

Press release

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Two stars and 'excellent prospects' secures £165m for Nottingham's council homes

The Audit Commission confirmed today that Nottingham City Homes achieved a 'two star' rating in its recent November inspection, while showing 'excellent prospects for improvement'.

The report, released today, recognises a transformed company, where 'strengths significantly outweigh the weaknesses'. The report reveals that: "At the same time as delivering major organisational change, NCH has also delivered customer facing improvements across all services we inspected."

The result also releases £165m of Government money for the 'Secure Warm Modern' programme to improve thousands of council homes by 2013. Work has already begun to install new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and insulation.

Audit Commission inspectors visited Nottingham for two weeks in November 2008. They assessed every service, and interviewed speaking to employees, tenants, councillors and our partners.

The inspectors concluded that: "Substantial changes and improvements have been made in organisational governance, structure and culture."

Successes include gas servicing, which is 'well managed' and has a 'strong' performance in gas safety checks, and work to combat anti-social behaviour. The report said: "There is a strong focus on preventing ASB, with an effective approach supported by strong partnership working and effective use of a range of measures."

Chief Executive of Nottingham City Homes, Chris Langstaff, said: "This does not just represent our success in transforming the company – this means we are now able to get on with the job of making every council home a decent home.

"Our tenants have had to be very patient while we sorted out how the company operates. I want to thank all those tenants who worked with us to improve services.

"I am proud that the inspectors have recognised employees' strong and genuine commitment to customer care. Without their enthusiasm and dedication, we would not have been able to make the significant improvements to our services.

"The Audit Commission say we have 'excellent prospects for improvement' – it's now time to deliver on that promise and give all our tenants the high quality services they deserve."

Leader of Nottingham City Council, Councillor Jon Collins, paid tribute to the hard work and outstanding achievements of Nottingham City Homes and its workforce. He said: "People will see a big difference over the next three or four years.

"The housing service in Nottingham has made the kind of improvements necessary to gain two stars and attract the £165 million funding for the Decent Homes work to the City's Council housing. It has also been recognised as having

what it takes to go on making further improvements to housing services for city residents.

"The plans in place to improve council housing will also give our estates a new look. They will have a big impact on the appearance of the city and on people's lives. The work will provide jobs for Nottingham people and there are opportunities for people to learn new skills as part of the Decent Homes workforce through Nottingham City Homes' One in a Million training scheme.

"All in all, it is a great example of what can be achieved with imagination and good co-operation between our two organisations."

Key observations from the Audit Commission report:

- NCH has an established and experienced executive management team. The team, which has been assembled since February 2007, brings a range of skills and expertise along with experience of delivering high quality services
- Scrutiny of the allocations process is comprehensive and effective. Lettings of properties are closely and systematically monitored with a clear audit trail to demonstrate they have been in accordance with the agreed policy
- Customers are offered choice through a well publicised Homelink choice-based lettings system and this, along with a clear allocations policy, is providing a fair and transparent system for allocating homes
- There is a strong focus on supporting vulnerable customers to use Homelink (the choice-based lettings service)
- Staff at all levels show customer focus, commitment and enthusiasm. Staff we met indicated that they felt valued, supported, well informed, listened to and encouraged to make suggestions for improvement
- Customers play an important role in monitoring the quality of services. The tenant inspection scheme is also placing customers at the heart of

performance monitoring through estate inspections and mystery shopping.
Feedback is used well to improve and shape services.

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Notes to editors:

- Statistics on the NCH Secure Warm Modern (decent homes) programme is available on request.
- Case studies are also available on request
- Interviews will be available with Chris Langstaff and Cllr Jon Collins on Wednesday 28 January from 1pm to 3pm. Please contact us below to book a slot
- Nottingham City Homes was created on 1st April 2005 as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage Nottingham City Council's rented and leasehold homes. We are now working hard towards bringing Nottingham's council houses up to the Government's Decent Homes standard by 2013.

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