

## Eden Housing Association receives positive report from Watchdog

Eden Housing Association 'has more strengths than weaknesses' according to a report released today by the independent Audit Commission.

Audit Commission inspectors reached this conclusion following a short-notice inspection of how the Penrith-based housing association delivers day-to-day repairs and managed empty properties. The inspectors found it is easy for customers to access services in a range of convenient ways and queries are dealt with promptly by knowledgeable staff. However, Eden Housing Association is yet to assess whether its activities are accessible for all sections of the community and it is taking too long to let empty properties.

**Domini Gunn, Audit Commission Lead Housing Inspector, said:** 'Eden Housing Association is one of the best performing housing associations nationally for how satisfied tenants are with the repairs service and completing repairs in time. It now needs to assess whether services are inclusive for all local people, and the viability of delivering more flexible repairs appointments for tenants.'

Strengths include:

- performance for responsive repairs is strong with most repairs completed on time
- service standards agreed with tenants are widely publicised and regularly reviewed
- Eden Housing Association understands its tenants and is delivering services around their needs
- there are effective arrangements to ensure protection of children and vulnerable adults
- gas servicing regulations are being met
- tenants receive useful advice to assist them to move into their new home and meet tenancy conditions

Paul Davies, Chief Executive of Eden Housing Association said "The Association is pleased with the outcome of the Short Notice Inspection of these key areas of our service. As well as providing an external validation of work which we are delivering effectively, with full credit to our staff, the recommendations will be of great value in shaping continuous improvement in these services, to which we are committed as an organisation".

There were a few areas of weakness which include:

- costs for repairs and empty property maintenance are high, but there has been little work to understand where efficiencies need to be made
- appointments for responsive repairs are limited, being restricted to morning or afternoon time slots within office hours
- tenants are not able to book appointments at the time of reporting repairs
- repairs to make empty properties ready to let are taking too long

The Association is already working on the areas identified and is pleased to be recognised as one of the best performing housing associations nationally for how satisfied tenants are with the repairs service and completing repairs in time. This is particularly pleasing to EHA who place great emphasis on tenant satisfaction. Anyone wanting to find out more can contact Paul Davies at Eden Housing Association on 01768 861 400 or email [paul.davies@edenha.org.uk](mailto:paul.davies@edenha.org.uk)



Picture: Paul Davies, Chief Executive of Eden Housing Association. Editor notes overleaf.

## Notes to editors

1. Eden Housing Association (EHG) is based in Penrith, a market town at the centre of the Eden district which is spread across North East Lakeland, the Eden Valley and North Pennines. The district covers an area of 2,156 square kilometres making it the fourth largest council district whilst it has the lowest population density of any English district.
  2. EHA was set up in 1997 to provide affordable homes for rent in Cumbria, following a large voluntary stock transfer from the local authority. Since then it has grown to provide accommodation in the Allerdale, Carlisle and Eden districts. It currently manages 1,580 homes for rent and has developed over 350 units for sale or rent.
  3. The Audit Commission introduced short-notice inspections for housing associations to give inspectors a clearer and more realistic view of the services that tenants receive.
  4. Associations are given just five days notice of the inspection before their services are rated on a four point scale - from 'strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses' down to 'weaknesses outweigh strengths'.
  5. Within two months of the publication of this report, EHA will provide the Audit Commission with a plan showing how it will implement the report's recommendations. The Commission will then assess and publish EHA's prospects for improvement.
  6. The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.
  7. Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.
  8. As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.
  9. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the affordable housing regulator in England and works with the Audit Commission on the inspection of housing associations. The TSA commissions the Audit Commission to carry out inspections and the results are used by the TSA in its overall assessment of housing association performance.
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