

Tristar Homes

Annual Report

2012





Welcome to our 2011/12 Annual Report to our customers.

In our second year after transfer I am happy to confirm that we have made great progress against all of the promises we made to you in 2010.

You will see in this report that one of our key achievements has been the fitting of double glazed windows, a key priority for our customers.

It has been a busy year for us all here at Tristar and across the Vela Group, as we continue to work in partnership with customers to improve services and make your neighbourhoods safer and more pleasant places to live.

You should also see in this report the rewarding work we have been doing to support and promote diversionary activities for young people across our Borough and

the work we are doing to tackle anti-social behaviour in our communities. This is making a real difference in the quality of life for our customers and their families.

As part of the Vela Group we have been building affordable new homes for sale and rent, this helps people onto the property ladder and is a key factor in supporting our local economy. As a major employer who has proudly taken on 24 young apprentices across our companies, we are making sure that we are giving opportunities for employment that helps local individuals achieve their potential.

We take pride in being more than a landlord, we are here to help and support our customers with a wide range of issues and a key focus for us lately has been advising people of the upcoming changes to the welfare benefit system.

Our achievements are not just down to us, we continue to work with you and our involved customers who make sure, through monitoring and scrutiny that we are on track and doing everything we promise.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at Tristar and across the Vela Group in working incredibly hard to make sure we are working towards our vision of Shaping Places, Creating Communities and Changing Lives.

John McDougall
Chairman of Tristar Homes' Board



'Working for the Vela Group as an apprentice in the HR Team, has given me the opportunity to gain a qualification in Business & Administration and improved my confidence. My apprenticeship has given me a broad knowledge about the Company and I have learned skills that will help in my career development. This has since helped me gain a job working as an HR Administrator within the Company.'

Brittany Shaw



When Tristar took over the ownership of homes from Stockton Borough Council in 2010, we promised that we would carry out improvements to your homes. This year we have carried out improvement works to 2,427 homes including:

■ **186** new kitchens

■ **341** new bathrooms

■ **1,060** new windows

■ **963** new external doors

■ **456** central heating upgrades

In 2011/12 we spent **£12.2m** and in 2012/13 we will spend another **£26m** doing more of the above

The Vela Group, which includes Housing Hartlepool as well as Tristar Homes,

recruited 24 young people into apprenticeships

last year, giving them an excellent start on the career ladder

Maintaining Your Home

Our Repairs Team carried out **40,413 repairs** and we kept to **97.3%** of all our appointments

Our Engineers carried out **11,266 gas services**
All our properties have a Landlord Gas Safety Certificate

Did you know?

We have a Priority Repairs service for older or vulnerable customers and last year we carried out

456 repairs

as part of this service.

You can report repairs 24 hours a day/365 days a year by telephoning

0300 111 1000

What you said about the Repairs Team

// The Joiner provided a superb service and had an excellent attitude. He was keen, exemplary and very professional in his performance and conduct. //

// They did a first class job, left everything nice and tidy and clean. I am over the moon with the service. //

Hello from Tristar's Customer Panel

We have been busy working with Tristar Homes to improve services, making sure that the promises made at transfer are being delivered.

We meet the last Wednesday of every month and always welcome new members. If you are interested please call the Customer Involvement Team on 0300 111 1000 or email customerinvolvement@velagroup.co.uk

As Chair of the Customer Panel I would like to thank all of the customers who have worked hard in partnership with Tristar to improve things for us all.

Helen Millar
Chair of Customer Panel

This year we have:

- Examined the complaints received by Tristar and checked improvements made as a result
- Agreed with Tristar the approach the Company should take to let people know about Welfare Reform benefit changes
- Consulted with the Investment Team about progress made with the modernisation works to our homes – including double glazing
- Asked the Tristar Scrutiny Panel to check if the offer promises are being delivered on time – they found that they are



Customer Involvement - Succeeding Together



Did you know?

It's really easy to get involved - just call us on

0300 111 1000

send us a message on Facebook or email

**customer
involvement@
velagroup.co.uk**

Tristar Scrutiny Panel

In 2011/12 we:

- Created and supported our Going Forward Together Group who are helping us to shape our new Vela Involvement and Empowerment Strategy

- Launched a new Vela wide group - Voice for Action - for people who have a disability or life changing condition

- Held joint 'Keep in Touch' events where customers from across the Vela Group have learned about neighbourhood services, Welfare Reform and have been consulted on the future direction for Vela's Business Strategy

- Invested £40,000 in diversionary activities for young people including:

- Beat the boredom events
- Work in schools with puppetry to prevent bullying and to encourage recycling
- Supported community volunteering projects through the National Citizen Service

- Held a joint customer conference with Housing Hartlepool where customers shared experiences and helped improve services

- Gave customers more confidence through our Inspire Learning and Development Programme

This has been the first time we have completed a piece of scrutiny work on behalf of customers and we are really proud of what we have achieved.

Our first piece of work was to look at the communal areas of low and medium blocks of flats across Stockton Borough.

We reported our findings to the Board of Tristar who agreed a plan of improvement actions, including setting up a specific customer group. The Customer Panel will make sure that these actions are carried out.

We were asked by the Customer Panel to do an audit of the transfer offer promises that Tristar said they had carried out so far to see if this was true. We were happy to find that Tristar had delivered all that they said they would by this point in time.

We have enjoyed doing this work, but would like more people to join in and help us. If you're interested please call the Customer Involvement Team on 0300 111 1000.



The scope of our review was wide ranging and included:

- Medium and low rise properties with enclosed communal areas
 - Cross cutting services – Estate Management, Repairs and Maintenance and Investment
 - Grounds maintenance within the boundaries of the block
 - Internal and external communal areas

We found that:

- The standard of investment in communal areas varied across the Borough
- The standard of cleanliness also varied
- There were some communication issues between teams
- Customer involvement with the people who live in the blocks was low

Customer Service



Did you know?

Across Vela, our Customer Service Teams answered over **222,000 calls** in the last year

We offer a **24 hour/ 7 day a week** telephone service

You can also contact us via the website www.tristarhomes.co.uk

By texting 60070 starting text with 'TRISTAR'

On our Digi TV channel

On Facebook

On Twitter

We also keep you informed via

Home visits, Consultation events and focus groups

Regular newsletters

Money Matters

Current tenant arrears rose in the last year by

£84k to £1m

The number of cases of customers in arrears reduced by **13%**

We know that many customers are struggling financially, so in September last year we appointed a second Money Advice Officer and developed our Money Matters Local Standard.

Last year we:

■ Held **1,239** office interviews to discuss rent issues

■ Held **528** appointments with customers

■ Carried out **286** home visits

■ Carried out **157** new tenant benefit checks

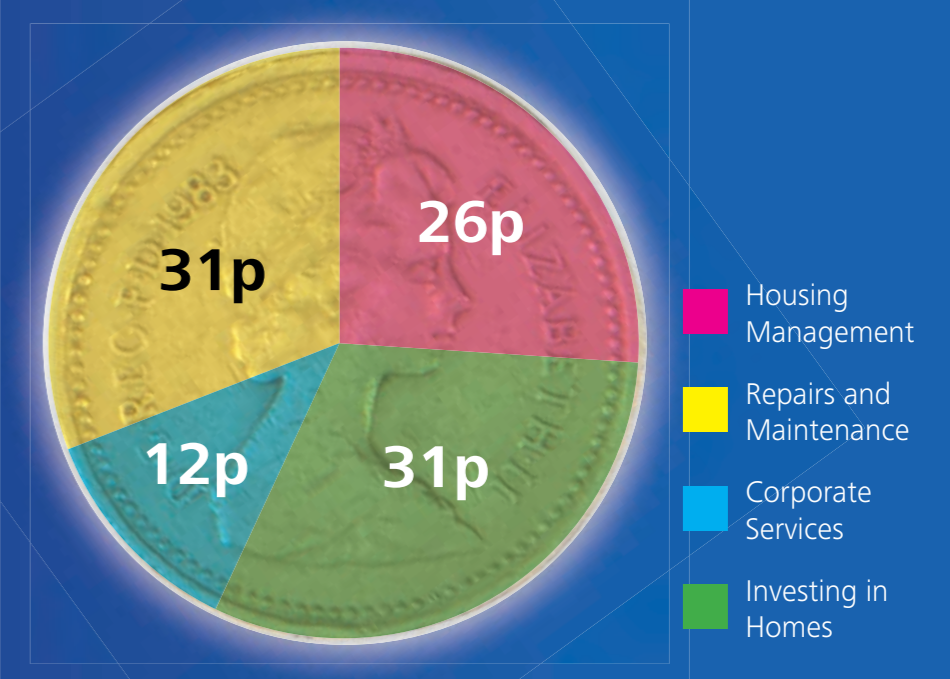
■ Helped customers get an extra **£69,612** in Housing Benefit payments

■ Reduced **41** creditor repayment agreements saving customers over **£22,000**

■ Supported over **100** pupils in three schools delivering money awareness skills

Your Rent

How we spend each **£1 of rent** you pay



We are always looking for ways to make savings that can be reinvested to improve services, by:

■ Producing rent statements online we have saved money (in printing and postage) and made them more accessible to people who want to use computers

■ Renegotiating our agreement with Stockton Borough Council on working together to deal with anti-social behaviour we will **save £10,000** over the next two years

■ Obtaining better prices on our contract for high rise and office cleaning we **will create savings of £70,000** over the next three years

The savings are now being reinvested across the Vela Group to help us deliver the promises we have made to customers.

Neighbourhood Services

Last year:

■ We responded to **423** requests for our Estate Caretakers to remove rubbish on our estates

■ **91%** of you said you were satisfied with our Garden Service

■ We inspected **93%** of communal blocks every month. Next year we need to improve this so that they all get inspected on a monthly basis

■ We developed an Investment Plan for communal areas

■ We inspected all garage blocks every quarter

■ We developed a new Garden Standard with the help of customers

■ Reaching Out Area Panel members regularly attended our quarterly Estate Walkabouts. If you want to come along check the dates published on the Tristar website

■ Our staff carried out **1,866** Customer Contact Visits, and the information received will be used to influence how we deliver our services in the future



Reaching Out Area Panels

Our four Reaching Out Area Panels (ROAP's) have an annual budget of £25,000 each to improve neighbourhoods across Thornaby, Stockton Central, Stockton North and Billingham.

They achieved a lot with this money, including:

- Funding music lessons for young people
- Bringing older and young people together to improve the outdoor space at a Thornaby Day Care Centre
- Working in partnership with the Neighbourhood Police to deliver a 'Good Citizens' award for primary school children to reward positive behaviour
- Funding a garden workspace for people with disabilities to participate in a community garden and learn new skills
- Funding activities at a variety of neighbourhood fun days to help bring our communities together
- Helping Queen's Park Resident Association to develop their high rise garden spaces for entering the Britain in Bloom competition. Their hard work paid off and they received a silver medal. **Congratulations!**

This year we will be:

- Revising the standards for open and communal area maintenance together with customers
- Developing Tenant Scrutiny arrangements for all Neighbourhood Agreements

You can find details of our Neighbourhood Services Standard on our website – www.tristarhomes.co.uk



Building New Homes

■ Last year we bought **19** new flats at Victoria Park

■ Next year we will build **41** new affordable homes in Stockton

■ Working with residents at Swainby Road we will demolish the old homes making way for much needed new homes in the area

■ Consultation is on-going with Victoria estate residents to develop a master plan for the area

■ We will bring a number of private sector empty homes back into use which can be used for affordable homes

Getting It Right

What have we done or changed as a result of complaints?

We learn from our mistakes - when we receive complaints we investigate what has happened and take appropriate action to put things right

Our aim is to always provide excellent services for our customers, but sometimes things can go wrong and when this happens we try to put it right straight away.



■ Last year **230** people made a formal complaint to us

■ **84.35%** of these were responded to within our agreed timescale of 10 days. Next year we are working towards 100%

The three main things you complained about were:

- Delay in service
- Staff attitude
- Quality of work

Dealing With Anti-Social Behaviour

Did you know?

Our Anti-Social Behaviour Local Standard was highly commended in the Best Practice category at the Social Landlord's Crime and Nuisance Group Awards 2011/12, and shortlisted for "Excellence in Working Together" at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service 2011/12 Awards

Our staff are always available to talk to you about any problems you are having – you can contact us by telephoning 0300 111 1000 or 01642 607 943



Dealing With Anti-Social Behaviour

Last year:

■ **89.1%** of all anti-social behaviour cases were responded to within 24 hours

■ In **96%** of all cases, a dedicated Officer made contact with customers within one working day

■ **96.3%** of witnesses were given a choice of how frequently they were updated

■ **89.7%** of witnesses accessed a range of support services offered

■ Where possible we always try to protect the identity of witnesses

What you said about our service

- /// Excellent service. ///
- /// Situation dealt with very satisfactorily. ///
- /// Complaint dealt with quickly and I was confident that if such a situation arose again it would be dealt with. ///



More Than a Landlord

Did you know?

■ During 2011/12 our Employability Team worked with **215** people, **179** of whom were Tristar Homes' customers. We have helped **52** customers into employment in partnership with Know How North East - a local charitable organisation

■ Through our partnership with Urban Blitz we have helped **36** young people into employment. This offered a 20–26 week paid work placement and NVQ Level 2 qualification. A further **42** received an NVQ Level 1 qualification. As a result **11** of the 36 have now secured employment

■ We have developed a new partnership with the North East Chamber of Commerce which is helping to deliver training and work placement opportunities for customers

■ We delivered employability and life skills' development to **100** young people at Bishopsgarth School



"I can't say thank you enough, the help that my Personal Advisor gave me to get the apprenticeship placement and the time spent at work has greatly increased my confidence and skills and got me into a routine of getting up early, reporting to work on time and taking responsibility for my own life."

Nordic Pioneer Apprentice

Homes For You



■ Last year we carried out major adaptations to **351** homes, improving people's quality of life

■ **1,249** houses were successfully occupied through Compass, which is the regional Choice Based Lettings system and gives people the chance to bid for advertised properties. For more information about moving home visit our website www.tristarhomes.co.uk or telephone 0300 111 1000

■ **211** customers moved to another Tristar home with a further 54 people exchanging homes

■ It took on average less than **22 days** to relet an empty home last year, which is an improvement of two days on the year before

■ We also **have new houses for outright sale and shared ownership**. To find out more contact the Home Ownership Team on 01642 947 449



Here is a look ahead to some of the things we might be reporting this time next year.

- A number of new homes completed, new starts on site and the start of the Victoria estate regeneration project
- Empty homes brought back into use across the Borough
- Tenants' Scrutiny Panel successfully completing a number of reviews
- £26 million investment in customer homes
- £3 million of environmental improvements completed. In total £13 million will be spent over the next three years
- 2,000 customers received advice and help to deal with the impacts of Welfare Reform
- More opportunities given in apprenticeships, work experience and help to get a job
- All of our services are being reviewed over the next three years. We will have completed in 2012/13:
 - Adaptations
 - Tenancy support
 - Empty properties
 - Income management
 - Supported housing contracts
 - Concierge



There are various ways you can contact us, please see page 8 for further details.

If you would like information in another language or format please contact us on 0300 111 1000.

Arabic

إذا أردت الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو أي تنسيق آخر، الرجاء الاتصال بنا على الرقم 0300 111 1000

Urdu

اگر آپ دوسری زبان یا کسی شکل میں معلومات چاہتے ہیں تو، براہ کرم ہم سے 0300 111 1000 پر رابطہ کریں

Kurdish

ئەگەر ئێمە زانیاریانەت بە زمانێکی دیکە یان بە ھەر فورماتێکی دیکە دەوێ، تکایە پەیوەندیمان بپێوە بکە لەسەر 0300 111 1000

Bengali

আপনি অন্য কোনও ভাষায় বা ফরম্যাটে তথ্য পেতে চাইলে, অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে 0300 111 1000 এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

Chinese (Tradit.)

欲獲取本信息的其它語種或格式版本，請致電0300 111 1000 聯繫我們

Polish

Jeśli potrzebują Państwo informacji w innym języku lub formacie prosimy skontaktować się z nami pod numerem: 0300 111 1000

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this Annual Report and look forward to a successful year in 2012/13.

Further information about our activities, how we are governed and financial performance are available on our website -

www.tristarhomes.co.uk

The style of this year's report is a change from last year and this has resulted from a wide ranging consultation with customers and staff.

We would be more than happy to receive any comments about the new content style. You can do this by contacting the Customer Involvement Team on **0300 111 1000** or by emailing **customerinvolvement@velagroup.co.uk**



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Tristarhomes 
Part of the Vela Group