation to reduce duplication and cost. This supports the overarching business purpose of being more than a landlord, offering a wide range of services, investment and expertise that help to sustain our tenants and their families. Having a combined offer that embraces housing, personal support, employment and advice is often attractive to local commissioners.

We are able to achieve the economies of scale through utilising Mencap's back office functions including in relation to IT, marketing, finance and HR.

Our properties are well distributed across England and Wales with approximately the same number in the north as the south. This means we are reasonably insulated against regional and sub-regional property value fluctuations. Our properties are typically single houses and bungalows in good quality residential areas.

The solutions and services GLH offer exclusively for people with a learning disability across the country makes us a unique organisation. GLH offers specialist, adapted properties that provide the level of service and specification required to make sustainable tenancies for people with often complex and distinctive needs. We seek to provide solutions across the country providing that we are confident we can provide quality management and maintenance services. The current and future demand for appropriate accommodation is considerable at a time when the sector has seen a reduction in the number of social landlords prepared to offer appropriate solutions, either self-contained or shared tenancies. This has been down to reductions in grant funding from local authorities, due to the significant reduction in the central Government grants to local authorities (40% up to 2015) which limits what they can do and accentuates the need for organisations like GLH. There is an uncertainty created in the industry by the Local Housing Allowance cap to housing benefit for social rents introduced in 2015.

The need for GLH to provide flexible solutions to people with a learning disability and bring our vast experience to commissioners is therefore greater than ever. GLH has specialist development officers, property surveyors and housing officers who understand the needs of future and current tenants and we believe we offer value for money in providing these expert services. The ability for us to provide additional tenancies in areas we already operate in allows us to continue to reduce the costs of providing these services at the same time improving our service to existing tenants.

GLH registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) in January 2015 and has taken this current financial year as an opportunity to formalise its approach to Value for Money (VFM).

## 2

### Our Value for Money strategy

Golden Lane Housing is committed to adopting a comprehensive approach to managing our resources in order to provide cost effective, quality services to tenants and to create the capacity to invest in new homes and services for the benefit of our tenants. VFM is about business effectiveness and is embedded into our culture and decision making process.

The Board of Trustees has responsibility for directing progress, whilst operational responsibility for VFM is held by our Executive team. Through operational plans performance is monitored and managed, and priorities are cascaded down throughout the business. The strategy sets out five strategic aims to support delivery of this vision:

- to ensure strong financial management, budgeting and control
- to understand our costs and performance and how they relate to others
- to maximise opportunities for value creation
- to have meaningful monitoring and reporting
- to deliver better quality services and realise our growth ambitions, while also managing the risks associated with welfare reform change

In summary, what VFM means to us includes: economy – achieving the best value for our inputs, efficiency – maximising the outputs for a given level of inputs, effectiveness – ensuring the outputs deliver the desired outcome of quality and adding social value.

#### 2.1 Value for Money - Annual Report

This report aims to assess the progress GLH has made regarding VFM. It reviews our business activities, the services we provide, and how we use our assets to deliver value for our stakeholders.

This document is designed to be read and understood by a variety of audiences, including tenants, staff, Board members, our regulator and other key stakeholders. It will be part of a suite of documents that includes the Board report in our statutory accounts and our annual report to tenants. It is not designed to be an all-encompassing document, rather a clear roadmap that links to other key strategies and policies, most notably the business plan.

We include our journey to date, our current position and how we intend to improve, along with some key targets for the year ahead.

The GLH Board approved this document at the meeting held on 28 September 2016.

#### 2.2 GLH business plan

Our business plan has the following three key objectives for the next ten years:

- have a viable business to provide security to our existing tenants
- provide a high quality, caring and efficient housing service
- grow the number of tenancies



“I have peace of mind now that should Jack ever have another stroke, then he would always have somewhere to recuperate that met his needs.”

Adam,  
Jack's Father

#### 2.3

### Jack's story

Jack is 23 years old. Within the last three years he has suffered from two strokes which has affected his mobility. Wanting to share a place with his friends, Golden Lane Housing (GLH) was able to buy and specially adapt his home using 2014 Retail Charity Bond monies.

“We were advised there was a strong likelihood that Jack would have another stroke in the near future which may reduce his mobility even more. We wanted to make sure he would be able come home to recuperate – being in his own bed surrounded by family and friends with staff to support him would also aid his recovery. This changed the specification of the property as Jack needed a downstairs bedroom and wet room to support with his personal hygiene. “Jack is really happy with his new room, he’s a massive football fan so it’s painted red to go with his Manchester United bedding!” Pauline Cann, Mencap.

Adam, Jack's Father is very happy with all the support and hard work that both Mencap and GLH have done to make it a success. Adam says, “I am a builder and from my point of view the alterations and decorations and all the work completed throughout their home is to a high standard. I'm really pleased with everything everyone has done for Jack and the others.”

You can read more about Jack's story at [www.glh.org.uk/jack](http://www.glh.org.uk/jack)

# 3

## Performance during 2015/16

Upper quartile	Upper median quartile	Lower median quartile	Lower quartile
1	2	3	4

Performance indicators	GLH 2013/14	GLH 2014/15	GLH 2015/16	Peer group quartile 2015/16	SPBM quartile 2015/16	HouseMark
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### Housing management

Cost per property of housing management	-	-	£353.00	2	2	4
Overhead costs as a percentage of turnover	-	-	14.3%	1	2	4
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall - supported housing	-	-	84.9%	3	3	4
Satisfaction - quality of home - supported housing	89.0%	86.0%	87.0%	2	3	4
Satisfaction - neighbourhood - supported housing	97.0%	95.0%	94.6%	1	1	1
Satisfaction - VFM rent - supported housing	-	-	88.3%	1	2	1
Satisfaction - VFM service charges - supported housing	-	-	90.4%	1	1	1
Satisfaction - repairs and maintenance	82.0%	56.0%	74.0%	3	4	4
Satisfaction - listens to views and acts - supported housing	91.0%	79.0%	85.8%	1	1	1
Percentage of complaints resolved within target timescale	-	-	70.3%	3	4	-
Percentage of complaints resolved to the satisfaction of the tenant/service user	-	-	88.5%	3	3	-

### Rent collection and arrears

Rent collected - supported	99.1%	98.7%	96.4%	2	3	4
Current arrears - supported	4.6%	4.2%	5.0%	1	2	4
Former arrears - supported	0.4%	0.4%	1.1%	1	2	-
Rent written off - supported	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	2	3	3

### Repairs and maintenance

Cost per property of responsive repairs and void works	-	-	£676.00	1	2	2
Cost per property - major and cyclical works	-	-	£1,448.00	1	4	2
Repairs fixed on first visit	85.5%	100.0%	92.6%	2	2	3
% of emergency repairs completed within target	90.0%	94.4%	96.4%	3	4	-
% of urgent repairs complete within target	75.1%	82.9%	90.3%	3	4	-
% of routine repairs completed within target	76.8%	88.6%	96.0%	2	3	-
Number of responsive repairs completed in the period	-	5160	5516	1	1	-

### Voids and relets

% of void losses - supported	3.4%	4.1%	5.4%	1	3	3
Void works spend per property per week	£3.49	£2.82	£4.96	4	4	-

### Capacity

Average days lost due to sickness absence	-	-	8.9	3	3	2
Total staff turnover	-	-	10.9%	1	2	2
Agency staff costs as % of payroll	7.1%	16.0%	4.5%	3	3	3



“Scott gets on well with everyone. When he arrives, the first thing he does is say hello to the ladies and then explains what work he’s doing rather than just talking directly to the staff.”

Lesley Heridge,  
Voyage

## 3.1

### Jackie’s story

By listening to our tenants and their support staff we’ve created the dedicated in-house repairs service that we have today.

Following the expansion in February, five operatives are covering the North of England.

Jackie and her friends Jean and Caroline live in Nottingham and receive the service from the In-house team. Lesley Hedridge, scheme manager at Voyage told us:

“Scott gets on well with everyone. When he arrives, the first thing he does is say hello to the ladies and then explains what work he’s doing rather than just talking directly to the staff – this is how it should be, it’s their home. When an appointment is made we can rely on Scott keeping to the time and on the agreed date. This is really important as the work needs to be carried out before Caroline comes home otherwise it will disrupt her routine. It’s a real pleasure to work with him.”



### 3.2 Benchmarking

GLH has been a member of SPBM/Acuity since 2012. This has enabled us to compare our performance with national specialist providers and support our improvement in these areas.

GLH is an active participant within the benchmarking club with other smaller supported housing providers and we report and meet face to face with them on a quarterly basis. This sub-set for supported housing providers provides a beneficial method to compare the performance of GLH against similar organisations.

It enables us to assess relative strengths and weaknesses; to identify where good practice may be taking place elsewhere and to stimulate continuous improvement.

There are 17 organisations including GLH in this supported housing benchmarking club (the “Peer Group”). We recognise that there are similarities and differences between GLH and the other housing organisations in the club. For example, some have national coverage like GLH whilst others have distinct geographical remits. Some also provide some general needs accommodation as well as supported living. However, importantly this year Advance Housing and Support and Inclusion Housing, who both provide national housing for people with a learning disability, have joined the club and we are encouraging other similar landlords to join in 2016/17.

The following organisations are currently those with some specialist supported housing provision

across the SPBM club and provides the closest direct comparison for key indicators (“Peer Group” in the charts and tables):

- Adullum Homes HA
- Advance Housing & Support
- Churches Housing Association
- Chapter 1
- Creative Support
- Forum HA
- Horton HA
- Hull Churches
- Inclusion Housing
- Langley House Trust
- Peter Bedford HA
- Providence Row HA
- Quo Vadis
- Salvation Army HA
- The Papworth Trust
- York HA

For a broader understanding of our performance we have also compared ourselves across our main performance indicators against the SPBM group of housing providers which is a larger group of smaller housing providers including those providing some homelessness and mental health provision. However, this group also include general needs accommodation. We have given our quartile rating for the Housemark group which includes all general needs housing providers whether large or small. Results for 2015/16 for the supported housing benchmarking club indicate that GLH is in the top quartile in 11 of the 27 measures for our peer group, and in the lowest quartile for two measures.

We score highly in relation to most measures including tenant satisfaction regarding the neighbourhood and listening to views of tenants along with rent and service charge value for money. We are also in the top quartile for current and former rent arrears as well as cost of responsive repairs and the second quartile for routine repairs completed within target.

However, our costs are higher than our peers on major and cyclical works, this is due to the nature of our client group which quite often leads to greater levels of wear and tear and reduces the longevity of some components. We maintain our properties to a high standard and have a robust and consistent planned investment programme annually which maintains their value and therefore represents value for money.

Another factor in understanding our costs is the fact that over 50% of our properties are three bed or bigger, we have a high percentage of bungalows which lead to higher planned costs due to increase in roof area, guttering, enhanced security to ground floor windows and doors etc. In addition the bungalows tend to be more highly adapted for the limited mobility needs of the tenants.

We also score low in the indicator for satisfaction with repairs and the percentage of urgent repairs completed within target, this due to the fact that the survey relates to the 2015/16 financial year when in the early part of the year we still had some difficulties with our repairs contractors that led to us extending the In-house Repairs team in the second half of the year. The change should mean that our score for this improves in subsequent reports. For urgent responsive repairs we are in the lower median quartile but we have seen an improvement from 83% to 90% in the last 12 months. The percentage of routine repairs and emergency repairs completed on time are now in the second and third quartile respectively. This compares to 2014/15 where all were in the fourth quartile.

We are also in the lowest quartile for void works spend per property, this again is because our properties are in general relatively large and have a higher specification of fittings relating to tenants needs, as mentioned earlier in some

cases our tenant’s behavioural issues lead to more wear and tear so in order to make void properties ready for the next tenancy we often have to spend more than average across the sector.

- The satisfaction with quality of home compared to HouseMark is largely a perception. Often family and support complete the questionnaires on behalf of tenants and expectations over the quality of a property and the environment are high but these are often factors that GLH cannot control. Whilst we provide the bricks and mortar and ensure it is maintained the support team on site must ensure the property remains clean, tidy and homely. Tenants in general social housing are far better equipped to change the environment they live in and expectations of standard social housing are generally lower. GLH maintains its properties to a high standard with replacement cycles well within the decent homes standards.
- As maintenance is one of the biggest areas of expenditure and every property we manage has some form of maintenance over a year, any dip in performance can effect a tenant’s opinion of the overall service.
- There was some historic poor levels of performance from our maintenance contractors in 2014/15, this had led to understandably negative feedback from tenants in the annual survey done in September 2015. We have since rolled out our own In-house Repairs team across the North which is reporting very high levels of satisfaction. In the South we have started working with a new contractor who is committed to providing an improved service. We are confident the satisfaction levels will improve after the next annual service.
- Our low performance on complaints was picked up in early 2015 as a procedure and accountability issue. We have since instigated a new complaints procedure and process so we expect to see an improvement in performance during 2016.

### 3.3 Performance review

#### a. Rent collected as percentage of rent owed

Analysis of our rent collected as percentage of rent owed and tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit shows our performance has fallen over the last two years. For 2016 this in part is due to a significant number of new services coming on line in January to March 2016 and the lag in housing benefit being received. In addition we had outstanding a number of restricted housing benefit claims which were subject to an appeal (successful outcome came in June 2016). Our performance is in line with our supported housing peer group. We expect the performance in this measure to improve, the adverse drivers of the PI's result have been addressed where possible. One of the changes is through the introduction of an Income Manager role with these specific responsibilities. We anticipate the downward trend will level out.

#### b. Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit (excluding HB adjustments)

Our tenant arrears continue to be favourable in comparison to our peers but we have seen an increase in the year end March 2016. One of the key reasons for this was our successful development programme and a significant number of new services which came on line in the latter part of the year. The delay in receiving first housing benefit payments is around 2 months but can be longer for some local authorities. In 2015 we created a central income team which has seen improvements in reducing long standing debts, including former tenancy arrears and a significant fall in the number of restricted housing benefit claims for exempt rents following our registration in January 2015. Performance remains within our KPI and we expect to see gains this coming year.

#### c. Percentage of rent lost through dwellings being vacant - supported housing

Rent lost due to voids has risen since 2013/14 indicating a rise in void levels and reduction in third party agreements to cover voids. GLH has already seen more investment and resources put into tackling voids and improving the quality of vacant properties through the support of our property team. We have developed a clear disposal process where there are no identified nominations available from the local authority or other sources. All our new services have void risks mitigated through service agreements or exit options. Our void losses are better than our peer group and we aim to maintain our position of better than peer group median.

Chart 1: Rent collected year-on-year



Chart 2: Rent arrears year-on-year

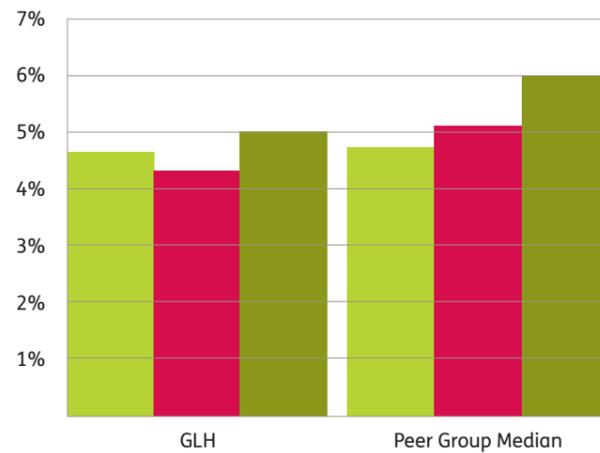
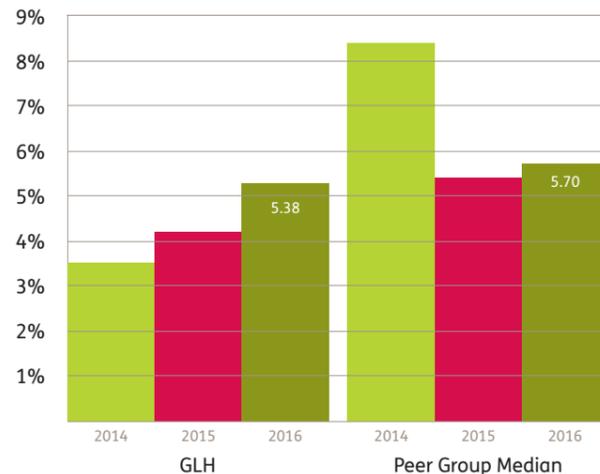


Chart 3: Void losses year-on-year



### 3.4 Performance in estate management

#### a. Investment in existing homes

We have a diverse stock profile, across wide geographical areas, with little standardisation of type. This brings its challenges in terms of understanding stock investment needs, a pre-requisite for ensuring that housing maintenance achieves optimum VFM. In 2010 we completed a stock condition survey on 100% of our properties. We maintain this current stock condition database to provide us with a comprehensive knowledge. This informs our investment planning which is robust, effective and efficient.

Over the last five years we have invested just under £5 million in our planned maintenance activity. This is comparable with other peer organisations, 2015 benchmarking figures give an average investment per week of £24 for similar size housing providers, GLH have averaged £25.17 over five years, this has enabled us to reduce our day-to-day repairs costs as set out in chart 4.

Investing in our stock is an imperative, not only to maintain our asset value but also to protect our income stream and maintain the quality. Due to the nature of our tenants and how our properties are used day to day, the wear and tear on components means the life expectancy is shorter that within social housing. In order to retain consistency within our properties whilst ensuring VFM, a robust inspection is undertaken before a renewal occurs.

Our ratio of planned investment to reactive maintenance in 2015/16 was closer to industry standards and best practise with a 60:40 ratio. Over the last five years our cost per property on reactive spend has dropped from £1,306 to £953. This shows that planned and sustained investment in our stock has reduced the need for costly reactive maintenance and thus achieves greater VFM.

Chart 4: Annual reactive expenditure per property

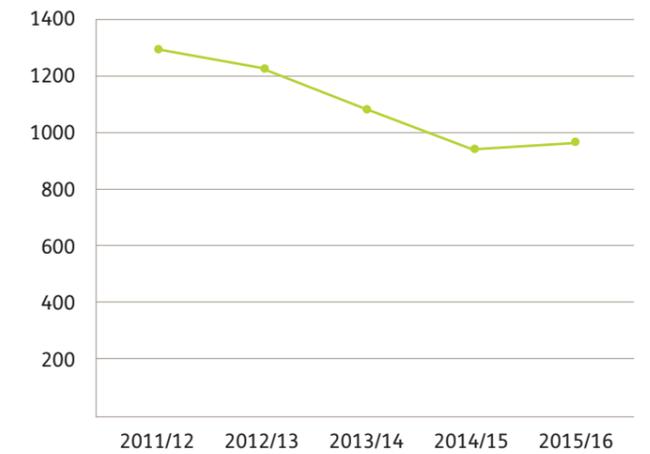
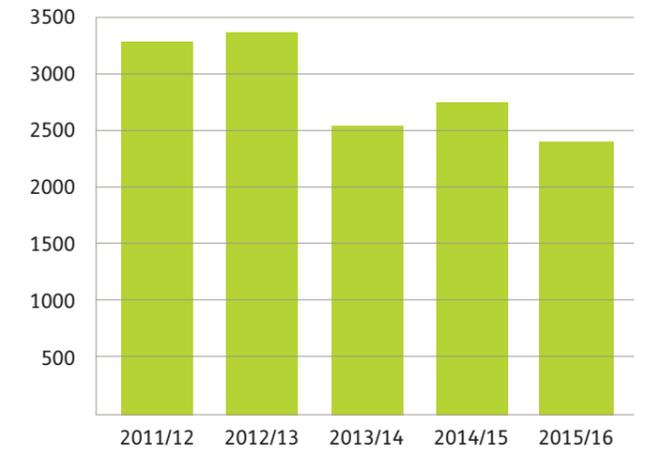


Chart 5: Total maintenance expenditure per property





During 2015/16 we developed a pilot project to deliver reactive repairs through our own operatives. As a result of the In-house Repairs team we have improved satisfaction in the area covered by the in-house operatives to 96% which is the industry upper quartile at the end of 2015 our overall satisfaction rating was showing 88%. 98.8% of repairs through the In-house team are completed on time and the average length of a repair has reduced to seven days which is in line with industry standards. Our current contractors are achieving 11 days which they attribute to the location and distribution of our stock.

As part of the drive to reduce the number of property repairs we have introduced property repair days where the operatives visit tenants to undertake a condition survey of the property and complete works while they are there. This reduces the number of calls and travel to small jobs. It is too early to produce the statistics on the savings made but this is being continually monitored.

Trackers have been fitted to all vans so that our schedulers can identify the nearest trades person to the reported jobs. These can be viewed via a web portal and we can also pull driver behaviour reports off the tracker to reduce our fuel costs. Initial analysis predicts a saving of £13,000 during 2016/17 will be made as a result of the fuel costs coming down and the tracker/restrictors fitted on vans.

During 2015/16 our in-house pilot generated a surplus of £40,000 which was reinvested in the mobilisation of the expanded team covering the North of England.

### b. Return on assets

The GLH stock is located throughout England and Wales along with one property in Northern Ireland. Because of the wide range of locations, property types and sizes, the value of the properties are also over a large range. We have therefore assessed our property portfolio in a number of ways to assess the return on assets. We have used historical profitability of schemes as well as using the net present value of future cash flows to assess schemes. This has enabled us to get a more rounded view of the financial viability of our properties. Given our relatively low number of properties and the wide range of locations we have done the analysis per property.

Maximising the financial returns on our existing assets helps to increase our capacity to invest in new assets and support our existing tenants. The purely financial returns on assets in some of our schemes can be low. However, our whole purpose, as a charity is to provide housing solutions for people with a learning disability around which they can build their lives and therefore schemes have been set up and are maintained to satisfy this objective. We judge the financial return on assets in conjunction with the more qualitative social returns such as the wellbeing of our tenants.

In the last year we have carried out financial reviews of all our properties since they were purchased to establish if they have made a surplus or deficit. The schemes that have made a low surplus or a deficit since inception have been reviewed individually to see if there are any learning points or changes to make.

In 2015/16 there were 23 properties in overall deficit (since their inception), they have been reviewed by the Housing team to understand the reasons behind the poor financial performance. Action plans for those schemes have been formulated. The next 50 poorest performing schemes (ie those with low profitability) have also been reviewed and are being monitored. Our target for 2016/17 is to reduce the properties in overall deficit to 20 or less if possible.

In most of the cases that are lossmaking the poor financial performance is due to significant repairs expenditure (39%) at some point in the life of the scheme or difficult to fill voids due to no one being put forward by the local authority (36%). Our policy is to make sure only the right person is added to a scheme so the current tenants are not disrupted and everyone gets on well together (25%). In analysis of each scheme option/solution to address the reason for poor performance have been identified including:

- Significant repair expenditure – revised stock condition survey and review of rent model of income, rehusing and disposal options.
- Voids – no nominations – disposal of vacant properties.
- Voids – compatibility – move on accommodation for existing tenant/s and relet of whole property to new compatible group, or reconfigure the property (asset).

Chart 6 and 7 show the financial position for each property for 2015 and 2016 respectively. They show the overall financial position for each property since we purchased or leased them.

Reason for poor financial performance	Number of properties
Significant repairs expenditure	9
Voids - no one being put forward by the local authority	8
Voids - compatibility of tenants	6

Chart 6: 2015 surplus/deficit per scheme (£)

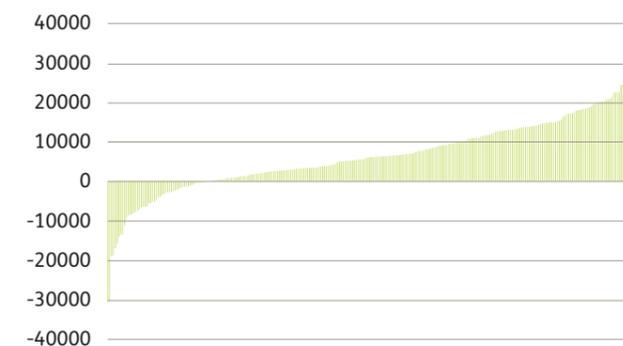


Chart 7: 2016 surplus/deficit per scheme (£)

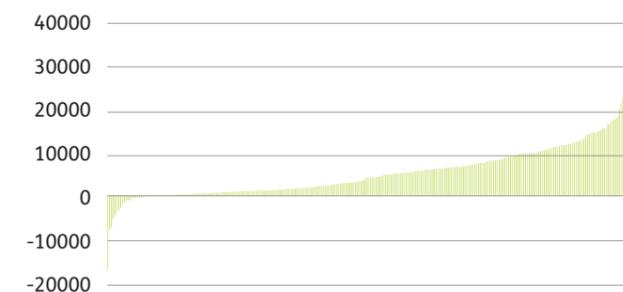


Chart 8: Rent income return on property value 2016

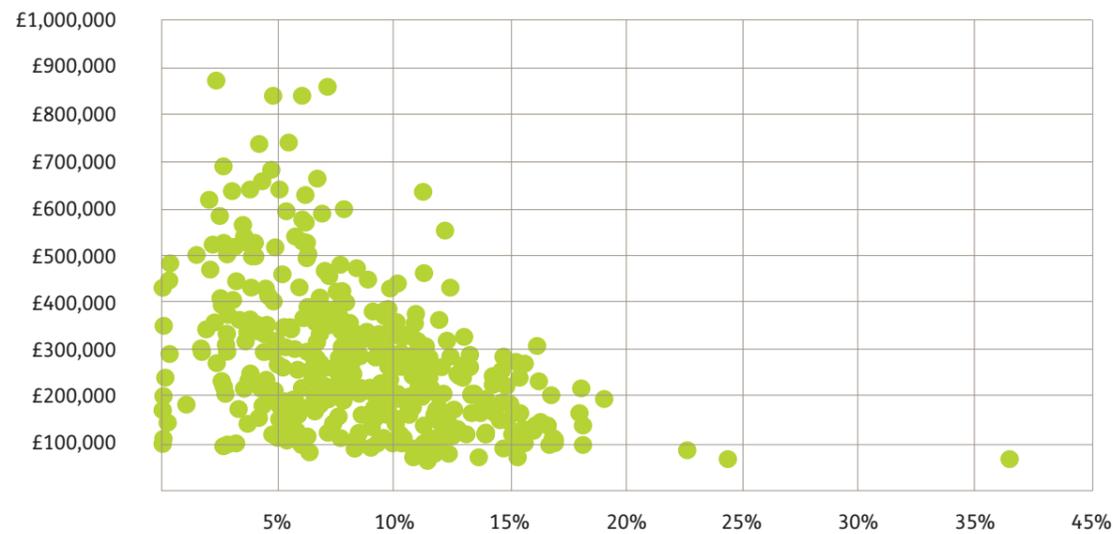


Chart 8 plots all the GLH properties showing their open market value (using industry standard banking purchase price indices) and return. It can be seen that GLH has a very wide range of properties in terms of market value in its portfolio; this is because the properties are spread throughout the country and vary in size from one bedroom properties to houses in multiple occupation. The properties have been acquired throughout GLH's 17 years of existence and a number have been purchased with the help of grants from Primary Care Trusts (now Clinical Commissioning Groups) or local authority grant income being available in a particular area.

In general, the graph shows that the higher value properties have the lowest return whilst the lower value properties have the greatest return. This is to be expected because a GLH property in a sought after area of London may be valued at many multiples of a similar sized property in Northern England for example but the rent paid by the local authority will not be so significantly different and hence the greater percentage returns for our lower valued properties.

From this analysis a question arose of whether GLH should sell their higher valued properties and reinvest in more and cheaper properties in other areas in order to provide more housing solutions for people with a learning disability and to obtain a better return. This idea was discounted for the following reasons:

- GLH is tenant focused and we would not like to pursue a policy of uprooting our vulnerable tenants from their home with the stress and upset this would bring them especially since some of them have strong adverse reactions to change.
- A fairly significant number of our properties were purchased with the help of grants from the local area and so if the property was sold the grant would have to be returned or used to purchase another property in the borough which probably would be similarly expensive.
- The expensive properties with low returns are mainly in areas of London and the South East. These areas recently have had higher capital growth and so for this reason too there is no current intentions to sell higher valued properties with lower than average income returns. Also these properties with a high capital value enhance our borrowing capacity.

### c. Investment in new homes

It is important for GLH to develop new homes and is a critical part of our mission statement.

Since 1998 we have acquired and leased 1701 units of supported housing (1217 owned and 484 leased units). In 2014/15 we provided 52 purchased tenancies and 93 leased tenancies. In 2015/16 we increased our reach by providing a total of 225 tenancies, 48 purchased tenancies and 177 leased tenancies.

Over the past 17 years GLH has successfully secured grants through different sources including Department of Health, NHS and statutory agencies to help fund the purchase of properties and importantly contribute towards the cost of adaptations.

Over recent years the amount of funding available from regional health authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups has reduced. The Department of Health has been directing latest funding through a Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund overseen by the Homes and Communities Agency. GLH submitted our first HCA bid following registration for 11 person cluster scheme in autumn 2015. Due to the uncertainty over welfare reform, especially in relation to the housing benefit cap, we have not been able to progress with this scheme.

GLH continues to explore new development opportunities through working with commissioners and key support providers despite the issues caused by the Government's announcement on the Local Housing Allowance cap.

Our asset growth model establishes new services based on assessed needs which cannot be provided by alternative solutions cheaper. Priorities are established on these needs and whether the outturn rent levels of the housing solution are viable through Housing Benefit. We explore the lower cost accommodation that meet the essential needs first. We look at higher priced purchases or leases only where we can show reasons why they lower cost properties are unsuitable. The last £11 million bond issue is providing accommodation for 125 new tenants nationally which equates to an average of £88,000 per unit. We have invested £1.525 million into refurbishing and adapting these properties without grant to meet the specific needs of the individuals.

A family impact report undertaken independently by Qa Research of those housed through the Bond indicate positive outcomes.

### What families say...

**91%** agree there is sufficient space in the GLH property for their relative.

**91%** agree their relative lives in housing and a neighbourhood where they feel safe.

**91%** agree the quality of the GLH's housing is excellent or very good.

**95%** agree the quality of care and support is excellent or very good.

**100%** agree that their relative has the support they need.

We are committed to continue to provide high quality accommodation in the right locations to enable people to feel safe and secure. Results from our most recent My New Home survey of 85 new tenants show 96% gave the area they live in an excellent or very good rating, 95% are happy with the size and layout of their new home, 98% of people feel safe and secure in their home and 96% gave an overall rating as excellent or very good. It is not surprising that these findings are higher than for existing tenants as the properties are newly decorated with new fittings and carpets and have been purchased in an area of choice with the support of the tenant, their family or support.

Once the tenants have been in the homes for a longer period there are often issues with maintenance that can cause frustration, or they feel that they want new fixtures and fittings when the old are perfectly serviceable. We cannot budget for simply changing kitchens and bathrooms because they have been in for a while, this can often lead to frustration on behalf of the tenants, support and family. There can be other factors effecting a tenant's satisfaction after being in a property for a while like the neighbourhood is no longer working for them, they don't get on so well with their fellow tenants, or the support are not proactive in decorating and furnishing the home to a good standard.

### 3.5 Financial performance: costs per unit

Chart 9: Headline social housing costs per unit based on HCA research



In June 2016 the Homes and Communities Agency published research into the housing costs of Registered Providers (RPs) called “Delivering better value for money: Understanding differences in unit costs”.

This gave a figure for the headline social housing cost per unit for each Registered Provider with over 1,000 units and was derived from data supplied to the HCA by RPs for the period up to March 2015. Because GLH only became an RP in January 2015, the HCA did not provide a headline social housing cost per unit for GLH.

The research found that the baseline unit cost for an RP was £3,300. This is based on a traditional provider with 100% general needs stock, no non-decent homes, operating in an area with average deprivation and wages.

The research also found that each unit of supported housing is associated with additional costs of £10,800 above general needs properties, this sits in the middle of a broad range which reflects the diversity of clients and associated service offered. That would give a baseline for an RP with 100% supported housing of £14,100.

The research found that of 328 providers with complete data (and over 1,000 units) only seven had greater than 30% supported housing. At GLH we have virtually 100% supported housing.

We have calculated our headline social housing cost per unit based on our costs defined in the same way as used by the HCA. It gives a headline social housing cost per unit for GLH of £5,510. This relates to the 2014/15 year in order to be consistent with the HCA research.

We have also calculated our costs for 2015/16 based on returns made to the HCA for that year. Our housing cost per unit for that year falls to £5,420 per unit. These figures are represented in the pie chart.

The results put GLH’s cost per unit at the lower end of the supported cost spectrum and shows that we have reduced the cost per unit from the previous year. However, this only tells part of the story because there are also quality of service and support considerations.



This comparison above is a headline PI across social housing activity, however it’s not so good for comparisons which is why the metrics in our dashboard have now been adopted, whilst the new housing management cost per unit measure is still bedding down in the sector.

From section 3, ‘Performance indicators’, we score highly in terms of satisfaction with rent and service charge but have improvements to make in terms of complaints resolved satisfactorily and within timescales.

#### Average weekly cost per tenancy on housing management

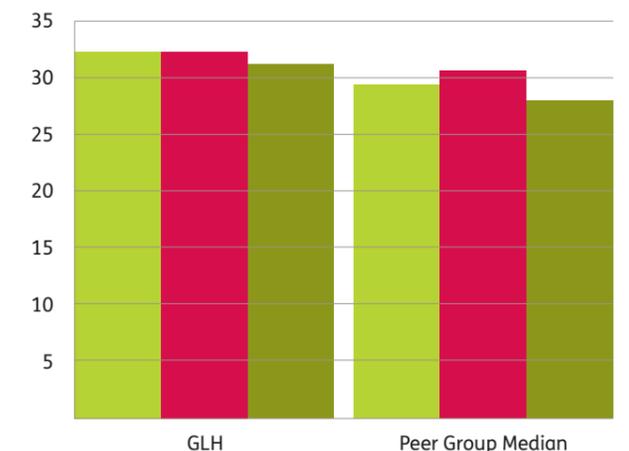
Through regular analysis we have a strong appreciation of our housing management and costs in comparison with similar organisation. GLH utilises these comparisons to help us manage our resources and improve how our regionally dispersed team operate. We have been able to benchmark our performance against SPBM trend data over the last three years and data shows that we reduced our costs per dwelling in 2016 are above those similar sized specialist supported housing providers.

It should be recognised that GLH provides bespoke properties and an intensive service to people with increasingly complex needs, challenging behaviour and those people with profound and multi disabilities.

In doing so we provide quality management and maintenance services across England, as well as part of Wales and Northern Ireland. Whilst the diverse spread of our properties brings challenges, our services are in demand by local authorities and health services in response to the need for supported housing at a time when many larger providers are withdrawing from this part of the sector.

Our strategic plans to grow our services aim to do so in a way that improves our coverage and efficiency, working with partner support providers will provide increased economies of scale and targeted growth in existing operating areas, reducing management cost per unit which is reflected in this indicator.

Chart 10: Average weekly management cost per tenancy



# 4

## Savings made during 2015/16 and social impact



### 4.1 Savings made in 2015/16

During 2015/16 we have delivered the following:

- A saving of £20,300 was made on our property insurance compared with the fee paid in 2014/15.
- An annual saving of £60,000 was made on our void security by bringing responsibility for monitoring empty properties internally.
- We entered into a contract with British Gas to cover plumbing and electrics in our properties for an annual fee saving us £20,000 per annum.
- We negotiated a 10% reduction from Travis Perkins for materials purchased by the In-house work team saving £3,222 in 2015/16.
- Going forward, during 2016/17 GLH will use the Efficiency East Midlands Procurement Group to purchase goods and services to deliver our planned, adaptation and environmental works nationally and the savings made will be quantified using historical works costs.

### 4.2 Other Value for Money initiatives

- Leadership team members utilised Skype calls to reduce avoidable travel time and venue bookings for meetings. The estimated saving throughout the year is £3,000.
- Staff travel car share arrangements for national and team meetings were used with estimated saving throughout the year of £1,000.
- The direct labour operation for maintenance repairs has instigated Repair Me days, delivering proactive repairs in each property this has reduced reactive repair calls and mileage costs. The Direct Labour team was set up to achieve value for money by enabling us to take a whole property approach to reactive maintenance, thus reducing the number of call outs and increasing the level of service, quality and customer satisfaction. The direct labour operation has made a saving in the year 2015/16 of £24,593 compared to the comparative cost of delivering the service by the contractors to the same properties for the previous year.
- Use of IT to enhance efficiencies of mobile and home working including officers having mobile devices and tablets with internet access, scanning facilities to reduce printing and postage cost of sharing and filing of documents. Staff are able to complete tenancy reviews and condition surveys in real time on site rather than waiting until they return to their offices, this has cut down on administration time. Estimated saving throughout the year is £5,000.

### 4.3 Summary of savings

Total saving in 2015/16 (£263,874) in the context of total operating costs (£9,690,413) for 2015/16, represents a 2.7% saving on what the costs would have been had we not implemented these VFM initiatives.

List of savings achieved in 2015/16	Value in £
Council Tax exemption project	112,053
Void security	60,000
Direct labour operative	24,593
Insurance	20,300
British Gas cover	20,000
Easy Buy	15,006
IT efficiency savings	5,000
Travis Perkins	3,222
Leadership Skype	3,000
Staff car sharing	1,000
<b>Total saving</b>	<b>263,874</b>

List of reinvestment in 2015/16	Value in £
Additional investment in existing stock	176,874
Investment in environmental improvements	52,000
Aids and adaptations	35,000

### 4.4 GLH's VFM history

Although 2016 is the first year GLH has produced a VFM report, the ethos of the scheme has been central to GLH for many years. Examples of initiatives seeking to achieve VFM in prior years are as follows:

#### a. Management services

GLH has experience offering management services to other landlords and support providers including in recent years Mencap, CareTech Community Services, Precious Homes Ltd and Salters Hill. This offers us the opportunity to increase the level of income for GLH and increase our tenancy management numbers in strategic areas as well as bring our expertise and specialist services to more people with a learning disability.

#### b. Procurement

Our procurement activities (excluding maintenance) have been largely centralised through Mencap's Easy Buy system (an easy to use online purchasing system). By grouping all purchasing activities under the central buying team it has allowed GLH to benefit from the greater purchasing power of Mencap and obtain savings on office costs such as stationary, printing and postage. The Maintenance team worked alongside suppliers such as Howdens Kitchens to deliver a standard specification for repairs and reinvestment across the housing stock. This remains a challenge with such a diverse range of properties but the standardisation has enabled greater certainty in pricing and availability of replacement parts.



### c. Housing management

GLH delivers housing management services to over 1,650 tenants across England Wales and Northern Ireland. Because of our role as a supported housing provider for people with a learning disability, our housing officers spend lots of their time with tenants and their wider support network. Because of our dispersed portfolio that potentially means lots of travel. Historically our teams were based from a number of local offices (Preston, Rotherham, Taunton and Mitcham). Now we work with one central administration and Income team who are office based in Manchester, with all field based housing officers working from home and based on their patches across the country. This ensures our management officers, who spend lots of time with tenants and their support network, are based locally to where they work.

Our teams use mobile technology to enable them to access and update our information systems when with tenants. This includes recording when tenancy review visits are undertaken to check wellbeing and our tenants are happy and their home is well maintained. We believe with further growth of the organisation through an active development program that there are opportunities to create greater economies of scale within our team. We believe we have made real progress in providing an efficient and caring service and perform strongly in this area. We are however always exploring with our tenants and other stakeholder's better ways of doing things and harnessing new technology.

We have reviewed with colleagues in the development team how we most effectively hand

over new services into management. This looked at how we ensure tenants have their housing benefit application made prior or ready to submit at the time they sign up for a tenancy. This has reduced gaps in housing benefit payments from tenancy start dates which increases income.

### c. Energy efficiency

We have pursued where possible energy grants for individual properties. In 2014/15 we undertook a review of properties in Cornwall, 23 properties were found to be fully insulated, and we secured grant funding through Glow Cornwall for two properties that qualified for cavity wall insulation and five properties that qualified for loft insulation upgrades. In addition to this, a further three properties received boiler upgrades to new energy efficient systems.

Average fuel cost	Environmental savings
5 @ 580 kg CO2 per year	2,900 kg
5 @ £140 per year	£700
3 @ £115 per year	£345
2 @ 650 kg CO2 per year	1,300 kg
2 @ £160 per year	£320

VFM annual efficiencies	Savings/income
Energy efficiency - total estimate tenants fuel saving	£1,365
Energy efficiency - total estimated environmental saving	4200 kg CO2

## 4.5 Procurement initiatives

As GLH's parent company, Mencap has a dedicated procurement team who deliver VFM through their purchasing activities across the wider organisation. Their mission is to purchase fit-for-purpose goods and services at the best possible price. In doing this, they will locate and evaluate suppliers, negotiate contracts and provide advice and support. Mencap purchasing services achieve savings through:

- close links with key stakeholders in Mencap
- a commitment to good negotiation
- best purchasing practice and communication with the team in Mencap's group via purchasing partners

Each Mencap supplier (above a certain spend and/or with a certain risk profile) has agreed service levels which will maintain their performance in meeting Mencap's and GLH's needs. Lower value stakeholder vetted products and services are accessible through Easy Buy.

By utilising Mencap's central purchasing service for buying goods and services, GLH can be confident that Easy Buy will deliver cost savings and maintain quality.

During the financial year GLH has saved an average of 17.25% on RRP by purchasing goods through the Mencap Easy Buy services, this amounted to £15,006 in the year 2015/16.

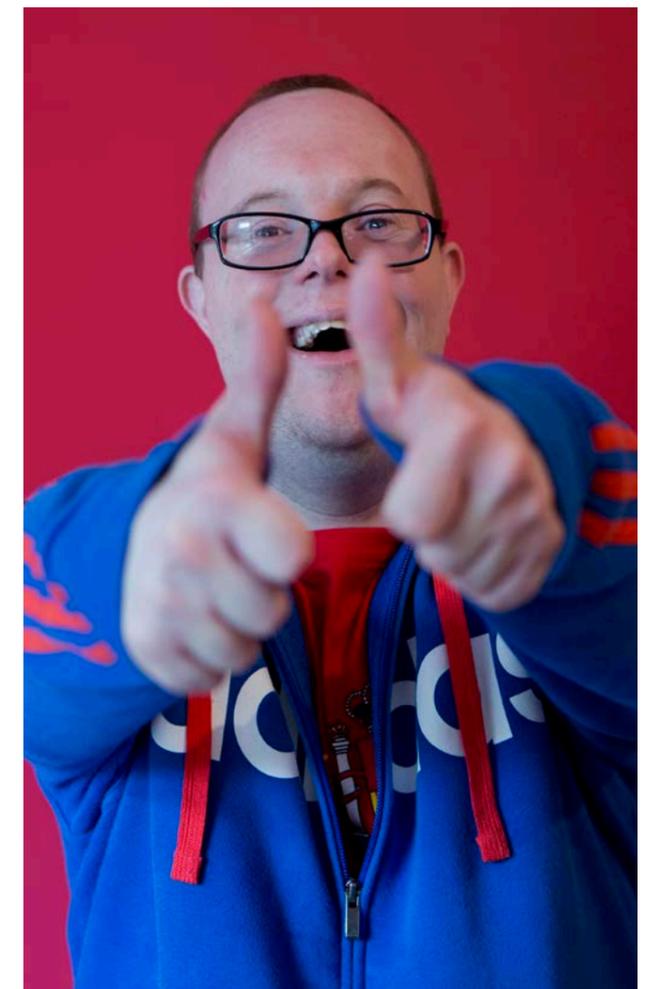
## 4.6 Social and economic impact

The social impact of our work is huge. We are providing housing for some of the most vulnerable people in our society today. If we weren't here, our tenants would likely be living in large, remote institutional settings, usually many miles away from family, or living with parents who in many cases would be unable to cope. Instead, they are living where they want to live, with people they want to live with, in high quality, usually adapted housing in the community typically close to family.

We commissioned an independent report in 2014 into the social impact of our work, focusing on the properties we acquired using the money raised through our innovative bond issues. The report

made use of Mencap's innovative What Matters Most framework which was used to assess tenants before and after the move. It also made use of Bangor University's study of the impact of the families of people who became our tenants, again using pre and post surveys. Finally, Just Economics considered the overall social, economic and financial impact of our work. Their report, now published on the Social Stock Exchange website, found:

- substantial quality of life benefits for our tenants as a result of moving to our properties, including increased independence, learning new skills, higher levels of confidence and increased participation in the community
- substantial health benefits for the parents of the people we housed, especially in relation to mental health
- cost savings to the public purse as a result of people moving from expensive and inappropriate institutions into supported housing in the community





The sector accepts that it is not easy to quantify the cost savings for the reasons explained in GLH's 2014 Social Impact Report (unit costs and savings section, page 34 and 35). Notwithstanding this, we have made a reasoned assumption that we save central government in the order of £500 (residential care) to £2,500 (hospital setting) per tenant per week as a result of GLH supporting tenants to move out of more expensive accommodation and care settings. In 2015/16, we supported 35 tenants (16% of the total) to either move from these types of settings, or we stepped in to stop people with learning disabilities being forced to live in more expensive accommodation due to the absence of any other housing solution being available.

Of the 35 tenants that we supported, 20 moved from (or would have moved to) residential care and 15 moved from (or would have moved to) hospital or assessment and treatment unit settings.

On this basis, GLH with the support of Mencap and other care providers directly saved central Government £2.5million in housing and related care costs for people with more significant learning disabilities and/or complex and challenging behaviours last year.

In addition, we have undertaken a number of value added activities:

- Twenty-five volunteers from Irwin Solicitors and Marcus Construction provided skills at two tenant garden makeovers to improve the access, and create low maintenance gardens tenants could relax in and grow vegetables.

- Four tenants visited the Manchester office on Housing Day to increase their knowledge about GLH's work across the teams and how it benefits them. By gaining confidence it resulted in reporting their own repairs.
- Fundraising: The total raised by the staff team as a result of various activities to date stands at £8,657.
- By establishing a centrally based Income team we who have been able to focus on developing relationships with Housing Benefit authorities, the source of the majority of our income, to improve first payment timescales and resolve queries quicker. As a result of the more focused approach and due to better relationships with local authorities it has resulted in better determination of tenants' entitlement for Housing Benefit and Council Tax by £152,000 in total.
- Offering practical help and advice to tenants on budgeting and providing information in accessible formats.

#### 4.7 2015/16 Reinvestment activities

As well as ensuring that we operate with efficiency and effectiveness, our VFM activity is concerned with creating the resources for reinvestment in our strategic objectives. We provide properties for people with a learning disability, some of whom have profound and multiple disabilities which makes them vulnerable. As a consequence, our reinvestment activity has focused on:

- Investment in existing stock. We have spent £686,000 on investment on existing stock across our stock nationally in 2015/16, including £176,874 funded from savings.
- Investment in environmental improvements. In 2015/16 we have spent £52,000 on improving the environment around our properties for tenants (including tree removal, gardening, hard landscaping).
- Aids and adaptations. In 2015/16 we have invested £35,000 in providing adaptations within properties to make life easier for our tenants and to adapt to their changing needs.

## 4.8

### Nottinghamshire County Council's story

I have worked with Golden Lane Housing (GLH) in my role as a supported living coordinator for the last 12 years and I have set up over 15 schemes with them covering the full range of supported living models and utilising an equally varied number of funding sources.

At all times I have found working with GLH to be an extremely successful and beneficial experience. Whether they are accessing capital via the Mencap bond scheme, or through their great tenants lease arrangement – at all times I have found them to be accessible, flexible and extremely knowledgeable when dealing with all aspects of providing specialist accommodation. I have opened several bespoke properties that have required extensive refurbishment, and from a project management point of view they have always brought these projects in on time and on budget, and have been open to last minute alterations and requests for adaptations.

More recently given the financial restrictions that we are all working under – GLH and I have been working with the private sector in order to meet the need to provide suitable accommodation. GLH's experience with working with their Great Tenants scheme, has meant that we have been able to work with a growing number of private landlords – who have now become so keen on the arrangement that they come to myself with would-be developments and offer to make adaptations before the tenant goes in. The creative housing solutions that this has allowed us to develop have been extremely beneficial to all parties – in one particular service we were able to provide two people with appropriate accommodation and support at a saving to the department of over £1000 per week.

Since acquiring housing association status this year we have developed a prize winning shared service in Newark which provided suitable supported living accommodation to a group of people coming out of residential care. This move not only saved the authority over £600 per week in funding, but it gave the four service users a home that will provide them with suitable accommodation right into their old age.

In addition to working well with key professionals in the development and commissioning of services – GLH's approach means that they work well with service users and families – their support to service users once they have moved is impeccable, and their response to repairs and requests for adaptation is timely and sensitive to the needs of the service user.”

#### Giles Blower

Accommodation and Support Coordinator, Adult Social Care and Health and Public Protection, Nottinghamshire County Council Commissioning Officer with the Young Adults Project Team.

# 5

## Planned savings in 2016/17 and beyond



### 5.1 Overall approach

We will continue to monitor and report on VFM on an organisation wide basis.

The whole organisation reports monthly through a management information tracker which is the focus of team meetings and one-to-one appraisals.

We will also continue to report to every Board meeting on our progress in implementing and developing our VFM approach through the Operational Report. In addition, we have established a VFM team that leads a number of dedicated VFM projects and reports regularly to the GLH Leadership team.

We will embed this approach throughout all our staff days. We will also continue to compare ourselves to others through the SPBM benchmarking group of peers and to investigate areas where we may be able to do better.

We will continue to build upon our strategic approach to asset management. We want to ensure our stock is sustainable in the longer term by taking care of our assets and providing a quality environment for our tenants to thrive. We will further develop and review our Return on Assets model, prioritising a more in-depth review of our lower performing assets, with the aim of enhancing their return and helping us make good asset management decisions as well as maximising the financial returns generated from our assets, whilst not losing sight of the non-financial benefit and impact to our tenants, remains a strategic priority.

We have some clear evidence of costs savings to the public purse for those moving from inappropriate expensive institutional settings. One example from Nottinghamshire showed the costs in locked rehabilitation units or low secure hospitals were above £2,500 per person per week, making savings of over £1,000 per week in the new two person supported living setting.

The national picture is that the average cost for hospital settings is over £4,200 per tenant per week and we have example in Sheffield last year which reduced the previous costs of £5,000 per week by thousands per week. GLH's continued work to support people out of these units will clearly save the public purse significant savings.

The Government has recently confirmed that specialised supported housing will be exempt from the 1% year on year rent reductions that apply to other housing associations, and that we can increase our rent by up to 1% above CPI. We have therefore factored this into our business plan.

However, the Government has also said that from 1 April 2019 Housing Benefit for supported housing will be capped at the applicable Local Housing Allowance level, with tenants having to seek any top ups above this from a cash-limited local pot.

Through Mencap and with others we have made representations to Government on this issue. At the time of writing, the Government is due shortly to publish a consultation paper and report into the future financing of supported housing and we will consider carefully the implications of this and respond accordingly.

We have undertaken detailed stress testing of our business plan around pessimistic scenarios for rent and housing benefit, and we have set out the mitigations that we would apply should these circumstances arise. These include: changes in the planned maintenance programme, changes in how the two bonds would be re-financed, a staff restructure, changes to pay, and deriving additional income from our in-house repairs service.

### 5.2 Specific activities

All of our key strategic decisions will be scrutinised by the need to deliver increased VFM.

#### a. Procurement and maintenance

We remain dedicated to maximising cash savings and social value through the effective procurement of goods and services; securing benefits for our tenants in terms of the services and product we provide.

During 2016/17 we will make a total saving of £100,000 (5%) on the total maintenance budget and this will be achieved by the following:

- Planned – procurement through the Efficiency East Midlands (EEM) framework and use of In-house team to deliver some planned works.
- Reactive – reduction of costs within the In-house team by delivering Repair Me days, batching of work to reduce travel and greater savings on supplier costs through the EEM framework.
- Voids – by delivering a void standard and using the in-house team where possible to deliver voids works. To reduce the costs associated with void loss and turn around properties in a more timely basis ready for re-let.
- Dilapidations – greater control over lease hand backs, tenant re-charging and stronger negotiations with landlords over wear and tear assumptions – target £37,000 saving.
- Tenant recharges – we will revise the policy on tenant re-charge and dedicate a resource to recovering debts where appropriate – target £5,000.

#### b. Overheads

- Bad Debts – we will maintain our rent debtors within our target of 6% of our rent roll, whilst at the same time minimise bad debt write offs by a reduction of 10% on 2014/15 – target £15,000.
- We will concentrate on reducing our travel and accommodation costs for staff by £25,000 over 2016/17, this will be achieved by the following:
  - Increased use of video conferencing for meetings thus reducing need for travel.
  - Booking trains and hotels further in advance to take advantage of available savings on tickets and to secure lower rates.
- Risk register system – we are looking to produce our own risk register system in house rather than continue to pay for an external system – target £3,000.

Summary of targeted savings in 2016/17	Value in £
Planned and reactive maintenance	100,00
Dilapidations	37,000
Travel and accommodation	25,000
Bad debt	15,000
Tenant recharges	5,000
Risk register system	3,000

#### c. Social value

During 2016/17 we will be developing in areas of social value and developing methods of measurement relating to:

- Reducing our environmental impact, by minimising travel undertaken by employees, and encourage the use of Skype and conference call whenever possible.
- Improving the energy efficiency of our existing properties by targeting stock with low energy efficiency and developing improvement targets.
- We will promote recycling, waste reduction and energy saving through campaigns to our tenants through our Voices together magazine and information leaflets.

#### 5.3 Future reinvestment priorities

Our investment priorities will focus on the following areas:

- Maintaining our housing stock to a high standard by continued delivery of our planned programme.
- Continuing our compliance work by reviewing electrical and fire standards and delivering improvements works where required to maintain current standards.
- Undertaking a review of energy efficiency within properties and reducing the potential of fuel poverty for our tenants.
- Improvements to IT systems to deliver more efficient and cost effective tools for our services.
- Investment in learning and development opportunities for our workforce.



“Alaine can now get ingredients off the shelf thanks to the carousel unit. We now have a side opening door to the oven which also helps Alaine to use the oven to cook her meals herself.”

Shirley Burton,  
Mencap

#### 5.4

### Alaine’s story

Alaine and her friends Kelly, Jane and Molly were delighted to find out their tired kitchen was due to be replaced. Through the Planned Maintenance Programme they chose a shiny new one which was designed for Alaine to use in her wheelchair.

“The ladies hardly used the kitchen before. Alaine uses a wheelchair so she couldn’t help prepare the food as it wasn’t accessible for her,” says Shirley Burton, scheme manager at Mencap.

“The kitchen was chosen by the ladies. Together they all agreed on the tiling, the style of kitchen and the colour through Golden Lane Housing’s kitchen choices brochure. The units are a lovely colour, but they are unusual. It’s not your standard kitchen, and the tiles and work surfaces really tie it all in. They got so excited choosing everything.

The refurbishment was carried out whilst the ladies were on holiday in Devon. The look on everyone’s face when they returned home was priceless. They were so happy with it and now it’s transformed the area into a really communal space. It’s now the hub of the house.

What a difference! It’s great to see Alaine preparing her own salad on the lowered work surface to go with her lunch. Jane gets the cutlery from the drawer for everyone. This did not happen before with the old kitchen as it was not suitable for the ladies.”

# 6

## Stakeholder involvement



### 6.1 Involving Board

**Our Board is responsible for leading GLH's approach to VFM, and this is a regular feature in all Board meetings.**

The Board have been very involved in developing our VFM Statement, and set aside significant time at Board meetings to consider VFM in some detail. This enabled Board to fully review the statement with some rigour. Our Chair and other Trustees have worked closely with staff on interim drafts of the VFM Statement, adding another level of expertise and challenge. We feel this has been a robust Board process with full ownership of the final outcome.

All of our Trustees are unremunerated.

At the September and December 2015 meetings, Trustees gave detailed consideration to a revised business plan to ensure that GLH remains strong and able to deliver great services. At the March and June 2016 meetings, Trustees considered earlier drafts of this VFM statement and some important amendments and improvements were made.

### 6.2 Involving customers

**Golden Lane Housing's most recent Engagement Strategy was published in November 2013. We believe that it is important for our tenants and their advocates to be able to hold us to account and shape the ways in which we deliver and improve our services.**

As well as receiving feedback on our services in our areas of operations throughout the year, we undertake an annual tenants survey. Through this survey we seek feedback from tenants on areas they feel we are doing well in as well as where we could do better or work more effectively.

The results of our survey are analysed and reported to our executive team and Board and we feed back to our tenants the outcomes – “you said”, “we did”. The recommendations that have been accepted and delivered, have resulted in positive service improvements with targeted investment, reduced costs and increased customer satisfaction. One example of this is the establishment and extension of the In-house Repairs team in response to feedback about our repairs service.

We value our staff team and want the best people to come and work for GLH. As part of our rigorous recruitment process we involve our tenants in supporting us to get the right people through the interview process. By employing talented and skilled people who share our values and by investing in their future through our learning and development programmes, we aim to reduce our external recruitment needs.

Tenants have been closely involved in procurement, with a customer group appropriately involved in contributing to our procurement framework, agreeing the priorities, assessing the tenders and interviewing potential contractors.

We have two separate budgets; the environmental and adaptation budgets, which is driven by tenant's requests for improvements to their home. These budgets are managed in a responsive way which enables our tenants to access resources which will improve their ability to use and enjoy their home over and above repairs ordinarily undertaken by GLH.

As part of our planned maintenance programme, we offer a wide range of choices to tenants to tailor planned improvements to their homes which meet their needs and preferences. By providing high quality products and materials and using approved suppliers we have achieved efficiencies whilst maintaining the ability to offer a wide range of great products.

### 6.3 Involving staff

**We have continued to invest in the development of our people, maintaining expenditure at just over 0.4% of our income.**

The culture of GLH is one where support and collaboration are of paramount importance. This has led to the organisation enjoying a low turnover of 10.9% and a reasonable use of agency staff (4.5% of payroll). This facilitates productivity and service continuity.

### 6.4 Specific activities

#### a. Support to customers

- We will be engaging with our tenants in a review of our communications using IT platforms and social media.
- We will be using our Voices Together newsletter to promote energy saving and recycling campaigns.
- We will promote our property repair days offering a handyman service in our tenant's homes.
- We will build on our Customer Excellence Standard by continually reviewing and improving the way we support our tenants.

#### b. Consideration of merger options

We are open to consider mergers with other organisations who provide housing and other services for people with a learning disability if this would have the net effect of reducing our costs. As stated elsewhere, we are already in discussion with two housing associations with a view to providing them with a repairs service utilising our In-house team and our call handling facility. This may enable us to spread our cost over a larger number of units, to achieve greater economies of scale and reduce our unit costs. We have also started discussions with a third housing association regarding working together to achieve efficiencies and service improvement. We will be pursuing all of these options during the course of the year.

#### c. Supported housing

During 2016/17 we will review how we deliver our tenancy reviews to ensure the wellbeing of our tenants. We want to ensure we see all our tenants and properties at least once each year and utilise all operational and visiting staff to be able to contribute to ensuring our tenants are happy in their home. By every GLH member of staff taking an active role in ensuring wellbeing will enable our housing officers to proactively work with those who need their support most to work through issues.

#### d. Budget impact reviews

GLH staff continue to keep abreast of proposals about the future financing of supported housing costs and the impact and risks this presents to GLH. The Social Housing Rent Regulations 2016 came into force on 1 April 2016 and we will continue to ensure we meet this exemption by continuing to provide and offer housing designated for people with learning disabilities who require high levels of support, in partnership with social and health commissioners. We will continue to mitigate our risks on new schemes by setting up schemes within Local Housing Allowance applicable levels or securing third party agreement to cover the reasonable additional costs for our liability of lease arrangements.



## 7

### Value for Money self-assessment

This 2015/16 statement supports our view that we deliver VFM for our customers and other stakeholders. We believe that during 2015/16 we have delivered the VFM priorities that we set out during the year.

We align our investment choices with our strategic priorities and are increasingly effective at ensuring we spend our money wisely. However, we know that we can still improve and are committed to increasing the value we deliver in all its forms to our tenants in the wide range of communities in which we have properties.

### Contact us

For more information about Golden Lane Housing, please get in touch:

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