

A photograph of two women smiling. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a red cardigan over a white patterned top. The woman on the right has short brown hair and is wearing a red hoodie. They are both smiling broadly.

# Value for Money Self-Assessment 2017



Golden Lane Housing

working in partnership with mencap

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# 1. Summary and the Organisation and Operating Environment

## 1.1 Summary

Golden Lane Housing (GLH) provides much-needed housing for people with a learning disability across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The value for money that we achieve is derived in a number of different ways: savings to the public purse from our approach and activities; improved operational efficiency; cost savings achieved compared to the previous financial year; cost savings compared to budget; and savings which benefit our tenants.

### Savings to the public purse

Our high-quality, community-based accommodation offers excellent value for money for central and local government as our tenants have often moved from much more expensive institutional settings into a GLH tenancy.

We estimate 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 (see 2014 Social Investment Bond Impact Assessment July 2017). In 2016/17, we supported 62 tenants (32% 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 62 tenants that we supported, 56 moved from (or would have moved to) residential care and 6 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 £2.2m in housing and related care costs for people with more significant learning disabilities and/or complex and challenging behaviours last year.

In addition to the financial benefits, 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 into the social impact of our work, focussing 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 QA'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. The 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.

## **Summary of cost savings achieved in 2016/17 compared to 2015/16 (or against budget where indicated):**

- £71,871 Saving on dilapidations compared to last year
- £49,578 Saving on VAT on labour costs
- £16,738 Saving by using the in-house team
- £11,131 Saving on contractor price freeze (saving against budget)
- £9,398 Saving on bad debt provision
- £6,000 IT efficiency savings
- £4,800 on British Gas contract freeze (saving against budget)
- £4,000 Saving on risk register now done in-house
- £4,000 Leadership team using Skype
- £2,500 Savings on fuel costs for in house vans
- £2,400 Savings on van costs
- £3,000 Staff car sharing

**Total = £185,416**

The savings in 2016/17 are compared to the full year costs included in the previous year's financial results and the total savings figure means we achieved our target of £185,000 savings which we set out in last years' VFM report.

## **Improved operational efficiency**

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

- By establishing a centrally based Housing Income Team in 2016 we 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. This more focussed approach has resulted in reducing the time for first housing benefit payments for new tenants and contributed to an improving overall debtors position for 2016/17 to 4.9% of annual turnover.
- We have made operational improvements detailed later in this report including: increasing the proportion of repairs done as planned maintenance instead of day-to-

day repairs; improving our return on assets; changing the way that we do tenancy reviews.

- We added a resource to work on our Council Tax liability for all our housing and ensure our tenants applied for the exemptions they were entitled to. This is projected to deliver a saving of at least £50,000 in the current financial year which will be used to benefit our tenants.

## **Cost savings compared to budget**

We detail later in the report how we achieved savings against budget through better procurement (including through the Energy East Midlands framework), lower bad debts and lower repairs.

## **Cost saving benefits to tenants**

These savings have allowed us to provide direct benefits to tenants through higher levels of investment in our existing housing, environmental improvements and aids and adaptations.

## **1.2 Background: the Organisation and Operating Environment**

Golden Lane Housing (GLH) was established in 1998 by Royal Mencap Society (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 reside.

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 a single organisation from a tenant perspective in order 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 functions.



Our properties are well distributed across England, Wales and Northern Ireland with approximately the same number in the north of England 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 county 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 where 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 which limits what they can do and accentuates the need for organisations like GLH.

Uncertainty has been created across the sector by the proposal to introduce a Local Housing Allowance cap to housing benefit for supported housing from April 2019. 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 underwent an In Depth Assessment in 2016. This resulted in GLH receiving the highest rating of G1 V1. We have taken this current financial year as an opportunity to develop further our approach to Value for Money.



## 2. The Golden Lane Housing 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. Value for Money 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, reporting and follow up
- 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 26th September 2017.

### 2.2 GLH Business Plan

Our Business Plan has the following three key objectives for the next 10 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.



“The garden looks brilliant! We can also use the area by the side of the bungalow to relax as the trees have gone.”

Chris, GLH tenant

## 2.3 Jamie, Chris, Alex and Michael's garden makeover

Together with tenants, J Tomlinson Ltd, Jewson, Barlows and Mencap we completed a garden makeover in Stockport.

Jamie, Chris, Alex and Michael garden surrounds their home. It had become badly overgrown with areas they couldn't access.

It was an early start! Two trees were cut down and the majority of the surrounding area cleared by 9am.

With donated materials delivered from Jewson work began painting the 43 fence panels and cutting the long hedge in the front garden. The first skip was soon full and another ordered.

The team working on the front garden were digging, weeding and cutting the grass before the scented plants were planted. The garden bench was built and colourful plants put in the pots. Work continued at the side of the property with tree roots removed and a new area created with fresh planting and new fence panels.

You can read more about this story at [www.glh.org.uk/garden](http://www.glh.org.uk/garden)

### 3. Performance during 2016/17

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

Performance indicators	GLH 2015/16	GLH 2016/17	Peer group quartile 2016/17	SPBM quartile 2016/17	HouseMark quartile 2016/17
<b>Housing management</b>					
Cost per property of housing management					
£353.00	£365.00	1	2	4	
Overhead costs as a percentage of turnover	14.3%	15.2%	3	2	4
Weekly Operating Cost per unit	£1.25	£1.23	1	4	
Operating Cost as % of Turnover	88.3%	84.8%	1	3	
Ave weekly management cost per dwelling	£0.31	£0.31	2	4	
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the landlord's services overall - SH	84.9%	90.8%	2	2	2
Satisfaction - quality of home - SH	87.0%	88.3%	3	3	3
Satisfaction - neighbourhood - SH	94.6%	94.4%	2	1	1
Satisfaction - VFM rent - SH	88.3%	87.8%	1	2	2
Satisfaction - VFM service charges - SH	90.4%	92.3%	1	1	1
Satisfaction - repairs and maintenance - SH	74.0%	79.2%	2	2	3
Satisfaction - listens to views and acts - SH	85.8%	89.4%	1	1	1
Percentage of complaints resolved within target timescale	70.3%	88.0%	3	3	
Percentage of complaints resolved to the satisfaction of the tenant/ service user	88.5%	69.2%	4	4	
<b>Rent collection and arrears</b>					
Rent collected - Supported	96.4%	99.2%	1	2	3
Current arrears - Supported	5.0%	4.9%	2	2	4
Former arrears - Supported	1.12%	1.06%	1	2	
Rent written off - Supported	1.14%	1.11%	3	3	1
<b>Repairs and maintenance</b>					
Cost per property of responsive repairs and void works	£676.00	£637.00	1	2	1
Cost per property - major and cyclical works	£1,448.00	£1,720.00	4	4	4
Repairs fixed on first visit	92.6%	92.3%	2	3	3
% of emergency repairs completed within target	96.4%	93.3%	4	4	
% of urgent repairs complete within target	90.3%	85.5%	4	4	
% of routine repairs completed within target	96.0%	95.5%	2	3	
Number of responsive repairs completed in the period	5516	6136			
<b>Voids and relets</b>					
% of void losses - Supported	5.38%	4.77%	1	3	4
Void works spend per property per week	£4.96	£2.37	3	3	
<b>Capacity</b>					
Average days lost due to sickness absence	8.9	5.28	2	2	1
Total staff turnover	10.9%	5.0%	1	1	1
Agency staff costs as % of payroll	4.5%	0.8%			



“Most importantly the boys are together again at last, they are happy here and they are well cared for.”

Isobel and Bob Henry,  
Bryan and Warren’s parents

### 3.1 Bryan and Warren’s story

“It’s just marvellous it’s the answer to our prayers.” This is how Isobel and Bob Henry, who are in their 70’s, describe their sons’ new home. Both of their adult sons, Bryan (40) and Warren (38), are non-verbal, they both have a learning disability and complex needs which require 24-hour care.

Bryan and Warren moved into a new bungalow near Omagh supported by Mencap after 23 years, apart as no housing solution was available before to allow them to live together. They share the property with two other adults with a learning disability and have carers to look after them at all times – they have settled in well, the atmosphere in their home is both calm and welcoming.

Mencap’s Personal Support and Housing Service in Northern Ireland developed the supported living solution with Golden Lane Housing for the Henry family and believe people with a learning disability should have a real choice about where they live and who they live with, so housing is tailored to meet an individual’s needs and aspirations.

You can read more about this story at [www.glh.org.uk/bryan-warren](http://www.glh.org.uk/bryan-warren)



## 3.2 Benchmarking

GLH has been a member of Small Providers Benchmarking (SBPM)/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 subset 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 18 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 last year Advance Housing & Support and Inclusion Housing, who both provide national housing for people with a learning disability, have joined the club and Progress Housing Group and Look Ahead Housing Care both specialist providers joined 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 above and subsequent graphs):

- Adullum Homes HA
- Advance Housing & Support
- Churches Housing Association
- Chapter 1
- Creative Support
- Evolve Housing & Support
- Horton HA
- Inclusion Housing
- Langley House Trust
- Look Ahead Housing and Care
- Peter Bedford HA
- Progress Housing Group
- Providence Row HA
- Quo Vadis
- Salvation Army HA
- Stoll
- The Abbeyfield Society

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. Also we have given our quartile rating for the Housemark group which includes all general needs Housing Providers whether large or small.

Results for 2016/17 for the supported housing benchmarking club indicate that GLH is in the top quartile in 11 of the 28 measures for our peer group, and in the lowest quartile for 4 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. Our tenant satisfaction overall increased substantially from the previous year and puts us in the second quartile. Our tenants put us in the top quartile in our peer group regarding value for money for rent and service charge.

We are also in the top quartile for rent collected 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. Also 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 3 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.

The indicator for satisfaction with repairs has seen an increase since 2015/16 from 74% to 79% which is largely due to the work of the in-house team. The percentage of urgent repairs within target showed a slight drop in 2016/17, after analysis this was found to be a combination of lack of updating by the contractor on the repairs portal so jobs were counted as unfinished. The cost per property of responsive repairs has dropped from £676 in 2015/16 to £637 in

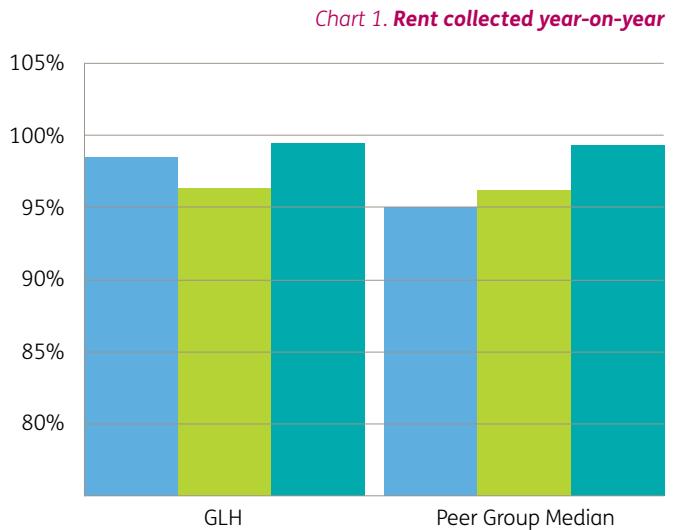
2016/17 which puts us in the higher quartile for our peer group, efficiencies have been achieved through delivering Repairs days within properties allowing multiple repairs to be carried out in one day therefore reducing the cost of the service by cutting down on travel and repeat call-out. The consistent delivery of planned works has also contributed to reduced reactive costs.

The benefits of the in-house repairs team are starting to feed through into the performance figures in the current year. For the first four months of 2017/18, the percentage of all repairs across all categories done target time was over 96% and within that the in-house team delivered over 99% in target time.

We are in the lower median 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.

We have seen an increase in complaints completed within target due to our new procedure which allows us to monitor timescales on complaints being dealt with. However, the number of tenants satisfied with the outcome remains lower, we have a process of sending out a letter asking for feedback after a complaint is closed but due to the nature of our tenants we have a low return rate to enable us to benchmark accurately.

### 3.3 Performance Review



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

Analysis of our rent collected as percentage of rent owed shows our performance has improved over the last year. Through 2017 we have started to see the benefits of establishing a specific income team to manage debtors. Our performance has jumped collecting 99.24% of rent due. We are now above our peer group median and expect the performance in this measure to continue to improve as we seek to become a top quartile performer.

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

Although we experienced a rise in the gross amount of tenant arrears during the year, at the year-end we were performing below target of 6% and slightly improved our position on 2016 reducing tenant arrears to 4.9%. We have robust systems to track first housing benefit payments for new tenants improving the time it takes to receive payments. And our 3 Housing Income Assistants have clear accountability for arrears management in their regions which is improving performance and consistency of approach.

#### c) Percentage of rent lost through dwellings being vacant - Supported Housing

During 2017 one of our housing team priorities was to focus on reducing both the number of empty bed spaces we had and the time they were empty for. We have seen a positive outcome with rental income lost due to voids reducing to 4.77%. This compares favourably with our peer group median.

Our focus continues on improving the standard of quality of vacant properties and bed spaces ensuring they meet the needs of prospective tenants. We have implemented a clear disposal approach where there are no identified nominations available from the local authority or other sources. All our newly developed services have void risks mitigated through service agreements or exit options.



## 3.4 Performance in Asset 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 prerequisite 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.

During 2016/17 we invested £886K across 269 properties which means 62% of our owned stock benefitted from some form of investment during the year.

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 than 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 2016/17 met the industry standards and best practise with a 67/33 ratio. Over the last 5 years our cost per property on reactive spend has dropped from £1,236 to £835, the median for our peer group. This indicates 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

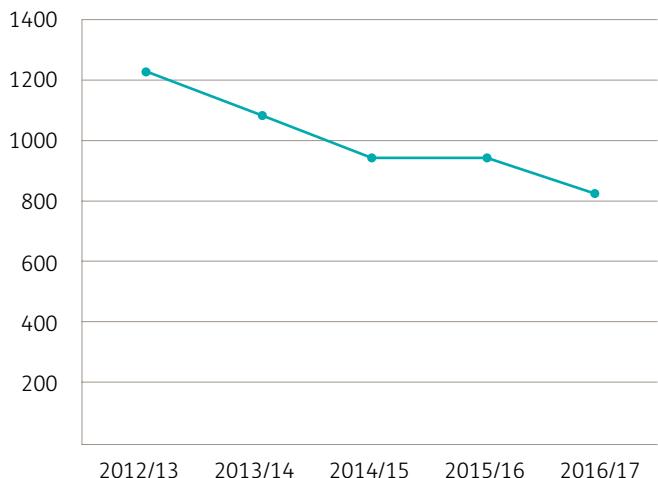
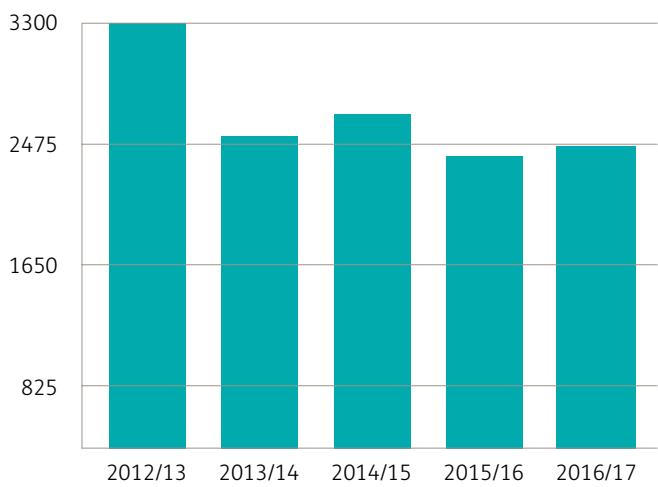


Chart 5. Total maintenance expenditure per property





During 2016/17 our in-house team went from strength to strength and as result of the in-house team we have improved satisfaction in the area covered by the In-house operatives to 99.82%, a 2% increase on 2015/16 which is the industry upper quartile at the end of 2017 our overall satisfaction rating was showing 86%. Almost 100% of repairs through the in-house team are completed on time and the average length of a repair has reduced to 8 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 residents to undertake a condition survey of the property and complete works while they are there. During 2016/17 we saw a reduction in reactive repairs of 20%. In 2015/16 185 repairs were reported in the In-house team area, in 2016/17 this was reduced to 145.

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. During 2016/17 we saved £2,588 on fuels costs as a result of better planning.

During 2016/17 our in-house pilot generated a surplus of £41K which was reinvested in via the planned programme.

During 2016/17 we made savings of £72K on dilapidations costs compared to last year by working with landlords and having more robust processes and procedures in place.

### b) Return on Assets

The GLH stock is located throughout England and Wales along with four properties 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. 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.

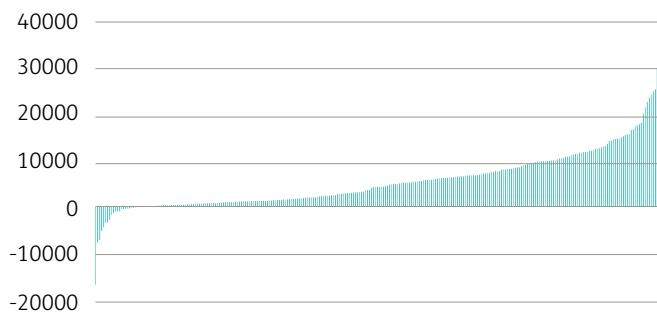
Maximising the financial returns on our existing assets helps to increase our capacity to invest in new assets and support our existing tenants. The purely financial returns on assets in some of our schemes can be low. However, our whole purpose, as a charity is to provide housing solutions for people 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 deficit since inception have been reviewed individually to see if there are any learning points or changes to make.

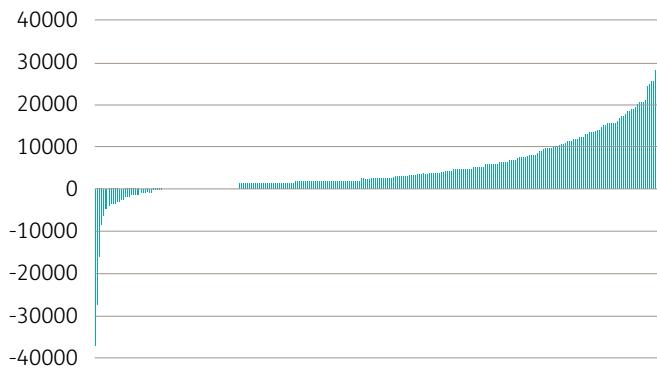
The 2 line graphs below show the financial position for each property for the years 2016 and 2017 respectively.

The line graphs below show the overall financial position for each property since they were purchased or leased by GLH.

**Chart 6. 2016 surplus/deficit per scheme (£)**



**Chart 7. 2017 surplus/deficit per scheme (£)**

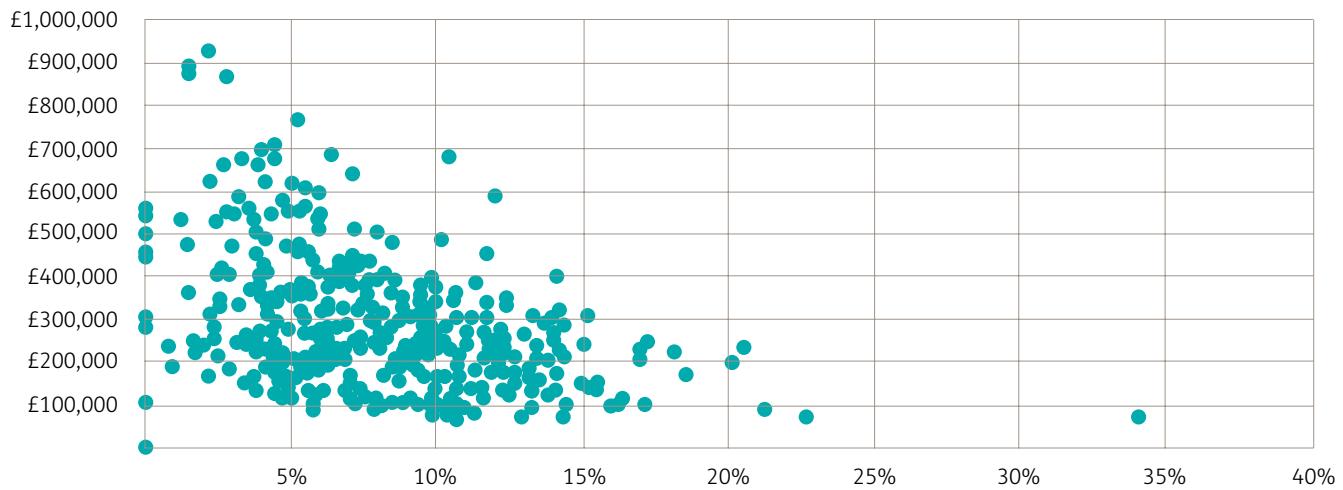


During 2017 we have undertaken financial reviews of 564 assets in total. This compares with 284 that were undertaken in 2016.

In 2017 there were 67 assets in overall deficit since their inception, this represents 11.88% of reviews undertaken. This is an increase from 7.75% of assets in deficit in 2016. Our worst performing assets have been reviewed to understand the reasons behind the poor financial performance and action plans put in place to address losses. Of our top 10 deficit schemes which accounted for 54% of the gross deficit for 2017 the analysis showed:

Scheme	Reason for poor financial performance	Action Plan
1	GLH front-funded adaptions and the DFG grant is outstanding in payment from Local Authority	Recovery of DFG from local authority.
2	One off significant planned maintenance expenditure for leased property.	Lease renewal terms on repair liabilities revised and rent model increase income.
3	Significant planned works in 2017.	Long term lease, overall scheme surplus.
4	Significant planned works in 2017 and void loss of leased property.	Tenants rehoused and lease termination agreed with local authority.
5	Repair liabilities in lease not accounted sufficiently to meet through income.	Lease renewal to be negotiated on terms which ensure viability, or terminated and tenants rehoused.
6	Investment in upgrading property in 2017 with grant from NHS England. Long term void loss during major works.	Will be full let when refurbishment completed.
7	GLH house empty with void loss during 2017. No local authority nominations.	Property placed for disposal on the open market.
8	Lease property 4 void bedspaces during 2017 with no nominations from the local authority.	Agreement ended. Property handed back at end of lease.
9	Lease property 3 void bedspaces during 2017 with no local authority nominations.	Agreement ended. Property handed back at end of lease.
10	Combination of repair works and void loss from one bedspace in 2017.	Works costs were one off adaptions and void bedspace filled.

Chart 8. Rent income return on property value 2017



The above scatter graph 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 19 years' 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.
- Also 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 1,701 units of supported housing (1217 owned and 484 leased units). In 2015/16 we provided a total of 225 tenancies, 48 purchased tenancies and 177 leased tenancies. In 2016/17 we continued our reach by providing a total of 194 tenancies, 35 purchased and 159 leased tenancies. Over the past 18 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. This year we have been able to secure funding from NHS England to purchase a property for 8 people in Cambridgeshire and secured 100% grant funding for two new schemes in Devon and Gloucestershire in 2017.

GLH continues to explore new development opportunities through working with commissioners and key support providers despite the issues caused by the Government announcement on Local Housing Allowance caps. Our asset growth model establishes new services based on assessed needs which cannot be adequately met by alternative solutions. Priorities are established relating to these needs and whether the outturn rent levels of the housing solution are viable through Housing Benefit. We explore lower cost accommodation options that meet the essential needs first. We look at higher priced purchases or leases only where we can show reasons why the lower cost properties

are unsuitable. At present we are purchasing accommodation in Northern Ireland using capital receipts from the sale of void properties. We have working closely with a number of Health and Social Care Trusts in the Province over the past year and they have identified a number currently living outside Northern Ireland. These people live in Assessment and Treatment Units or unsuitable registered care homes. Along with our own capital we hope to submit a bid for Northern Ireland Financial Transaction Capital which is being worked up by senior civil servants.

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 26 new tenants show 100% 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 can be 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 such as issues with the neighbourhood, not getting on so well

with their fellow tenants, or the support are not proactive in decorating and furnishing the home to a good standard. Our housing staff work hard with neighbours and support staff to address any such problems.

We continue to check our costs, tendering works to get the most competitive prices possible. As the property market improved we sold 2 properties, generating additional surplus of £287,986.

GLH has experience offering management services to other landlords and support providers including in recent years Mencap, Care Tech, Precious Homes 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. The type of management service includes intensive housing management and property services and we have a target of 50 new tenancy services in 2017/18 providing additional income of around £76,000.

Over the past 18 months GLH has won and undertaken two specific consultancy projects that have extended our experience and reach outside our modus operandi. Both pieces of work have enabled us to develop our understanding of housing, support and commissioning issues at a national and local level and provided additional income in for GLH. The first piece of work was a successful bid to NHS England for £20,000 to undertake a research and development project in Greater Manchester. It focused on the Fast Track programme there for reducing reliance on Assessment and Treatment Units and building up suitable community based housing and support. Whilst it has not resulted directly in any further development work in Manchester we have continued to work on schemes elsewhere and are working on schemes in Devon and Gloucestershire and are currently exploring opportunities in Yorkshire. In summer of 2016 we bid for a 4 year £600k contract to co-produce Royal Borough of Greenwich's learning disability housing strategy and delivery plan. We were successful based on a strong track record of working on complex projects with a variety of partners and being part of Mencap we were able to draw upon the resources of our Mencap colleagues. This is a major project for GLH and is likely to lead to new business in that part of London. We engaged with Cordis Bright to support with the data collection

and analysis and we started the work in October 2016. We have made good progress and received very positive feedback on our approach – which included consultation events, interviews, property assessments - and our outcomes, which include improved value for money and better quality housing solutions.

### 3.5 Financial Performance: costs per unit

In June 2016 the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) 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 RP with over 1,000 units and was derived from data supplied to the HCA by RPs for the period up to March 2015.

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.

Because GLH only became an RP in January 2015, the HCA did not provide a headline social housing cost per unit for GLH. However, 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 established that our Housing Cost per unit for 2015/16 was £5,420 and £5,463 for the financial year 2016/17.



These figures ( based on the returns made to the HCA ) are represented in the table below:

<b>Headline social housing costs per unit based on HCA research</b>	
Baseline 2014/15 including 100% supported housing	<b>£14,100</b>
GLH 2014/15	<b>£5,510</b>
GLH 2015/16	<b>£5,420</b>
GLH 2016/17	<b>£5,463</b>

The results put GLH's cost per unit at the lower end of the supported cost spectrum and shows that we have a lower cost per unit than in 2014/15. However, this only tells part of the story because there are also quality of service and support considerations.

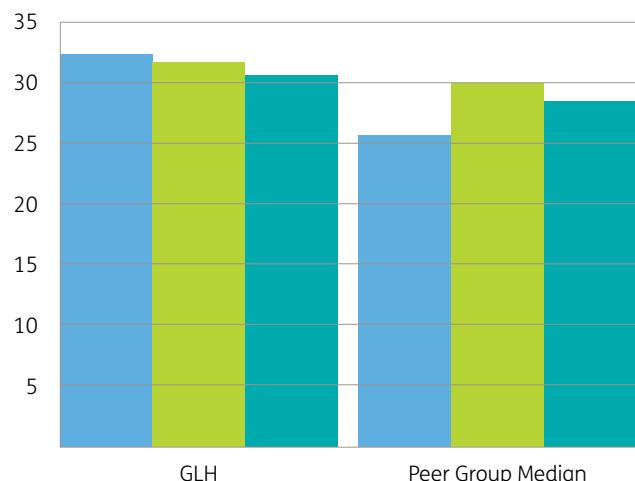
### Average weekly cost per tenancy on housing management

Through regular analysis we have a strong appreciation of our housing management and costs in comparison with similar organisations. GLH utilises these comparisons to help us manage our resources and improve how our regionally dispersed teams 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 again in 2017.

It should be recognised that GLH provides bespoke properties and an intensive service to people with increasingly complex needs, behaviours that can challenge and those people with profound and multi disabilities. In doing so we provide intensive management and maintenance services across England, as well as parts 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 continue to deliver increased economies of scale and targeted growth in existing operating areas, reducing management cost per unit which is reflected in this indicator.

*Chart 9. Average weekly management cost per tenancy*





## 4. Savings made during 2016/17 and social impact

### 4.1 Savings made in 2016/17

During 2016/17 we have delivered the following:

- A saving of £2500 was made on fuel costs for the in-house team.
- By utilising the arrangements with Mencap on property insurance we secured a freeze on our annual insurance premium.
- Savings made on the cost of dilapidations work of £71,871 as a result of a more robust procedure including more rigorous challenging of head landlords around liability which has resulted in less work needing to be done at the end of tenancies.
- A saving of £15,738 was made by using the in-house team as opposed to our contractors.
- We have achieved an overall saving of 21% on material costs through the EEM framework.
- We have made savings of £49,578 on VAT on labour by utilising the in-house team.
- We have secured a saving of £40 per month per vehicle on the rental cost of our van fleet by securing a better deal per van when we increased the number of vans used.
- We have developed our own Risk Register system in house rather than using a contractors software, this has saved £4,000 against the prior year's expenditure.

In addition, we made a saving against budget of £15,900 by securing a freeze on British Gas and our principal contractor for a two-year period.

### 4.2 Other VFM Initiatives

- Leadership team members utilised Skype calls to reduce avoidable travel time and venue bookings for meetings. The estimated budget saving throughout the year is £4,000 against the prior year's expenditure.
- Reduction in debts written off making a saving on our bad debt provision of £9,398. Whilst this was below our saving target of £15,000, it reflects our Income Team dealing with historic former tenancy arrears.
- Staff travel car share arrangements for national and team meetings were used with estimated saving throughout the year of £3,000 against the prior year's actual cost.
- Both Housing Officers and Surveyors are able to complete tenancy reviews and condition surveys in real time on site rather than waiting until they return to their offices using apps on their mobile devices. This has cut down on administration time and also help reduce duplicate visits by members of different teams. Estimated saving throughout the year is £6,000.



## 4.3 Summary of savings

Total saving in 2016/17 (£185,416) in the context of Total Operating Costs (£10,208,674) for 2016/17, represents a 1.8% saving on what the costs would have been had we not implemented these VFM initiatives. The above savings are savings against previous year's budget except for the British Gas and contractor price freeze (£4,800 and £11,131) which were savings against budget.

List of savings achieved in 2016/17	Value in £
Saving on van costs	2,400
Saving on fuel costs for in-house vans	2,500
Saving on VAT on labour costs	49,578
Saving by using in-house team	16,738
Saving on British Gas contract freeze	4,800
Saving on contractor price freeze	11,131
Saving on Dilapidations compared to last year	£71,871
Leadership Skype	£4,000
Staff car sharing	£3,000
Saving on bad debt provision	£9,398
IT Efficiency Savings	£6,000
Risk Register – now done in house	£4,000
<b>Total Saving</b>	<b>£185,416</b>

List of additional reinvestment in 2016/17	Value in £
Additional investment in existing stock	2,400
Additional investment in Environmental improvements	2,500
<b>Total additional reinvestment</b>	<b>185,416</b>

## 4.4 GLH's VFM History

Although 2017 is only the second 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 Easybuy 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.

In 2015 GLH joined the EEM Framework. EEM has developed a vast range of fully EU compliant frameworks for the procurement of materials and services. This enables Golden Lane to benefit from the strength in aggregated volumes that EEM and its 58 members bring with no charge to Golden Lane. It also means that lengthy procurement

processes can be avoided. EEM assists members from their initial enquiries, the supply and completion of JCT contracts through to ongoing support during contract periods from a team of qualified procurement experts. This has already saved many person hours within GLH and allowed us to secure a contract that is fully compliant with the HCA's procurement good practice.

EEM has a strong contractual relationship with many material manufacturers who support EEM's objectives of driving down costs and treating all members equally regardless of size. This means that Golden Lane Housing benefits from the same rates as larger EEM members with up to 90,000 properties. EEM have a managed online Pricebook and offer a free invoice validation service – meaning that Golden Lane can have confidence that they are invoiced at agreed EEM rates. This tool also allows us to regularly undertake benchmarking.

Golden Lane joined EEM in September 2015 and an extensive benchmarking exercise by EEM was undertaken soon after. Based on prices at the time this showed a projected overall saving of 21% across 151 items (covering plumbing, decorating and building materials); a full summary is given in the table below.

	Base Unit Price - TP	No Items Priced	Supplier	EEM Price - Jan16	% Saving
Plumbing Materials	£157.18	34	PTS*	£105.07	33%
Ironmongery	£1,091.68	34	Pochin*	£960.54	12%
			JWL	£967.13	11%
PPE	£94.04	11	Arden Winch*	£52.05	45%
Decorating Materials	£49.77	6	PPG - Johnstones*	£25.62	49%
			Dulux	£28.73	42%
Bathrooms	£318.12	9	PTS*	£227.67	28%
General Building	£467.73	57	Jewsons*	£359.26	23%
			Graftons	£382.06	18%
<b>OVERALL*</b>	<b>£2,178.52</b>	<b>151</b>		<b>£1,730.21</b>	<b>21%</b>

\* Indicates used in overall Calculation

## c) Housing Management

GLH delivers housing management services to all our 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. All field based housing officers work from home and are 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. Not all our management work needs to be field based and we have central roles co-ordinating our leased properties, undertaking administration, as well as our Income Team who are office based in Manchester.

During 2017 we reviewed how we deliver our tenancy reviews to ensure the wellbeing of our tenants. The ability to undertake reviews was extended to Surveyors meaning we were able to undertake a total of 1055 reviews during the year. This was a 47% increase on the 719 reviews of the previous year. This enabled our housing officers to focus working with those who needed their support most to work through issues.

All our staff have a proactive approach to safeguarding the wellbeing of our tenants. All staff have undertaken safeguarding training in 2017. By being able to support our tenants through difficult circumstances we aim to ensure the tenancy remains sustainable for them. During 2017 we dealt with 22 safeguarding alerts to local authorities and a further 62 concerns that were raised which were not formal safeguarding referral. By taking a proactive approach we hope to demonstrate tangible value for money outcomes in the future reduction in failed tenancies.

Our teams use mobile technology to enable them to access and update our information systems when with tenants. This includes recording when tenancy visits are undertaken to check wellbeing, that 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 to find better ways of doing things and harnessing new technology.

We ensure our teams have a range of skills to support collaborative work with colleagues across GLH. This means for example Housing Officers can look at and accurately report repairs when in a tenant's home, or Development Officers can undertake a new tenant sign up if they are best placed to do so.

## 4.5 Procurement Initiatives

As GLH's parent company, Royal Mencap Society (RMS) has a dedicated procurement team who deliver Value for Money 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. Royal Mencap Society 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 EasyBuy (an easy to use online purchasing system).

By utilising the RMS central purchasing service for buying goods and services, GLH can be confident that EasyBuy delivers cost savings and maintain quality.

During 2016/17 we purchased stationary through the Mencap Lyreco account and achieved savings of £29,000 against RRP. (This was a saving against RRP and not a saving against the prior year's cost or against budget, so we have not counted this in the table of savings).

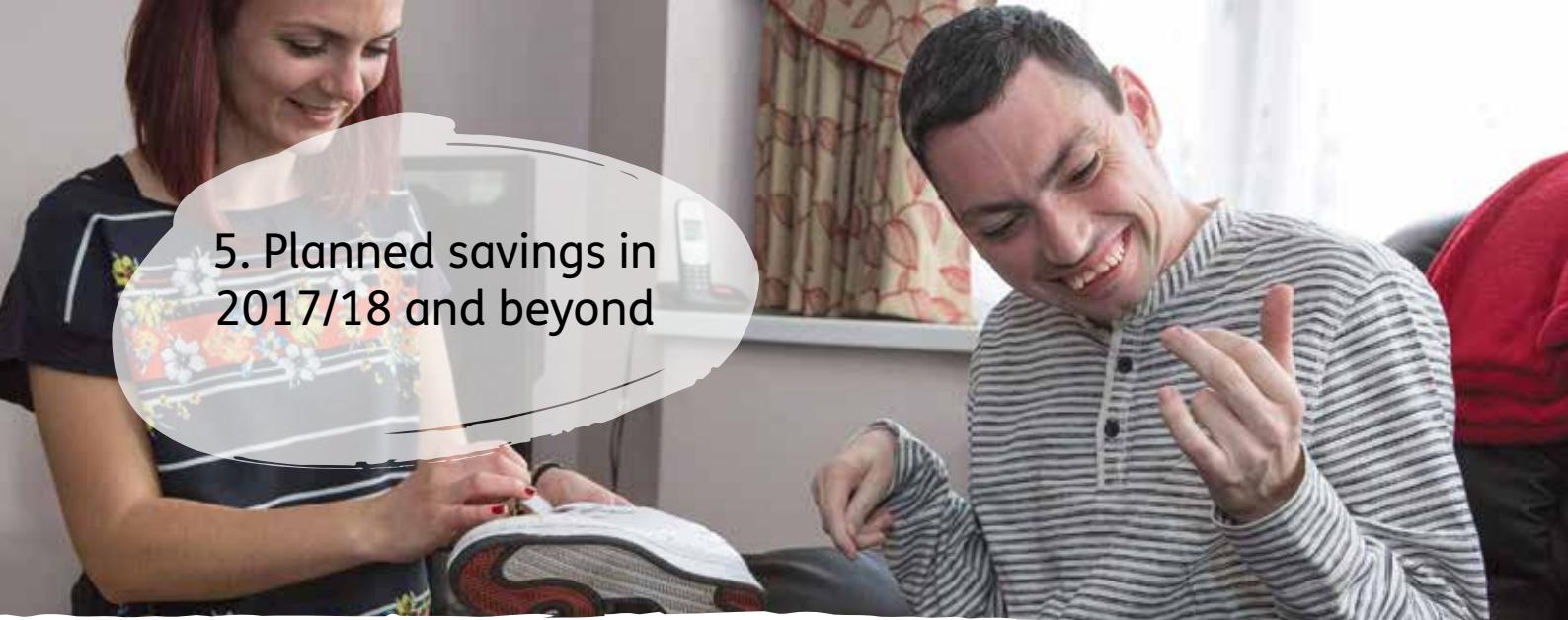
Golden Lane Housing arranges its own insurance in respect of Buildings, Contents, Public Liability & Professional Indemnity and cover is arranged by specialist insurance broker, Arthur J. Gallagher. As a subsidiary of Mencap, GLH benefits from using the same primary insurer as Mencap;

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group and thereby benefits from the overall buying power that this relationship generates, where the total premium spend is in excess of £1m. Notwithstanding GLH's growth in terms of additional properties, the main Property Combined premium has remained very stable. Our brokers do periodically test the market to ensure that Ecclesiastical's premiums remain comparable and improved cover has been negotiated on key areas relating to void properties. The under-insurance clause has also been removed from our policy.

## 4.6 2016/17 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 re-investment activity has focused on:

- **Investment in Existing Stock.** We have spent £948K on investment on existing stock across our stock nationally in 2016/17, including £167,076 funded from savings and a surplus made by the in-house team.
- **Investment in Environmental improvements.** In 2016/17 we have spent £58,921 on improving the environment, including £18,340 from savings, around our properties for tenants (including tree removal, gardening, hard landscaping).
- **Aids and Adaptations.** In 2016/17 we have invested £13,383 in providing adaptations within properties to make life easier for our tenants and to adapt to their changing needs.



## 5. Planned savings in 2017/18 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 have embedded 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 tenant.

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 resident 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 is clearly making significant savings to the public purse.

The Government 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 1st 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, including through the new supply Task and Finish Group. One of our tenants gave oral evidence in person to the Joint Select Committee on this issue, which we understand is the first time someone with a learning disability has given evidence to this type of select committee. At the time of writing, the Government is due shortly to



publish a Green Paper on 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 & 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 2017/18 we will make a total saving of £50,000 (2.5%) 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 on a timelier 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 £15,000 saving.



### 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 with a reduction of the provision to £149,567 for bad debt for 2018 – this equates to a reduction of £18,457 from the 2017 provision.

Summary of targeted savings in 2017/18	Value in £
Planned and reactive maintenance	50,000
Dilapidations	15,000
Bad debt	18,000
<b>Total targeted savings 2017/18</b>	<b>83,000</b>

### c) Social Value

During 2017/18 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 reviewing and targeting stocks with low energy efficiency.
- We will promote recycling, waste reduction and energy saving through campaigns to our tenants.

## 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.

Continuous improvement of our Fire Safety Procedures by reviewing Fire Risk Assessments in line with new standards and prioritising planned spend to ensure all GLH properties meet or exceed national 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.



## 5.4 Gary's story

Gary and his seven friends were the first to benefit from the joint work of Golden Lane Housing (GLH) and the London Borough of Southwark.

They gained more control over their lives when they moved into four flats leased from Affinity Sutton Group through our Great Tenants approach.

They are supported by Brandon Trust. Catalina Ignat, scheme manager explains how their lives have transformed.

"Gary lived in registered care for 20 years. He shared a large house with seven others. The communal areas were quite small, and the only personal space they had was in their bedroom.

The care home was no longer suitable and it was agreed Gary and his friends would move into the same block of modern flats. They have stayed good friends, regularly visiting each other. It feels much more homely and they can see it's their home. There's a concierge which gives an added security to the flats and they are very helpful.

You can read more about this story at [www.glh.org.uk/gary](http://www.glh.org.uk/gary)



## 6. Stakeholder Involvement

### 6.1 Involving Board

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

The Board have been very involved in developing our VFM Statement, and set aside time at Board meetings to consider VFM in some detail. This enabled Board to fully review the statement with some rigour.

All of our Trustees are unremunerated.

At the September and December 2016 meetings, Trustees gave detailed consideration to a revised business plan to ensure that GLH remains strong and able to deliver great services. At the June 2017 meeting, Trustees considered earlier drafts of this VFM statement and some important amendments and improvements were made. A further draft was circulated prior to the September 17 Board meeting and additional changes were made.

### 6.2 Involving Customers

We are undertaking a review of our Voices Together magazine to develop a more effective way of engaging with our tenants. Our tenants use or access to IT is still relatively unknown. During 2017/18 we will be investigating methods of communicating with our tenants using IT and through the GLH website.

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 maintenance 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.

We have two separate budgets, the environmental and adaption 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 5% and a low use of agency staff (0.8% 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 magazine 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

When our tenants are settled in their home they tend to remain living there for a long time. During 2017 we made significant changes to our approach to safeguarding tenants. Our aim is to have happy tenants who are safe in their home. Because of our approach to safeguarding we expect the number of concerns and safeguarding alerts to increase over the coming year. However, we will track the outcomes and look at the number of failed tenancies due to safeguarding issues to monitor and reduce these in the future.

### 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 LHA 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 2016/17 statement supports our view that we deliver VFM for our customers and other stakeholders. We believe that during 2016/17 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.



“We've got a great new wet room and our bedrooms look lovely. Next year, we're going to look at redecorating the lounge.”

Angela, GLH tenant

## 7.1 Sarah and Angela's story

Sarah and Angela have lived together in Warminster for many years. They wanted to update their home and look at ways to improve the bathroom due to their mobility.

They decided to redecorate their bedrooms, and after approaching Golden Lane Housing they were excited to find out they were able to get their sparkling new wet room through the Planned Maintenance Programme.

“The bath didn't get used as Sarah and I had trouble getting in and out of it,” says Angela. “I even had trouble stepping into the shower cubicle which wasn't ideal for me.”

Sarah and Angela explain, “The occupational therapist did an assessment of our bathroom but were unable to fund a wet room as they felt that we could still get in and out of the shower without assistance. We were really happy when we found out that Golden Lane Housing were going to change it into a wet room.”

We looked through Golden Lane Housing's choices brochure and choose which style of wall tile.

You can read more about this story at [www.glh.org.uk/angela-sarah](http://www.glh.org.uk/angela-sarah)

## **Get in touch**

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