

GLOUCESTER CITY HOMES SELF ASSESSMENT 'Achieving Level' March 2009



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



CONTENTS

	Page
Section 1: Foreword	3
Section 2: Introduction	4
Section 3: Setting the scene	13
Demography – The Gloucester Profile	14
Demography – The GCH Profile	15
• Age	
• Disability	
• Faith, Religion and Belief	
• Gender	
• Race	
• Sexual Orientation	
Partnership working	17
• Gloucester City Council	17
• Local Strategic Partnership	18
• Local Area Agreement/ Management arrangements	20
Section 3: Implementing the Standard – our successes and plans	24
• Knowing our community – equality mapping	32
• Place Shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment	33
• Community engagement and satisfaction	36
• Responsive services and Customer Care	36
• Modern, diverse and reflective workforce	37
Section 4: Team assessments	41
Section 5: Conclusions	49

Section 1: Foreword

Gloucester City Homes is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all our tenants, leaseholders, residents, and both current and future employees. We are working towards equal opportunities and diversity in both the way we provide services for our tenants and leaseholders; and in the way we recruit and employ staff. Our overarching principles support our commitment to:

- Valuing diversity in the community we serve and in the workplace, recognising our legal and moral responsibilities to be fair.
- Treating all tenants, customers, clients, employees and potential employees fairly and consistently.
- Ensuring that no one is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, gender, language, age, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, or any other grounds (as outlined in the Human Rights Act 1998), which cannot be justified.

We are delighted to submit our self-assessment for the achievement level of the new Equality Framework. Gloucester City Homes has clear values, respecting every tenant & leaseholder and every employee by being honest and fair in all our decisions. Promoting equalities is an integral part of our corporate priorities and a vital part of delivering our vision for our customers and employees. As a key driver for both demonstrating and challenging our progress we committed to reaching the emerging and then achievement levels of the new equality standard (previously level 2 and 3) in our business plan when we launched in January 2006. This has remained as a key strategic objective for the business.



Tim Dare, Chair
Gloucester City Homes



Ashley Green, Chief Executive
Gloucester City Homes

Section 2: Introduction

Key strengths, progress and challenges at GCH

Gloucester City Homes is a dynamic and forward thinking organisation, which has fundamentally transformed services to our tenants and leaseholders since we were formed as a non-profit making company in December 2005.

Meeting the needs of all our tenants and providing equality of access and opportunity is what makes GCH an excellent organisation.

The Audit Commission commented on Diversity and equality as a cross cutting theme of their last inspection in March 2007 that:

“Strengths outweigh weaknesses on equality and diversity issues. Equality and Diversity is given a clear corporate lead and awareness of diversity issues is high. Progress has been made on undertaking impact assessments and the organisation has an increasing understanding of the profile of its customers”

Our Current strengths and Progress:

Since their inspection, Gloucester City Homes has built on those strengths by

- Collecting and maintaining comprehensive diversity information for **82%** of our customers. We use the information to review how we deliver our services and target our resources. We have a good understanding of our customers and our communities, gained through a local information system, MAIDeN, a unique neighbourhood information database, recognised as providing national best practice. The database provides detailed profiles of our diverse communities, enabling us and our partners to identify and target equality, diversity and access issues by enabling multi-agency data analysis at super-output area level.
- Equality proofing all of our strategies, policies and procedures and putting systems into place to do the same for all future policies
- Ensuring that staff at all levels in the organisation and in every team are involved in helping GCH to set and achieve challenging equality targets, through the development of an Equalities Steering group and Equalities Working Group
- Developing the role of Diversity Champion within each team through monthly review meetings and ongoing training.
- Providing Equality and Diversity awareness training for staff, Board and Customer Forum members
- Reviewing how we consult and engage with hard to reach groups and customers with diverse needs resulting in the setting up of a Customer Equality Proofing Group and monthly Diversity focus groups.

- Working hard this year to engage with all our customers in less formal more appropriate ways for example through fun days, action days, youth days, silver surfer days etc
- Developing a robust suite of equality monitoring information to help us, and our partners set challenging targets and monitor progress.
- Improving arrangements with current and future contractors/agents to ensure they comply with our equality standards
- The views of 'hard to reach' groups are gathered through innovative local surveys and the use of representational groups. These views are being fed back into our strategic planning processes.

Our Challenges ahead

During the next year our major challenges to support progress through the standard will involve.

- Building on our existing consultation processes to ensure we capture and understand the needs of local people
- Continuing to develop our approach to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments
- Through consultation, including further input from voluntary and public sector agencies, we will continue to develop equality targets in respect of Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief.
- Through the development of an e learning training package ensure that all customers and Board Members are aware of our commitments and progress in respect of Fairness and Diversity

About Gloucester City Homes

Gloucester City Homes manages and provides housing services for our 4,900 tenants and leaseholders in the City. Since the company was launched, as an Arms Length Management Organisation, in December 2005, we have steadily improved our services working with our tenants by listening to their priorities, identifying with them their service standards and working with and taking into account their views every step of the way. This year we will continue to strive for excellence, working with our tenants and for our tenants to meet their needs and objectives for their homes and communities.

Having successfully secured almost £40 million to invest in improving homes, following the achievement of a 2* Good service rating from the Audit Commission in 2007, we have made excellent progress towards meeting our Decent Homes Target by 2011. We have continued to secure excellent outcomes in terms of quality delivery and high value from our partnership with our decent home contractors and achieved consistently high levels of tenant satisfaction with the improvements made, whilst always ensuring our expenditure is line with budgets.

Our Board, Chief Executive, management team and staff are totally committed to driving changes to deliver excellent 3* services, meeting tenant needs and delivering value for money. In 2008 we launched our 'Journey to Excellence' vision with the aim to become an excellent 3* rated service.

Gloucester City Homes Key Milestones to date

January 2005	Submit Formal Decent Homes Bid - £39.6 million
June 2005	Government approve bid to achieve Decent Homes Standard
August 2005	City Council seeks delegation from Government to transfer services to Gloucester City Homes
December 2005	Government confirms delegation of Housing Management function to Gloucester City Homes
December 2005	Company goes live on the 12 th December 2005
December 2005	Chartered Institute of Services Founder Council Member
October 2006	Supporting People Gold Award
November 2006	Investors in People Accredited
December 2006	ISO 9001 Accredited
June 2007	Audit Commission Inspection 2*(Good) Service with promising prospects for improvement releasing £39.6 million to deliver Decent Homes and Community Improvements
October 2007	Housing Corporation Accreditation to Manage for others
June 2008	Housing Corporation Accreditation as Investment Partner
March 2009	Customer Service Excellence Award

Our services

Gloucester City Homes provides a range of services for tenant and leaseholders including: -

- Asset Management and client monitoring services
- Anti-Social Behaviour in partnership with the Company's Crime and Disorder Partnership
- Customer Services
- Income Management
- Tenancy and Estate Management Neighbourhood Services
- Resident Involvement
- Sheltered Housing
- Life link Services
- Leasehold Management and Right to Buy
- Support Services

Our Management Arrangements

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of GCH is made up of 15 Directors: 5 Tenant Members (including 1 leaseholder), 5 Council Members and 5 Independent members. It is responsible for: -

- Acting as the guardian of the organisation;
- Making decisions about policy and strategy;
- Acting as the final point of accountability;
- Monitoring, supervision and control of the activities of the company;
- Ensure that the company's commitments under the Management Agreement are delivered
- Approve resources and overall expenditure
- Providing a bridge between the organisation and the outside world.

The Board of Directors of GCH has clearly defined constitutional and legal duties under the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company and the Companies Act 1985 and 2005.

There are three committees working to the main Board including:

1. Services and Operations Committee:

Providing strategic leadership, reviewing and sanctioning recommendations for the delivery of front line services; ensuring effective internal and external communications and marketing of the company and; lead and monitor the company's performance management framework, the company's financial planning and budgetary control systems and the provision of our Human Resources framework and associated policy.

2. Audit Committee:

Reviews and Monitors all decisions of the company, its policies and procedures relating to internal control, corporate governance and risk analysis.

3. Partnering Board:

Procures and manages partners at a strategic level, reviewing performance and delivery of services on behalf of our tenants to deliver effective property management services.

Organisational Management

Executive Management Team (EMT) is responsible for translating the mission and vision of the company into specific customer based operations. They are responsible to the Board of Directors and provide professional advice, the strategic direction and overall management of the organisation. The EMT responsibilities of are to ensure that the company is fit for purpose, providing resources to ensure the company's legal and service delivery commitments are achieved in accordance with the 5-year management agreement of the City Council.

The EMT comprises of the Chief Executive, Director of Housing Services and Business Development; Director of Resources: Director of Asset Management and Regeneration and the Human Resource Manager.

Tactical Management Team (TMT) comprises 6 experienced managers who report through the Executive Management Team. They are responsible for ensuring the resources of the company deliver tenant services through effective performance management. The team ensures that the business operation achieves tenant needs and aspirations.

Operational Management Team (OMT) manage a team of line managers and team leaders called the Operational Management Team who ensure the delivery of all front-line and support services to agreed service standards and performance targets through their Technical Teams

Technical Teams

The teams are directly responsible for the front-line delivery of services in accordance with our statutory requirements and GCH Policy and Procedures. GCH technical teams comprise of:

- Asset Management and Client Monitoring Services
- Anti-Social Behaviour in association with the Council's Crime and Disorder Partnership
- Customer Services
- Income Management Services
- Neighbourhood Services
- Resident Involvement Services
- Sheltered Housing and Life Link Services
- Leasehold Management, Home Ownership and Right to Buy Services
- Financial Services
- Human Resources Services
- Business Support and IT Services

Our Strategic Objectives

Gloucester City Homes has 8 key strategic objectives, which are included in the 2008-2013 Business Plan: -

1. To be a customer driven provider of excellent services
2. To Build strong partnerships that help us to make a real difference to the local communities in which we work
3. To deliver value for money and maximise the use of all our resources
4. To deliver excellence in our governance & management arrangements
5. To be a first class employer nurturing top performing people
6. To be responsible towards our environment to protect it for future generations
7. To be a champion of diversity
8. To achieve the long-term sustainability of the company through business growth

In relation to being a customer driven organisation, GCH is committed to achieving excellence in customer services by putting our customers first. Two of the strategic objectives above are directly relevant to our submission:

Strategic Objective 1: To be a customer driven provider of excellent services

Objectives	Target date
Provide accessible tenancy services which provides fairness and integrity linked to meet tenants needs and aspirations with standards agreed and monitored by tenants	31-03-2009
Achieve the Government's customer service excellence award known as "The Standard"	31-03-2009
Enhance the opportunity for leaseholders to access services currently available to tenants	31-03-2009
Achieve a 3* rating from the Audit Commission	31-03-2010
Deliver the Resident Involvement Strategy	31-03-2010
Ensure that at all front line service staff achieve the Institute of Customer Services Award	31-03-2010
Deliver our Asset Management Strategy, providing our tenants with quality repairs and maintenance services and delivers the Decent Homes Programme.	31-03-2012
Achieve continuous top quartile customer satisfaction levels	31-03-2013

To become a Champion of Diversity we will work with our customers and partners and within our local communities to ensure diversity is valued and respected in such a way that will build strength and unity. To support this GCH has set the following strategic targets: -

Strategic Objective 7: To be a champion of diversity

Objectives	Target date
Attain the 'achievement' level of the New Equalities Framework	30-04-2009
Achieve external recognition for Best Practice in Diversity	31-03-2010
Attain the 'excellence' level of the New Equalities Framework	31-03-2011
Deliver the Equalities Strategy	31-03-2013



Gloucester City Homes Mission Vision and Values

Our Mission:

"To provide a better quality of life to every tenant and leaseholder of Gloucester City Homes by delivering exceptional services and providing decent homes in successful communities."

Our Values:

Pride:

We will act responsibly and will enable our tenants & leaseholders to take pride in their homes and communities through effective service delivery. Equally, we are proud of our staff and will recognise their achievement and success. We will work in partnership with the Company, our residents, staff and partners to build strong and successful communities.

Quality:

Our aim is to be the best social housing agency in the country, delivering outstanding customer service and looking to improve continuously. We will listen; responding quickly and fairly to our tenants & leaseholders and employees needs to ensure we achieve our targets and standards.

Integrity:

We will say what we do and do what we say, publishing clear standards, and monitoring performance and providing efficient, value for money services. We will be a caring and responsible agency, respecting every tenant & leaseholder and every employee by being honest and fair in all our decisions.

Innovation

We will be creative and dynamic in delivering our services, anticipating tenant & leaseholder needs and planning accordingly. We will strive to be a national leader of excellence through challenging existing practices, working together as a team and never accepting mediocrity.

Our Vision:

"To be a first class social housing agency, delivering modern, efficient, high quality customer-focused services so that we can provide an excellent quality of life for our tenants & leaseholders in their homes and their community."

Understanding our customers and delivering on our promises

GCH is a driving force in the community it supports and is committed to diversity and equality policies and practices. Our mission, vision and values support and enforce our commitment to equalities and diversity by

"Delivering and building strong and successful communities...work in partnership with residents.... respond quickly and fairly...achieve our targets and standards.... respecting every tenant and leaseholder...be creative and dynamic in delivering our services..."

We have developed a range of actions to understand the impacts on our community through:

GCH Equality Service Standards - developed via Focus Groups, consulted on at the Tenants Conference in August 2006 and reviewed by Customer Forum in January 2008

GCH Diversity Focus Groups - A range of equalities forums for tenants, stakeholders and diversity champions have been set up, focusing on the organisations progress against the equalities action plan.

Diversity Champions – There are trained champions within every team and at every level within GCH. Progress on Diversity is tracked by both the Equalities Steering Group (attended by managers across the organisation) and the Diversity working group (with representatives from every service team)

Customer Equality Proofing Group - a recently established group, which is made up of customers from a range of backgrounds and experiences, who work with the HR team and staff from across the organisation to impact access services, agree Equality targets and monitor progress.

GCH Equalities and Diversity Policy - developed with the Diversity Project Team, consulted with staff and tenants and publicised via Tenants Times and our website.

GCH Equalities Scheme - developed and publicised for 2006-2009 and updated for 2008 - 2011, which embodies all current legislation and relevant guidance, including CRE and DRC codes of practice and the Equalities action plan. The overall scheme is reviewed annually.

GCH Equalities Action Plan - developed by the Diversity project team, using customer profile information, equality impact assessments and feedback from customers. This is subject to review and challenge by the various Equalities and Customer Forums and key targets and resulting actions are publicised to tenants and monitored by senior Management and the Board

Annual training on Diversity and Equalities - All staff and board members receive training on diversities and equalities and is a key element of our Induction Programme. The Diversity working group, Diversity champions and managers have received training by dialog (including GCH obligations in respect of relevant equalities legislation and the impact assessment process) to ensure this work is carried out effectively and efficiently.

Section 3: Setting the Scene

Demography - Gloucester City Profile

Gloucester covers an area of approximately 5 square miles and is the administrative centre for the prosperous county of Gloucestershire. It has a relatively high population density - there are 111,900 people (consisting of 47,900 households) living in the City giving a population density of over 27.6 persons per hectare. This population is expected to increase both in real terms and in household numbers, such that by 2026 there will be 58,000 households within the city¹. Single person households have grown over the past decade and now constitute over 29% of all households countywide. This trend is expected to continue. 51% of single person households are lone pensioners and this, together with the increasing lifespan of pensioners, is also projected to continue. 92.5% of the city's population is white, with the Asian community being the largest minority group at 2.8%. 20% of households in the city are headed by 25-34 years olds. Heads of households in Gloucester are younger than the national average. The percentage of households with dependent children stands at 31.4%, which is higher than the average for England and Wales (29.5%). Gloucester city has the highest proportion of lone parents in the county at almost 7% and over 26% of lone parents countywide live in the social rented sector.²

Approximately 6% of Gloucester's households are overcrowded (2001 Census) but this varies considerably between wards, with 21.6% of Westgate's households being overcrowded. 40% of households in Gloucester have someone with limiting long-term illnesses. The ODPM's Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004 show that Gloucester is ranked 139th out of 354 local authority areas. However, the city is by far the most deprived of all local authority districts in Gloucestershire. 6 of the county's Super Output Areas (SOA's) are within the most deprived 10% nationally and 5 of these are in Gloucester. 22 of Gloucestershire's SOA's are ranked in the most deprived 20% nationally and 15 of these are in Gloucester.

Gloucester has a growing economy and overall unemployment in Gloucester is in line with the national average (3.4%). However, 22% of city residents were in receipt of state provided financial support in 2004 compared to a county average of 18.9% and unemployment is far higher in wards such as Westgate (7.09%) and Barton and Tredworth (5.9%). Inward investment is currently good, with a number of major sites around the city being redeveloped and further schemes in the city centre now coming on track.

¹ *DCLG 2004 based projection quoted in Housing Market Assessment 2008*

² *Figures quoted from Housing Market Assessment 2008*

Generally speaking, Gloucestershire is a relatively affluent area but the urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham do have some real social problems to tackle.

- For example, Gloucester is in the “worst” 50% of areas nationally in terms of children and older people living in income deprived households.
- To put it another way, in 2004 around 1 in 5 children and around 1 in 8 people aged over 60 living in Gloucester lived in an income deprived household, the highest proportions in the county on both measures.

Demography - Gloucester City Homes Profile

GCH manages the whole of the Council stock, comprising of 4585 rented dwellings, 61 shared ownership dwellings and 254 leasehold flats. There are fourteen sheltered or semi-sheltered schemes, providing support for 466 tenants. In addition, there are 10-community scheme manager’s offices; 3 offices for Tenants and Residents groups; The Matson “One Stop Plus” Office; 609 garages, and 200 parking spaces. GCH also manages and maintains land designated as ‘Housing Land’ by the City Council.

Over the past 12 months GCH has continued to develop a comprehensive diversity profile of its customers. We currently hold diversity data on 82% of our customers and we are working to ensure that we use the information gathered to develop, improve and drive service delivery. The data covers age, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation and faith. GCH maintains monitoring Data on the composition of our workforce, Board members, partners and applicants in a broad range of categories as recommended by the CRE (now E&HRC), by gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age and sexuality. This information is also compared to the 2001 census data for the Gloucester district to identify how GCH and our partner / contractor profiles compare and what impact current and projected profiles may have on our future customer base. Statistical information on the diversity of our customer base and how it compares with the Gloucester District is provided to both the Management Team and the Board via annual reports and Members Information Sheets. All managers and staff have access to customer diversity information through the Orchard system and are provided with regularly briefings and information on how this is changing and compares with the community as a whole.

By establishing a comprehensive customer profile, we are able to plot individual tenant and family needs and then provide the most appropriate form of communication to provide services and get feedback. This includes translated materials, large print documents, and audiotapes as examples. We have extended our methods of communication to our tenants and publicise these through the Tenant Times Magazine, website and via direct communication.

The profile informs us that 79 % of our customers are White British, with 8.45% from other ethnic groups. The predominant religion is Christian with 46% of Tenants identifying themselves as Christian compared with 1.05 % as Muslim. 33 % of our Tenants are over 65 and 5 % are under 25. 31% of our Tenants have some form of disability, with 21% having specific mobility difficulties.

Comparatively 16.9% of the City population suffers from long term limiting illness with 7% of the economically active population having long-term illness.

A number of Tenants have tended to refuse to answer the question on sexuality (30%), of those who responded, 47.5% identified themselves as heterosexual, 1.41% as non-heterosexual. The information is being used to develop and implement action plans to improve service delivery by focusing on identified Tenants needs such as communication and access to services.

Demography - Gloucester City Homes Staff Profile

Gloucester City Homes currently employs 96 members of staff. The profile of our team is broken down as follows:

Working arrangements: -	66 full time and 30 part time or term time only.
Disability profile: -	9 % of our staff have identified themselves as being disabled under the provisions of the DDA.
Gender profile	67% are female and 33% male.
Ethnicity profile	89% identify their ethnic origin as White UK and 11% as non White UK. (White Other -2%/ Black Caribbean -3% /Black other -2% / White Black Caribbean –1% /White Asian –1% /Joint Ethnicity – 2%)
Sexuality profile	83% of staff identify themselves as heterosexual and 1% as Gay and 3% as Lesbian (13% declined to answer)
Faith Profile	63% of staff identify themselves as Christian, 10% as other and 18% with no religion (9% declined to answer)
Age Profile	Under 21 – 3.5%/ 21 – 24 – 4%/ 25 – 44 – 42%/ 45-64 –47%/ 65+ - 3.5%

Age:

Gloucester profile		GCH customer profile		GCH Employee profile	
15 - 19	6%	Under 21	0.83%	Under 21	3.5%
Age 20 - 24	5.4%	Age 21 - 24	4.32%	Age 21 - 24	4%
Age 25 - 44	30.7%	Age 25 - 44	28.23%	Age 25 - 44	42%
Age 45 - 64	22.3%	Age 45 - 64	33.24%	Age 45 - 64	47%
Age 65 - 79	11.2%	Age 65 - 79	21.85%	Age 65 - 79	3.5%
Age Over 80	3.7%	Age Over 80	11.03%	Age Over 80	0%
		Age Not Known	0.29%		

Disability:

Gloucester City profile	GCH customer profile	GCH Employee profile
16.9%	31%	9%

Faith, Religion and Belief:

Gloucester City profile		GCH customer profile		GCH Employee profile	
BUDDHIST	0.13%	BUDDHIST	0.05%	BUDDHIST	0%
CHRISTIAN	74%	CHRISTIAN	46.29%	CHRISTIAN	63%
HINDU	0.44%	HINDU	0.09%	HINDU	0%
JEWISH	0.06%	JEWISH	0.04%	JEWISH	0%
MUSLIM	2.25%	MUSLIM	1.05%	MUSLIM	0%
NO RELIGION	14.25%	NO RELIGION	13.50%	NO RELIGION	18%
OTHER	00.3%	OTHER	2.98%	OTHER	10%
REFUSED		REFUSED	5.08%	REFUSED	9%
UNKNOWN	8.14%	UNKNOWN	30.92%	UNKNOWN	30.92%

Gender:

Gloucester City profile		GCH customer profile		GCH Employee profile	
Female	50.8	Female	60.10%	Female	67%
Male	49.2%	Male	39.90%	Male	33%

Race:

Gloucester City profile	GCH customer profile	GCH Employee profile
BME – 7.5%	BME – 8.5%	BME – 11%

Sexual Orientation:

Gloucester City profile	GCH customer profile		GCH Employee profile	
NK	HETEROSEXUAL	47.50%	HETEROSEXUAL	83%
	NO INFORMATION	30.97%	GAY	1%
	REFUSED	20.12%	LESBIAN	3
	BISEXUAL	0.62%	REFUSED	13%
	OTHER	0.44%		
	GAY	0.31%		
	TRANSEXUAL	0.04%		

Partnership Working

We are involved in a range of effective partnerships to help us improve the range and delivery of our services.

Our **partnerships with customers** are many and varied, ranging from our overall Customer Forum through themed forums for leaseholders, sheltered housing Tenants and for equality and diversity and 18 formal and informal **Tenants and Residents Groups**. There are over 200 Tenant testers who help monitor our services through a variety of mechanisms such as: mystery shopping, block or street representatives; attending focus groups or customer events; or being part of any of the previously mentioned forums and groups. We also regularly survey our customers on our key services.

1. Partnering with Gloucester City Council



GCH was established in 2005 by the City Council to deliver the Decent Homes Programme on behalf of our Tenants and improve services. By achieving the 2* status in June 2007, GCH is now delivering major investments into the Council's Housing Stock to meet the Gloucester Standard and thereby achieve the Government's Decent Homes target. GCH continues to work to the principles outlined in the strategic framework that the Council established as a vision for the ALMO agreed in September 2006.

The City Council comprises 36 councillors and is currently controlled by a minority Conservative administration. It has 16 Conservative, 12 Liberal Democratic and 8 Labour councillors. 6 Cabinet members govern the business of the Council. The City Council agrees an annual [Delivery Plan](#) with GCH, which re-affirms the LSP's objectives and sets out service standards and performance targets. GCH forms a key part of the [Council's Vision](#) in terms of developing as an independent, successful and expanding provider of social housing. We continue to develop our independence in order to fulfil the Council's expectations, which are for us to excel in comprehensively managing the Council's housing stock and neighbourhoods and to deliver safe, mixed, sustainable and decent communities and environments.

In April 2008, with the support of the Council, GCH submitted a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire to the Housing Corporation for accreditation to become a development partner of the Corporation. This will mean that we will be able to bid for future Supported Housing Funding Grant to develop new schemes to support the Council's Housing Strategy, however this has to be mutually acceptable and financially viable in the current economic climate.

GCH also work closely with the **Strategic Housing Partnership Team** led by the Council and attended by other social landlords, to prevent homelessness and develop initiatives to tackle the high demand for social housing within the City. There are currently 5,800 applicants on the housing register and nearly 750 Tenants on our transfer list. GCH are also part of a countywide partnership to develop and introduce **Choice Based Lettings** in December 2008 to increase customer choice and improve the transparency of our lettings process.

Clearly, our aim is to support any initiatives to improve the situation, and since 2007 we are working together to review potential regeneration opportunities of the stock linked to a “whole life costing” model. This work is gathering momentum through an action plan led by the Council and the intention is to identify potential opportunities for regeneration in 2008. A joint citywide strategic group has been established with the Council to review the future suitability of our current housing and, in particular, the less popular and non-traditional.

GCH chairs the **Family Intervention Project** as part of the Citywide Crime and Disorder Partnership, which has attracted high funding from the Homes Office to support families who are perpetrators of ASB into positive behaviours through a variety of support mechanisms. We also have a formal service agreement to work jointly together on a multi-agency basis to tackle ASB issues in the City. In addition,

At the same time, GCH works in partnership to share risk and support each other in terms of emergency planning, the 2007 floods being an excellent example of joint working arrangements.

The potential to develop the partnership is a key driver for future success in providing support to deliver the Housing Strategy as well as some of the Council’s key strategies on community cohesion and social exclusion.

2. Partnering with the Gloucester Partnership



Sustainable Community Strategy and its linkages with the Local Area Agreement

GCH is an executive member of the Gloucester Partnership and has taken a leading role in the development of the new [Gloucester Partnership](#) which was launched in January 2008, for 2008- 2018 to take advantage of the changed context for partnership working.

The strategy has a short term 3-year Action Plan to deliver its 4 key aims:

- Aim 1** A place where the future matters
- Aim 2** A place where all communities matter and where people want to live
- Aim 3** A place where all people matter and we 'narrow the gap' in health, poverty and social exclusion
- Aim 4** A places that thrives

The Strategy is aligned with the [Sustainable Community Strategy for Gloucestershire](#) and its delivery mechanism, the **Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA)**. The [Gloucestershire LAA](#) is an agreement between Government and the key statutory agencies in Gloucestershire to deliver actions, many by single agencies, to improve life across Gloucestershire.

The Sustainable Community Strategy is based on the following principles:

- It focuses on those actions for Gloucester where concerted partnership action has the potential to make the difference or would be hard to achieve without concerted partnership working.
- The intention is not to duplicate, but to link to and support other partnership action plans (such as the Gloucestershire Children and Young People Plan or the Gloucester City Employment Plan) and individual agency action plans through a Gloucester focus.
- It will be aligned to spatial planning – the Local Development Framework.

The role of Gloucester City Homes in the Sustainable Community Strategy

In December 2007, GCH signed up to working to the 4 aims with specific emphasis to achieve the following outcomes within those aims:

- Outcome: 2.1** Communities Live, work and play in peace and harmony.
- Outcome: 2.2** our diverse communities have a strong influence on the services they receive.
- Outcome: 2.3** Communities are safe and feel safe.
- Outcome: 2.4** there are high quality open spaces and built facilities, for culture, recreation and leisure.
- Outcome: 3.1** Measurable improvements are made in Gloucester's deprived communities
- Outcome 3.2** Everyone has improved access to Decent, Warm, and affordable homes

Outcome 3.5 Older people and those with special needs have access to the services, support and information they need

Outcome 4.4 Physical regeneration of the City delivers social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits for local people and their communities.

3. Partnering with the Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership

As a key partner of the Gloucester partnership, we are able to influence and contribute to the targets and key themes of the 5 other Local Authorities of the [Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership](#) – the countywide Local Strategic Partnership (County LSP).

4. The Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The [Gloucestershire LAA](#) is an agreement between the government and a partnership of local public and voluntary organisations, led by Gloucestershire County Council through the Gloucestershire Conference. It sets out how local partners will use a range of government funding streams to deliver real improvements in outcomes for local people. Through the Gloucester Partnership, GCH directly contributes to the LAA's five 'blocks' or targets, which are shown below. The development of each block has been led by a countywide thematic partnership. The five blocks, and the partnerships leading their development are:

1. Safer and Stronger Communities - Gloucestershire Safer & Stronger Communities Partnership
2. Healthier Communities and Older People - Gloucestershire Health & Community Well being Partnership
3. Children and Young People - Gloucestershire Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership
4. Economic Development and Enterprise - Gloucestershire First
5. Natural & Built Environment - Environment Partnership

The LAA partners have identified a firm commitment to ensure that fairness and diversity is embedded into the themes within the agreement. Training on Equality Impact Assessments has been provided to each of the 'Target Leads'. Each target is subject to an EIA and monitoring will take place through a partnership between County, District, PCT and voluntary sector agencies.

5. Supporting People Partnership

GCH work closely and effectively with a number of the countywide themed partnerships, such as the [Supporting People Partnership](#) which helps to fund our housing related support services to vulnerable customers and funds partners who work with our vulnerable customers to help sustain their tenancies e.g. Knightstone Housing; In August 2006, the Supporting People Partnership Board inspected the sheltered schemes and Supporting People services, as part of a two-year review programme and GCH was awarded the **first-ever gold award** in Gloucestershire for the excellent quality of our service. In November 2006, the countywide Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator commended our updated Domestic Abuse Policy & Procedures.

6. Partnering with Gloucestershire Community Safety Partnership

The [Gloucestershire Community Safety Partnership \(GCSP\)](#) manages the Safer and Stronger Communities Agreement on behalf of the Countywide Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership (GSP). The GSP's Community Strategy seeks 'to make a positive difference for people who live in, work in and visit Gloucestershire', and proposes that this is achieved primarily through six themed approaches, one of which is the ambition to achieve 'A Safe County'.

GCH has a major strategic influence in the partnership. We work with key agencies and our Chief Executive chairs the **Family Intervention Project** which meets monthly to review support progress on a case-by-case basis, securing funding for future support and developing support services on a strategic basis in accordance with Home Office targets within the Governments RESPECT Agenda.

Our Director of Housing, chairs the **Neighbourhood Management Group** which is a multi-agency task group charged with delivering one of the key strategic aims of the Crime Reduction Partnership strategy to make Gloucester City communities safer places to live.

7. Partnering with Local Neighbourhood Projects and Agencies

At a neighbourhood level, we work closely with Neighbourhood Partnerships and Neighbourhood Projects to tackle issues of local concern. For example, working with the Matson community and with local agencies to tackle ASB on the largest of our estates, which suffers the highest degree of anti-social behaviour. A key initiative is our work with young people to identify existing ASB and to deliver diversionary activities, which reduce and prevent ASB re-occurring in the future and to provide opportunities to engage with us and develop new skills. For example through the provision of website design skills and the development of a youth page on our website.

GCH recognises the importance of supporting and working with local Neighbourhood Projects and Community Agencies as they are the lifeblood of support to local residents and are in the heart of the community. GCH has

funded two local projects that support our [resident involvement strategy](#) and [communication strategy](#) and work closely with us to meet agreed targets. We also work with local advice agencies and voluntary groups to ensure effective outcomes and signposting for tenants.

8. GCH Strategic Delivery Partners

Our Investment Programmes are developed taking into account a number of factors including the current and future level of available resources, tenant priorities, the age/condition of the stock and achieving value for money in accordance with our procurement strategy. Our Asset Management Strategy is supported by separate Asset Management Plans, which provide the detailed information on individual schemes and properties. The Strategy will continue to be comprehensively reviewed in consultation with our tenants and key stakeholders on a regular basis and as a minimum annually. The key partnerships include:

Response Repairs, Voids and Cyclical Maintenance

MORRISON

Morrison Facilities Services Limited are responsible for the delivery of the responsive repairs, voids management and service maintenance contract to all of our tenants with a value of approximately £3.2 million per annum. The contract runs from the 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2011, with discretion to extend for a further 5 years until March 2016

Other Cyclical Maintenance

There are a range of other partners delivering our cyclical maintenance programmes including Asbestos Management and Landlord Health and Safety requirements, as examples. On the 1st April 2008, GCH entered into a 5 year programme arrangement with the Mitie Group to provide a prior to painting repairs and painting contract which will provide internal communal and external painting services for our stock.



Decent Homes Investment Programme 2007-2012

GCH has a 5-year programme to deliver the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2012. Wherever possible, the Decent Homes standard will be exceeded by the "Gloucester Standard" which was agreed by our tenants following the options appraisal in July 2004. The delivery of the programme supported by funding from the major repairs allowance will see a massive investment, approximately £55 million into the Council's housing stock over a 4-year period ending in 2011.

In 2007, GCH completed the procurement of our Decent Homes Partners under the Strategic Partnering Framework using PPC 2000, the Association of Consultant Architects Standard Form Project Partnering Contract, under the 'umbrella' of the framework agreement.



Our three partners, Wates, Lovell and Bullock commenced the internal programme of works in September 2007 based on a series of internal improvements to kitchen and Bathroom refurbishment's, installation/upgrading of central heating, and electrical rewiring, with doors and window upgrades. From April 2009, the partnership will reduce to one, Lovell's to deliver the remainder of the internal programmes as GCH has made excellent progress and we are ahead of schedule in our delivery.

9. Gloucestershire Conference

[The Gloucestershire Conference](#) sets out the arrangements for strategic partnership working in Gloucestershire, the structures by which we work together as well as information about what we aim to achieve together. The

Gloucestershire Conference comprises:

- Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership
- Community Strategy Executive Board
- Accountable Bodies Group
- 5 Thematic Partnerships
- 6 District Local Strategic Partnerships
- Sectoral Partnerships (including the Voluntary & Community sector Assembly and Local Government Association)
- Individual organisations and businesses

Working together through the Gloucestershire Conference structure, these bodies are collectively responsible for:

- Agreeing a long-term vision for Gloucestershire (set out in the [Sustainable Community Strategy for Gloucestershire](#))
- Translating that vision into [medium-term targets and delivery plans](#) through the Local Area Agreement and other delivery plans
- Delivering improvements which make a real difference for the people of Gloucestershire
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the partnership

Section 4: Implementing the standard - Our success

Evaluation against the 'emerging' level

In our journey towards the 'achieving' level of the new standard we have first challenged ourselves against the characteristics of an emerging one (previously level 1 and 2) and we have worked with a DIALOG consultant to undertake a gap analysis and identify areas for improvement. This together with ongoing reviews of best practice has provided the challenge and critique which has enabled us to focus on areas of weakness and seek to embed our approach to Equality and Diversity.

1. Board Members and senior managers understand the significance of equality in the place shaping agenda and provide clear and visible leadership in building partnerships to address inequality

GCH works in partnership with a range of public sector, voluntary sector and business partners to identify community cohesion and equality priorities. Together with the Executive Management Team, our Board members set the strategic priorities and direction of the organisation and work with key strategic partners, such as the [Gloucester Partnership](#), the [City Council](#) and tenant and resident groups to ensure that equality and community cohesion issues are kept at the top of the agenda. For example, our [Community Cohesion Strategy](#) and [Financial Inclusion Strategy](#) have been shared with and adopted by some of our partners and stakeholders including our Repairs Partner, Morrison and the City Council.

Gloucester City Homes is a strategic partner of the Council and is very much a place shaper in terms of the future of the City. The Chief Executive and the Directors are currently leading on a number of key partnerships including chairing the Family Intervention Project and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and have key roles on a number of other strategic partnerships, including representation on the Gloucester Partnership (Gloucester City Council's statutory Local Strategic Partnership), and the **Changing Demand Project**, which focuses on the re-development and regeneration of local communities to create successful and strong local communities.

2. We are able to demonstrate clear plans to undertake equality mapping and we understand the profile and needs of communities of interest within our locality.

Our progress on quality mapping and understanding our customer's needs and the communities they live in it a key strength for Gloucester City Homes.

Gloucester City Homes now holds customer diversity information on [82% of our tenants](#) and [89% of our leaseholders](#). This is reviewed against the Gloucester Profile provided by the [2001 census](#) information and the [Gloucester Story](#) produced by MAIDeN, the multi-agency database for neighbourhoods in Gloucestershire. Additionally, we have been working with some of our strategic partners to map the [emerging community](#) in Gloucester.

3. We have publicly committed to improving equality outcomes and the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment based on race, gender, disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation

We have made clear, public statements on our commitment to embracing diversity and eliminating inequality via:

- The development and implementation of a range of key documents, strategies and policies. This includes as examples, our [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#) and our [Equality Strategy](#), which incorporates our **Generic Equality Scheme** covering all six equality strands, a range of supporting [Equality Policies](#) and [Equality Service Standards](#). These are available through a variety of formats and are published on our [website](#) and circulated to our customers in summary format.
- Our robust approach to [procurement](#) and our award of contracts and use of employment agencies through our [Contracts Equality Scheme](#).
- Via our work with customers from hard to reach/ under represented groups through [Diversity Focus Groups](#), Customer Equality Proofing Group, [Community Events](#), and focused activities. For example, our [Youth Day in 2008](#).
- The ongoing provision of training and awareness sessions to Board and customer Forum members as well as our staff.

- The development of a [Competency Framework](#) for all staff and Board members based on 8 key themes, one of which is 'Fostering integrity and respect', against which all staff and Board members are appraised.

4. We are compliant with all legal requirements, including having all the public duty Equality Schemes in place.

Using current, up to date legislation and best practice as our guide we have in place a suite of [Equality Policies](#), which support our [Equality Strategy](#). We have produced and regularly updated our Generic Equality Scheme which covers all six equality strands as part of this strategy. This has been consulted on with customer representatives and is published on our website and available in a reduced format via our annual equalities report.

5. We have systems in place at corporate and team level to ensure the delivery, review and scrutiny of our equality and cohesion priorities

Over the last three years, GCH has developed a robust framework, which ensures that our Board, Managers and Staff are fully engaged and take responsibility for setting, delivering and monitoring equality targets and outcomes. Customer are engaged and given opportunities to challenge by via regular Diversity focus groups, the Customer Equality Proofing Group and reports and discussions at Customer Forum.

- **GCH Board of Directors**

Gloucester City Homes has a **Diversity Board Champion, Dorothy Smith** who is a Tenant Board Member and she also sits on the Customer Equality Proofing Group and has received additional training to support her role. We ensure that annual equalities training is provided to ensure all board members have the necessary understanding and information to agree equality targets and challenge progress and outcomes on all reports that are reviewed by them. Performance against BVPI targets is reviewed quarterly at Board meetings. Milestone information is provided via Members Information Sheets, with a full review on an annual basis via the updated [Equality Strategy](#) and [Community Cohesion Strategy](#). Key Equality objectives sit within the Company's [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#) and are agreed by the Board on an annual basis at a [Board and EMT away day](#).

GCH Executive Management Team

The **Chief Executive** is the **Diversity Champion**. The team is lead on all equalities and diversity targets by the Human Resources Manager. Members of the Executive Management Team and Board sit on the **Equality Steering Group** which sets targets, monitors progress against equality targets and reviews outcomes for customers.

- **GCH Tactical and Operational Management Teams**

All managers and Team Leaders sit on the **Equality Steering Group**, which sets targets, monitors progress against equality targets and reviews outcomes for customers. Managers also have specific responsibility for achieving equality outcomes and this is reviewed on annual basis as part of the appraisal process. As well as assisting with the setting of corporate equality targets managers also work with their team and the team's Diversity Champion to set and deliver Team based equality action plans.

- **GCH Diversity Champions**

Each team has identified a Diversity Champion. These may be people with specific equalities experience or backgrounds or with an interest and desire to get more involved with the equalities agenda. Diversity champions sit on both the Diversity Working Group (which meets monthly) and the Customer Equality proofing Group (which meets bi monthly). Their role is to identify and monitor team based equality targets and to work with their team members and manager to agree targets and achieve them. They are provided with regularly updated customer profile information, and additional layers of Equality and Diversity training to ensure they can effectively challenge current approaches and progress.

- **GCH Staff**

All of our staff receives annual generic Equality and Diversity Training and regular specialist training including as examples, the use of [Language Line](#), [Disability Awareness Training](#) and [cultural awareness](#) sessions. For example, in November 2009, Gloucester City Homes jointly sponsored and led on the [Anne Frank and You Exhibition](#) at Gloucester Cathedral, which raised the awareness and understanding of difference for all residents in Gloucester. All of our staff was encouraged to attend the exhibition and this was followed up with awareness sessions on [Respect and Dignity](#) within work and how we interact with our customers for all staff. GCH Staff on are also involved in setting, monitoring and delivering equality targets for their teams. Their progress and involvement is evaluated as part of their [annual review](#) and 1 – 1 process.

- **GCH Customers**

As well as reporting progress publicly through our [website](#) and annual Equality Reports, our progress is monitored and challenged by our tenants through their [Customer Forum](#), the Customer Equality Proofing Group, regular diversity focus groups and customer events.

6. Key internal and external stakeholders and community members are consulted on equalities issues

Internal stakeholders

All staff are involved in the process of identifying equality issues and developing responsive actions through the work of the Diversity Working Group and their involvement in setting team targets. We have recently run a series of [Respect and Dignity](#) workshops for all staff, which focuses on the equality issues of our customers, and work colleagues against the background of big picture equality issues. As well as raising awareness these sessions have provided staff with the opportunity and focus to identify employment and customer equality issues based on their own experience and understanding.

External Stakeholders

- **Customers**

We consult regularly and on an ongoing basis with our customers and residents living in our neighbourhoods via a variety of formal and informal mechanisms. Through service specific and diversity focus groups, via our tenants Customer Forum, attendance at Tenant and Resident Groups, through Postal and Telephone Surveys, Customer events and more focused consultation. For example, on the GCH Community Cohesion Strategy.

- **Gloucester City Council**

Our Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013 is shared and developed in joint consultation with the City and key strategic aims are agreed with the City Council as part of the annual review process and our progress is monitored through the delivery plan and quarterly performance reports

- **Neighbourhood Projects and Partnerships**

Gloucester City Homes recognises the importance of identifying issues relating to equalities are acted upon by both the Neighbourhood Partnerships and Neighbourhood Projects located throughout the City.

The existing eight Neighbourhood Partnerships are all fully constituted and within each constitution equalities issues are addressed. For example, Matson and Robinswood Neighbourhood Partnership state they: -

- Have a clear commitment to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Welcome all people and do not discriminate.
- Seek to ensure that any facilities provided are accessible to all regardless of any disability.
- Will ensure that no person or group is discriminated against on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, cultural belief, nationality, sexuality, age or disability.

Gloucester City Homes (GCH) supports two Neighbourhood Projects in Matson and Coney Hill by providing annual funding based on clear objectives set within their management agreement. The management agreement ensures that both Neighbourhood Projects provide outcomes that satisfy GCH strategic targets and also the Neighbourhood Working Strategy as follows: -

- Has a clear understanding of its local community using census and other information, including the service user profile of Gloucester City Homes to design services to meet their needs.
- Work with key partners including the Gloucester Racist Incidence Group to tackle incidents of a racist nature within our estates irrespective of tenure / ownership.
- Knows, records, analyses and monitors information about the ethnicity, vulnerability and disability of service users and uses it to ensure services are delivered appropriately and to prioritise resources.
- Provides information about services in a comprehensive range of languages and formats appropriate to service units needs.
- Does not discriminate against any person or other organisation on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, nationality, gender, sexuality, age class, appearance, religion, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.

The projects targets are also monitored in healthy living, advice, youth engagement, education and employment, community services and the environment.

- **Strategic Partners**

GCH works closely with a number of external stakeholders and partners such as the [Gloucester Partnership](#), the [Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership](#), Police and Primary Care Trust, to identify equality issues and agree supporting actions. For example, we identify any changing demographic issues within the Gloucester community and work together to establish mechanisms for developing a clearer picture of the impact in terms of future services and the public and voluntary sector services. On a multi -agency basis we agree key actions to support the [Emerging Community](#). Some examples of key agreed outcomes include the provision of Service Fayres, ESOL Training and the addition of Polish to our standard translation provision.

7. We have earmarked specific resources for improving equality practice

Each year, GCH set a number of Equality Priorities and Actions Plans which are then fed into the company's annual [Delivery Plan](#). Our [Project Plans](#) are developed in accordance with PRINCE 2 principles, which incorporate resources and budget provision. In developing new initiatives in terms of equalities, GCH has been successful in attracting external funding and sharing costs with our strategic and contractor partners

8. We are carrying out generic impact assessments

All Strategies, Policies and Procedures have been Equality Impact Assessed. Arrangements are in place for assessments to be undertaken on an on-going basis for any new strategies and policies as part of an embedded process. In addition, GCH has an agreed [EIA Review Timetable](#) for existing impact assessments to be regularly reviewed has been agreed. All managers, Diversity Champions and members of the Customer Proofing Group have received [Impact Assessment Training](#) and impact assessment workshops are regularly held.

9. We are clear about our workforce profile and we have plans in place to ensure equal pay outcomes and improve representation where appropriate.

Gloucester City Homes [Human Resources Strategy](#) is updated on an annual basis and reported to the Board. It contains employee and job applicant profile information together with targets and plans to ensure we are able to be more reflective of our customer profile and the profile of Gloucester as a whole.

Key performance indicator information on the diversity profile of our staff is reviewed monthly by the Executive Management Team, the Tactical and Operational Management Teams and then quarterly by the Board. Targets and actions are agreed and put in place as a result

of this ongoing monitoring process and fed into the [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#) and [Equality Strategy](#). For example the current profile of our customers shows that 32% are disabled. Compare this to our workforce profile of 9% of our employees who identify themselves as disabled under the provisions of the DDA. In response we are currently working in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Housing and local colleges to provide [Housing Management Traineeship for disabled applicants](#). This is a pilot scheme which, as well as providing a training and career development opportunity to the successful applicant, we would want to promote GCH as an Employer of Choice for disabled applicants.

In respect of equal pay, we have in the last 12 months undergone a comprehensive [job evaluation review](#) of every post within the organisation, how they compare to each other in terms of job score points and the current market pay levels. Following consultation with staff and Unison we have undertaken an initial Equality proofing exercise and we are in the process of implementing a [new pay and benefits strategy](#) and undertaking a full Equal pay audit.

Evaluation against the 'achieving' level

Knowing our community – equality mapping

Since our launch in December 2005, Gloucester City Homes has developed a clear understanding of the profile of both our existing customers and the community in which they work, through a variety of mechanisms: -

Customer Diversity profile information – Diversity information on tenants and leaseholders is gathered on an ongoing basis across all 6 equality strands. Initially this was gathered via [Customer Information Questionnaires](#), which were sent out to all tenants and leaseholders and followed up by frontline staff to ensure information was returned. Information is now gathered for new tenants on the sign up of the tenancy agreement. We have increased our profile from 43% of our customers in 2007 to 82% in March 2009. We continue to gather information for existing customers using Diversity Blitz days/events where staff across the organisation contacts customers where information is not held or is incomplete to gather customer information, relevant customer feedback and identify possible actions and service improvements. Additionally we work closely with our Repairs and Decent Homes partners to gather and share relevant customer information.

Accessing community information – GCH uses community profile information to inform our key **strategic aims** held in the [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#). This is accessed from a variety of sources including the County Council's [Maiden Service](#), information from our community partners such as the [Gloucester Partnership](#), [Family Intervention Project](#), [GLOUCESTER WORKS](#) and via joint surveys with key partners as with the [Emerging Community Survey](#)

Checking out our understanding – GCH works closely with our customers to make sure it has understood and correctly interpreted customer profile information and translated it into appropriate actions and improved services. This is achieved via a variety of [Customer Focus Groups](#), [Customer Events](#), [Customer Conference](#), [Customer Surveys](#) and joint working with our [Customer Forum](#) and the Customer Equality Proofing Group

Using the data to plan and develop services - The information gathered on both existing and future customers provides a profile on which to challenge existing services and develop services for the future. For example, the diversity profile of our customer base is used to set challenging employment targets and has led to the introduction of a positive action [Disabled Traineeship](#) and an in house first line [Management Programme](#) for staff from groups which are under represented at management level within the workforce. GCH is seeking to respond to the growing challenges presented by the current economic climate and worklessness, and in recent months unemployment situation , in it's community.

For example, GCH is a key partner of the [Gloucester WORKS Partnership](#), which aims to up skill the Gloucester workforce and provide training and work experience to the long-term unemployed. Alongside this, GCH has begun work on a worklessness project with our partners, which will provide training, work experience and employment opportunities for tenants and residents.

Sharing data - Customer profile information is shared with our Repairs Partner, Morrison and Decent Homes Partner, Lovell to ensure the same approach and standards of customer care are applied, and that equally challenging targets are set. GCH has recently set up a Partner Equality Group to identify, monitor and achieve joint equality targets based on our customer profile and share best practice. We are currently working through an [equality proofing exercise](#) with Morrison using both the Equality standard and [Diversity KLOE](#) as a framework.

Place Shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

Identifying and setting equality priorities – Equality priorities are identified through ongoing review of our customer profile, feedback from our customers and review of best practice. These are shared and agreed with our customers, key stakeholders including the City Council and partners including Morrison and the Gloucester Partnership as appropriate. For example, in January 2009, Gloucester City Homes converted our own Community Cohesion Strategy into a Gloucester Partnership Community Cohesion Strategy. Gloucester City Homes is a key strategic partner and place shaper within the City and our targets and strategic intentions are set within [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#) and supporting strategies including the [Equality Strategy / Scheme](#) and [Community Cohesion Strategy](#). Strategic Objectives are converted into operational delivery and then monitored through our annual [Delivery Plan](#) and monthly [Project Progress Reports](#) to the Company's Services and Operations Committee. One of our key strategic aims is to be Champion **of Diversity**; this sits in our Business plan and acts as a golden thread through all our strategies and policies. As part of our involvement of the Gloucester Partnership (LSP), along with all the thematic working groups we are currently participating in an equalities review:

We pride ourselves on our Community involvement, which in 2009-2010 has resulted in:

- 285 Actively Involved tenants
- 80 Trained Block and Street Representatives
- 35 Trained Mystery Shoppers
- 6 Mystery Shop Exercises
- 14 Focus Groups
- 10 Community Action Days
- 4 Big Tidy Up Events

In addition, GCH allocates annually £5,000 for Community Fund Schemes, which sponsor suitable local community projects. We provide community grants up to a maximum of £500 to each organisation.

The purpose of the scheme is to develop community cohesion by:

- Providing opportunities for people to become actively involved
- Improve quality of life by providing opportunities, health, welfare and local environment or facilities.
- Increase skill and activity, which encourage talent and raise standards

A copy of how we allocated funding to sponsor local community events and projects for 2008-2009 is shown below

Coney Hill Neighbourhood Project – singing group	£140
Family Haven – summer outings	£400
Tuffley, Grange and Podsmead Festival	£250
On-side – summer holiday football activities	£250
TETRA – Youth and residents open day six a-side football	£250
Tredworth Residents Association – Christmas extravaganza	£250
Podsmead Neighbourhood Project – community day	£250
Young/Pregnant Parents – outings	£250
Matson Baptist Church – harvest fun day	£175
Together in Matson – celebration of life	£175
Abbey mead Rovers –waterproof jackets	£200
Barnwood Community Partnership – Netball kit	£500
Gloucester Coyotes – New Uniforms	£500

Corporate/ Strategic Plans – Diversity and Equality crosscut across all of our services provided at GCH. It is part of our embedded processes. Organisational and Equality team priorities are set within a variety of GCH strategies and policies including the [Strategic and Business Plan 2008-2013](#) and supporting strategies including the [Equality Strategy / Scheme](#), [Community Cohesion Strategy](#) and [Financial Inclusion Strategy](#). These are dropped into the annual [Delivery Plan](#) and from there into team and individual plans. Monitoring against progress and achievement of equality targets is included in [staff appraisals](#) and 1-1's. Staff are also involved in setting, monitoring and delivering equality targets for their teams

Monitoring of Equality and Cohesion priorities – Annual equalities training and regular information is provided to ensure Board members have the necessary understanding and information to agree equality targets and challenge progress and outcomes. Performance against BVPI targets is [reviewed quarterly](#) at Board meetings. Milestone information is provided via Members Information Sheets, with a full review on an annual basis via the

updated [Equality Strategy/Scheme](#) and [Community Cohesion Strategy](#).
Key Equality

Objectives sit within the Company's [Business Plan](#) and are agreed by the Board on an annual basis at a [Board and Executive Management Team away day](#). All new strategies, policies and procedures are reviewed by the Board and must be presented with completed Equality Impact Assessments and action plans. These are then updated when strategies etc are reviewed or changed and represented to the Board.

Resources – Outcomes from the Equality Impact Assessment process are reviewed by the service manager, Equality Steering Group and Diversity Project Group and dropped into team plans or picked up a corporate level in the Equality strategy and Business plan, as with the worklessness project. All key targets and actions are included in relevant [Project Plans](#) where resource requirements are identified and reviewed monthly alongside progress.

Equality impact assessments - Over the last three years we have reviewed and honed our processes for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments, to provide a clear focus and take account of impacts across the six equality strands, and community cohesion priorities. Using an external Dialog consultant, we have provided [Impact Assessment Training](#) to all managers, two Board members, our diversity champions and members of the Customer Equality Proofing Group. To provide ongoing support and a shared focus we carry out regular impact assessment workshops, which are now run by our Human Resources Team. The Human Resources Manager has run an overview session with Board members to ensure they have the necessary skills and understanding to critically appraise and challenge Equality Impact Assessments presented to them. Our Equality Impact Assessments, together action plans and guidance information are published on our [website](#).

Overview and scrutiny processes – Equality Impact Assessments are presented to Board members together with new or updated strategies, policies and procedures. The Board have been provided with information and training on the equality proofing process and the **Board Member Diversity Champion** also sits on the Customer Proofing Group which has undergone full impact assessment training and undertakes initial impact assessments as part of the consultation process for all new or updated strategies, policies and procedures. The Board via the Equality Strategy reviews progress against all equality targets annually. Progress against performance indicators is reviewed by the Management Team monthly and by the Board quarterly as part of our Performance Management Framework. An additional suite of Equality performance has also been developed and will be in place from 1st April 2009.

Elected Representatives – GCH has worked hard to ensure that Board members are representative of the Customers they represent, with mixed success. The [current profile](#) of Board members is consistently compared with our tenant profile and that of Gloucester as a whole and we have

developed a [Succession Plan](#) and have been commended by the Electoral Commission for our approach to [Tenant Board Member elections](#). Information on how to become a Tenant or [Independent Board member](#) is provided on our website and included in articles in our quarterly Tenant Times Magazine. Vacancies for tenant or independent Board vacancies are advertised on our website, tenants times, local media and via Neighbourhood Projects and Community Groups. [Training](#) and shadowing opportunities have also been provided to encourage potential applicants.

Community engagement and satisfaction

Customer priorities and service standards are reviewed on an annual basis through a variety of focus groups and customer events. These are also reviewed by Customer Forum and the Board and fed into the Delivery Plan and Strategic and Business plan. All staff are made aware of Customer priorities and these are built into [Service Improvement Plans](#). Customer priorities are set alongside a background of our understanding of wider local and national issues, for example the need to tackle worklessness and providing debt management advice. We are currently working with [GOSW](#) to map the impact of the current downturn on rented housing.

Managers and staff across the organisation work in partnership with a variety of external agencies and voluntary organisations to review access and equality issues and identify appropriate action. For example, through a formal agreement with the Neighbourhood Projects in Coney Hill and Matson, we have agreed specific [Equality Targets](#) and also with the White City Project who has undertaken a [BME survey](#) and consultation process on our behalf. Whilst consultation is carried out as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process in the development of new or updated strategies and policies we recognise that this is an area that needs to be strengthened and extended to the third sector and a wider range of stakeholders.

Responsive services and Customer Care

As previously mentioned above, strategic equality objectives are set as part of the business planning process and sit in the final [Strategic and Business Plan](#) for the organisation. This is then fed into the [Delivery Plan](#) with each service manager taking responsibility for working with their team to agree actions and milestones. These actions and milestones are incorporated into the relevant [Service Improvement Plans](#) with progress reported monthly to the Services and Operations Committee. Team actions are distilled into individual targets, which are monitored through [annual appraisals](#) and 1 to 1's. Alongside this, each team has responsibility for developing; monitoring and implementing a team level [equality action plan](#) from the outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments, customer profile information, customer feedback and issues raised at forum meetings.

These action plans and equality targets generally are agreed and monitored at both the Equality Steering Group (managers) and the Diversity Working Group (Diversity Champions). Progress is also reviewed by the Customer

Equality proofing Group and through quarterly project reviews by the Services and Operations committee and annually by the Board where progress across the organisation is incorporated into the annual diversity report and review of the [Equality Strategy](#).

People and financial resource requirements are identified and monitored through [Project Plans](#) where resource requirements are identified and reviewed monthly alongside progress.

Over the last twelve months, GCH has built on existing processes and has developed a robust approach to the contract tendering process, for example with the recent [Gas Servicing contract](#). As well as equality monitoring all our contractors and employment agencies through the [Contracts Equality Scheme](#) we have worked closely with our repairs partner and Decent Homes partner Lovell to jointly set Equality Targets, ensure compliance with our equality requirements, share equality training and best practice and support a variety of events and activities in support of local community cohesion. For example, the provision of work experience and apprenticeships, [career conventions](#), visits to local schools and taster construction skills opportunities at our [Youth Day](#) and [Customer Event](#) in 2008.

GCH has been working with our repairs partner, Morrison and Decent Homes partner Lovell to review practices and ensure compliance with our equality requirements. Through the [contracts equality scheme](#) an annual equality monitoring review is carried out of the employment agencies on our preferred supplier list and a renewal process is carried out annually which requires re-application and accreditation. We also fund and regularly review the progress of two [neighbourhood projects](#) (Matson and Coney Hill) and the [Welfare Benefits Campaign](#) which provide services on our behalf. We also provide funding to local groups through our [Community funding scheme](#). These groups are required, as part of the assessment criteria, to demonstrate how their event or activity adds value to the community, supports community cohesion and is either accessible to all or addresses the need.

Modern, diverse and reflective workforce

Workforce strategies – In addition to a monthly review of [key performance indicators](#), GCH produces a [Human Resources Strategy](#) on an annual basis which analyses workforce information, compares this with both our Customer and Gloucester profile and identifies actions and targets to ensure:

- We more closely reflect the community we work in
- That all staff has equal access to training and development opportunities.
- That staff from minority groups are not experiencing higher levels of absence, turnover or disciplinary and grievance issues

These strategies and targets are fed into a number of strategic documents and work plans including the [Strategic and Business Plan](#), [Equality](#)

[Strategy](#), [Community Cohesion Strategy](#) and Worklessness project. The internal picture is measured against what is happening within our customer base and Gloucester as a whole. This means we can develop appropriate targets and actions. For example, our [in house ILM programme](#) which launched in January and is geared towards staff from under represented groups to provide management development training and career development support.

In respect of equal pay, we have in the last 12 months undergone a comprehensive [job evaluation review](#) of every post within the organisation, how they compare to each other in terms of job score points and the current market pay levels. Following consultation with staff and Unison we have undertaken an initial Equality Proofing Exercise and we are in the process of implementing a new [pay and rewards strategy](#) and undertaking a full Equal pay audit.

Learning and Development - When we launched our first Equality Scheme in 2007 we developed a challenging Equality Training Plan which delivered a robust package of training and awareness sessions for Board Members, Managers, Diversity Champions and staff as well as members of our tenant Customer Forum. All Board members and staff undertake equality training on an annual basis. We have recently introduced a comprehensive [e - learning package](#) to compliment this and also to provide a stronger focus during the induction process. We have recently undertaken [Respect and Dignity](#) sessions with all our staff to further embed our organisational commitment to equality and diversity, continue to raise awareness and further develop understanding. These workshops have provided the opportunity for staff to both understand and identify equality issues in the workplace and service provision. Members of the Board and the Customer Forum came together in October 2008 to review equality progress and participate in an innovative [Equality training event](#) run by the Garnet Foundation. All managers and staff involved in the EIA process have been trained by a Dialog consultant and EIA workshops are run on an ongoing basis by the Human Resource Manager to provide additional support and focus. We are constantly looking for new and effective ways to embed and understanding and commitment to equality and diversity across the organisation. The last [staff conference](#) in November 2008 was run in part by equality trainers from the Chartered Institute of Housing and provided an opportunity for mixed teams of staff to design and equality proof a home based on a variety of scenarios for a range of diverse customers and family groups. Following a successful pilot in January 2009, we are launching an [Introduction to Islam and the Muslim culture](#) in May 2009 for all staff, Board members and members of the Customer Equality Proofing Group.

The annual review of our workforce profile is published within our [Human Resources strategy](#) together with information on how this relates to our customers and Gloucester as a whole. Key employment objectives and actions are set at this stage. For example to increase the number of staff from under represented groups at management level with in the organisation. Together with our own [customer information](#) the local market data highlights

the issue of worklessness and in response we are working with [GloucesterWORKS](#) to provide training and employment opportunities for our tenants and residents who have been out of work for some time and in the current climate who have been made unemployed more recently.

We have identified a range of actions (including [management training](#), [targeted advertising](#) and [positive action traineeships](#)) to ensure our staff profile more closely reflects our customer and the wider Gloucester profile, using both workforce monitoring information of existing employees and applicants, set against the information we have of our customers and Gloucester as a whole.

Equality targets and appraisals – key targets from teams plans are dropped into individual work plans and monitored through 1-1's and [annual appraisals](#). A new [competency framework](#) was launched in September 2008, which is broken into 8 key organisational priorities, and themes, one of which are Fostering Respect and Dignity and lays out clear expectations from Board members to frontline staff. This is currently being dropped into job descriptions and staff has been assessed against it for the first time through their recent staff appraisals.

Equality Impact Assessments - Over the last three years we have reviewed and honed our processes for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments, to provide a clear focus and take account of impacts across the six equality strands, and community cohesion priorities. Using an external Dialog consultant, we have provided [Impact Assessment Training](#) to all managers, two Board members, our diversity champions and members of the Customer Equality Proofing Group. To provide ongoing support and a shared focus we carry out regular impact assessment workshops, which are now run by our Human Resources Team. The Human Resources Manager has run an overview session with Board members to ensure they have the necessary skills and understanding to critically appraise and challenge Equality Impact Assessments presented to them. Our Equality Impact Assessments, together action plans and guidance information are published on our [website](#). All employment procedures have been impact assessed and a programme of regular review is in place.

Section 4: Team Assessments

Customer Services

Key Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example, complaints • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award
Areas for further development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend use of Customer Diversity data to plan service improvement and set more challenging targets

Neighbourhood Services

Key Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example evictions, nosps • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award
Areas for further development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend use of Customer Diversity data to plan service improvement and set more challenging targets

Resident involvement

Key Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of engaged customers • High profile and effective partnership working with other support agencies • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example levels of engagement • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award • High number of successful customer events • Wide selection of training provision for customers • Effective in assisting in the setting up and supporting of a number of new tenants and residents groups
Areas for further development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend use of Customer Diversity data to plan service improvement and set more challenging targets • Implementation of key outcomes, for example sustainable Youth forum

Income Management Services

<p>Key Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example, arrears • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award • Involvement in Gloucester WORKS and worklessness project, providing support and signposting for tenants wanting to return to work.
<p>Areas for further development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend use of Customer Diversity data to plan service improvement and set more challenging targets

Anti Social Behaviour Team

<p>Key Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example complaints • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award • Provision of 24 Hour respect line • Positive promotion of service to effected group, for example hate crime
<p>Areas for further development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend use of Customer Diversity data to plan service improvement and set more challenging targets • Develop experience of team in dealing with Hate Crime and Domestic Violence.

Supported People

<p>Key Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of customer diversity profile • Information being used to analyse services by diversity group, for example complaints • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award • Gold standard for services • Telling Tales Project
<p>Areas for further development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete works to all Community Schemes in line with DDA • Extend range of customer focused training

Support Services

Key Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of high quality accurate Customer profile data • Provision of a range of innovative approaches to Diversity Training • Wide range of communication methods in place and being developed • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award
Areas for further development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend range of communication methods to include DigiTV, podcasts, video downloads etc

EMT and Governance

Key Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed and committed Board with a Board Champion sitting on the Customer Proofing Group • Annual training for Board members • Commitment to equality and Diversity is a key strategy for the organisation and informs the business plan. • Raft of robust strategies, policies and procedures in place to support equality aims and targets • Members of EMT and Board, regularly attend customer forum, focus groups and customer events to ensure regular dialogue with and understanding of our customers • EIA's are presented to Board members with new policies, strategies, proposals as a matter of course • Succession plan and innovative practices have been put in place to improve Board diversity profile • Attainment of Customer Excellence Award
Areas for further development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement further innovations such as podcasts, to encourage customers to attend Board meetings and improve long-term representation on the Board.

Section 5: Conclusions

Gloucester City Homes has worked hard over the three years, since it's launch to embed Equality and Diversity within the organisation and to provide access to high quality services to all our customers. We have been praised for our approach to our customers and staff through a range of awards and accreditations including, the Audit Commission report in 2007, the liP award in 2006 and most recently the Customer Excellence award. We believe that the evidence included in this self- assessment shows that we are operating at the achieving level of the new Equality Standard and we look forward to meeting the audit team at the end of April 2009.