



inspection report

Cotman Housing Association

Registered number: L0284

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FINAL VERSION

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SUMMARY

OUR KEY FINDINGS

The Housing Corporation and the inspection

The Housing Corporation is a statutory body which regulates housing associations – or registered social landlords (RSLs) as they are legally known. We ensure that they provide decent homes and services for tenants. In June 2002 we carried out an inspection of Cotman Housing Association. Just as Ofsted looks at the quality of education in schools, our team looked at the service that Cotman Housing Association gives to its tenants and other customers. We also looked at whether it was trying to improve the service of the future.

Our inspectors spoke to tenants and staff at Cotman Housing Association and members of the Association's Board of Management. We talked to the local authorities and other organisations that work closely with the Association. We visited homes that it owns and manages. We looked in particular at six aspects of the service:

- Maintaining homes in good condition
- Involving tenants in the activities of the Association
- Letting homes
- How customers receive services, including how customer complaints are managed
- Dealing with nuisance and anti-social behaviour
- How the Association ensures that its services are sensitive to the needs of the communities it serves including black and minority ethnic communities (BME)

All tenants of Cotman Housing Association were informed of our inspection by the Association.

For simplicity we use the word 'tenants' as a generic term for all those who live in the Association's homes, including secure and assured tenants, leaseholders and shared owners.

A full explanation of inspection is in "The Way Forward: Inspection our Approach" available from the Housing Corporation or on our website www.housingcorp.gov.uk.

What is Cotman Housing Association?

Role and History

- Cotman Housing Association was formed in 1970 and was registered by the Housing Corporation in 1975. It is a non-profit-making housing association registered as an Industrial and Provident Society with the Registrar of Friendly Societies and having charitable status.
- The Association manages approximately 1,200 properties in Norwich, Norfolk and north Suffolk areas. The Association moved to its current purpose built offices located in the centre of Norwich at the end of 2000.

Size and location of stock

- At 1 April, 2002 the stock level was 1,201 properties. Of these:
 - 1,024 were rented general needs housing units
 - 72 were rented sheltered housing units
 - 43 were shared ownership units
 - 62 were leasehold scheme for the elderly units.

In addition Cotman Housing Association manages 15 supported housing units for people with mental health problems.

By property type for rented stock this equated to:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| • Bedsits/studio flats | 4 |
| • 1 bedroom – general needs | 260 |
| • 2 bedroom – general needs | 574 |
| • 3 bedroom – general needs | 162 |
| • 4 bedroom and over – general needs | 24 |
| • 1 bedroom – sheltered accommodation | 68 |
| • 2 bedroom – sheltered accommodation | 4 |

The rented stock is located in the following areas:

• Breckland District Council	90
• Broadland District Council	38
• Great Yarmouth Borough Council	10
• Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	22
• North Norfolk District Council	54
• Norwich City Council	465
• South Norfolk District Council	310
• Waveney District Council	107

During 2001 Cotman Housing Association had 160 relets. In addition, there were 76 new properties brought into management for rent.

Average assured rents for the stock in 2001/02 were as follows:

	£
• Bedsit/studio flats	43.98
• 1 bedroom – general needs	48.52
• 2 bedroom – general needs	54.21
• 3 bedroom – general needs	63.91
• 4 bedroom and over - general needs	71.51
• Average rent	52.44

Profile of tenants

- Cotman Housing Association has some statistics on the age and base information on current tenants from the National Housing Federation STATUS (standardised tenant survey), and information on new tenants is broken down by race, gender and age. During 2000/01, 1.2% of new tenants were from BME communities, which compares to a local BME population of less than 1% for the areas in which Cotman Housing Association operates.

Strategy and Priorities

- Cotman Housing Association's mission statement is 'to maximise the housing options available to people in housing need, to provide our residents with the highest standard of appropriate, high quality, well designed and maintained affordable homes, and to ensure they are given such specialised housing care and support as required'.
- The more detailed aims of the Association are to:
 - help address housing need in Norfolk and Suffolk, by developing housing schemes in the areas where demand is recognised as being the greatest
 - assist local authorities by offering tenant nomination arrangements
 - encourage resident participation in management arrangements
 - help tenants of rented accommodation to move to other areas by facilitating transfers and exchanges, and through participation in mobility schemes
 - offer rented accommodation to those applicants who are in greatest housing need, based on consideration of their present housing conditions, the urgency of their housing need and the alternative solutions available to them
 - to co-operate with other housing orientated agencies and providers of social housing to ensure that those most vulnerable are provided with appropriate housing and support as a matter of priority.
- Cotman Housing Association is part of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance made up of three other housing associations in the East Anglia area. Apart from entering into a development partnering arrangement, the Alliance has established a best value benchmarking club. Staff from each association are currently working on a programme of best value reviews overseen by the four chief executives. It is intended to review all the major service areas by the end of 2004.

Structure and organisation

- The Association is functionally divided into four divisions:
 - Housing Services incorporating general needs, sheltered accommodation, maintenance, shared ownership and customer services
 - Development
 - Finance including computer services
 - Office Services incorporating administration and reception.
- There are 32.34 full time equivalent staff employed by Cotman Housing Association.
- Housing services are provided by two area teams based at Norwich, with estate based staff providing caretaking, cleaning and ground maintenance functions. In addition, Cotman Housing Association employs specialist warden and care staff at its two sheltered schemes in the Norwich area.
- The Association does not have a direct labour organisation, with maintenance of properties being undertaken by a range of contractors.

What we found

In our inspection we asked two key questions:

How good is the service delivered to residents?

Overall assessment

Satisfactory - Basis of assessment

- Services are generally informed and forward looking through using various mechanisms, such as, the Association's membership of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance and its on-going stock condition survey.
- Cotman Housing Association maintains its properties effectively through a planned maintenance programme based on the on-going stock condition survey. Tenants believe that the Association maintains the structure of its properties and were satisfied with the responsive repairs service.
- The Association reviews its performance against its objectives through the regular monitoring of performance which is reported to the Board of Management and its Committees. The Association also measures its performance with tenants through surveys, such as, the large scale STATUS survey, conducted by the National Housing Federation in 2001.
- Services and staff are generally accessible.
- Tenants generally believed staff were helpful, responsive and informative. During the inspection tenants said that the Association generally treated them with respect.
- Tenants perceived the rent paid for the property to be value for money.
- Customer views are gained through a variety of means and there is a tenant participation structure in place.
- Cotman Housing Association has satisfactory Equal Opportunity and Black and Minority Ethnic policies, in the context of their operation, which recognise the needs of minority communities, such as BME groups.
- There is limited written information for customers about the key services.

- Some tenants and their representatives perceived that the Association did not make optimum use of the tenant participation mechanisms to allow their views to shape the service.
- There were some concerns from tenants over services provided through service charges, such as ground maintenance, not being satisfactory. This led to tenants feeling that these services were not value for money.
- There was a general lack of awareness of equality and diversity issues amongst managers and staff at the Association.
- Some tenants and their representatives perceived that Cotman Housing Association did not always take effective enough action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Is the association working towards continuous improvement?

Overall assessment

Satisfactory – Basis of Assessment.

- Through membership of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance there is a formal internal mechanism for driving continuous improvement. Cotman Housing Association has a programme of best value reviews covering all services over the next four years. The only review completed so far is for rent arrears collection, and there is evidence of ambitious targets being set independently by Cotman Housing Association for this function.
- There is some evidence of tenant consultation and feedback from customers being used to shape short term initiatives.
- Tenants' representatives believed that they did not shape the longer term strategic policy formulation including the development programme.
- There is no evidence of staff being consulted over service reviews, and staff generally did not seem to be aware of the best value process. Although there is to be an external scrutiny on future best value reviews, there are no plans to include other stakeholders, such as partners and local authorities.
- There is evidence of ambitious targets being set for rent arrears collection, but others are based on previous Housing Corporation targets.

What works well in Cotman Housing Association?

Maintaining Homes In Good Condition

- Tenants were generally satisfied with the responsiveness of the repairs service and the standard of work by contractors. This endorses the results from the STATUS survey which found above average satisfaction levels with the repairs and maintenance service.
- The quick turn around of void properties by maintenance contractors contributes to the average void period of just over one week.
- Local contractors are employed giving the advantage of local knowledge.
- There is close monitoring of the responsive repair budgets by the Property Surveyor, leading to a value for money service for tenants.

Involvement of Tenants in the Activities of the Association

- There is a tenant participation structure that could provide the opportunity for tenants to shape the service through the tenants' associations, the Tenant Advisory Committee and the three tenant Board of Management members.
- Cotman Housing Association has a model constitution for tenant associations to adapt to their particular circumstances.
- Tenant Board of Management members have received training which allows them to participate in the governance of the Association.
- There are some examples of where customer feedback has led to changes to the service. For example, the installation of security cameras and door entry systems on certain estates.
- The survey of tenants by the National Housing Federation in 2001 is a good postal survey provides thorough analysis and data including comparison with 11 other social housing providers in the region.
The Association is planning to devise an improvement plan to address issues raised in the survey results published in April 2002.

Letting Homes

- Cotman Housing Association encourages sustainability by matching applicants to particular areas and having regular meetings with local authorities to identify nomination issues. The Association also positively facilitates internal transfers and undertakes surveys to obtain tenant views about improving the service. New tenants under 18 years of age are given assured shorthold tenancies until they become 18, at which time the tenancy becomes assured.
- Sign-ups are done at the new property to allow an accompanied viewing and to check for any outstanding repairs.
- A survey of new tenants in 2001, showed that 97% of new tenants were satisfied with the lettings process.
- Local authority and other partners were satisfied with the Association in terms of the nominations process and its commitment to partnership arrangements.
- Cotman Housing Association has a good average relet time of 2.5 weeks. The average for 2000/01 was 3.5 weeks. This is achieved by Housing Officers undertaking inspections of properties during the four week notice period. Repairs are identified and, where possible, carried out with the existing tenant still in the property. Pre-let offers are made to potential tenants after referrals and nominations from local authorities within a five day target time. Potential tenants are shown around the property by the existing tenant or the Housing Officer. Once the property is accepted by a new tenant, a tenancy commencement date is arranged.

How Customers Receive Services Including How Complaints Are Managed

- Tenants and their representatives interviewed were very satisfied with the helpfulness of the Association's staff in providing services.
- Estate Superintendents and Caretakers provide a key link between the dispersed estates and the housing office. They deal with routine estate management issues, take repair requests and inform the office of breaches of tenancy conditions. Tenants considered them to be contactable and responsive.
- The purpose built office has disabled access and toilet facilities and rooms for private interviews.
- Tenants receive information about Cotman Housing Association through the annual report, twice yearly newsletter and memorandums about specific issues on their estates.

Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour

- The Association is part of an anti-social behaviour working group with a local authority, Police, Probation Service and Social Services Department. The group has developed a protocol on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, organised training and promoted closer working relationships with front line staff as well as managers.
- There are some examples of door entry systems and security cameras being installed, leading to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and an increase in tenant satisfaction.

How the Association Ensures that its Services are Sensitive to the Needs of the Communities it Serves Including Black and Minority Ethnic Communities.

- Intran provides a translation service for tenants and potential tenants who do not speak or write English. It also provides a service for people with hearing problems.
- Cotman Housing Association has a budget, for 2002/03, of £28,000 for disabled adaptations.
- The purpose built office has disabled access and a disabled toilet in reception.

What could be improved in Cotman Housing Association?

Maintaining Homes In Good Condition

- Currently the Association does not have a written repairs policy.
- Tenants did not feel that they were consulted over the planned maintenance programme.
- Tenants perceived the standard of communal area services to be inconsistent, particularly grounds maintenance. Tenants also felt that Cotman Housing Association failed to keep them informed over what was being done to rectify problems with these services.

Involvement of Tenants in the Activities of the Association

- Some tenants and their representatives felt that although there was a tenant participation structure in place, the Association did not use it to an optimum to gain tenant views. For example, tenants felt they were informed rather than consulted over the outcomes of the rent arrears collection best value review. Tenant representatives also wished to be part of future best value review working groups. In addition they believed that they were not fully involved in the longer term planning for the Association including the development programme.
- Tenant representatives on the Tenants Advisory Committee felt that they had not received adequate training in order to play a meaningful part in the Association's operations. The inspection team recognises that the training need has already been identified and is being addressed.
- There were no methods of obtaining customer feedback, in order to review services, from tenants whose properties have received planned maintenance (except for cyclical decoration) nor from tenants terminating their tenancies.

Letting Homes

- New tenants felt that the practice by some local authorities of making more than one applicant aware of vacant properties, leads to confusion and unrealistically raised expectations for applicants.

How Customers Receive Services Including How Complaints Are Managed

- There are no leaflets on the key services amongst those displayed in the office reception area.
- Compensation claims and customer complaints are logged separately, and there is no evidence of these being strategically reviewed to see where improvements can be made to services.

Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour

- The Association has a procedure for dealing with nuisance, but does not have a specific anti-social behaviour policy leading to the potential for an inconsistent approach and action taken.
- There is no overall monitoring record of cases in order to monitor progress and to examine trends.
- Tenants and their representatives perceived that Cotman Housing Association did not always take effective action against perpetrators.

How the Association Ensures that its Services are Sensitive to the Needs of the Communities it Serves Including Black and Minority Ethnic Communities.

- The tenants' handbook and other information does not promote that it is available in languages other than English.
- Staff at Cotman Housing Association have not received any equal opportunities and diversity training in the last two years.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations that we have made to the Board of Management at Cotman Housing Association following our inspection are set out below. These are broadly in order of significance.

- In conjunction with tenants' representatives, develop further a strategy to involve tenants more in the operation of the Association, including more effective involvement in best value service reviews.
- Improve standards of communal area services, particularly grounds maintenance and cleaning, and keep tenants informed of actions, when there are problems with the services.
- Develop and produce training programmes for Tenants' Advisory Committee members.
- In conjunction with tenants' representatives, develop a strategy to deal more effectively with nuisance and anti-social behaviour (for example, make use of crime and disorder partnerships, within the areas that they operate) and communicate the Association's work in this respect more effectively.
- Implement a regular programme of equal opportunities and diversity training for staff at the Association, to raise awareness.
- Develop a written anti-social behaviour policy, and train staff to ensure a consistent implementation through procedures.
- Produce and implement a written repairs policy.
- Develop a strategy to involve tenants in the production and prioritisation of the planned maintenance programme.
- Consult tenants whose properties have received planned maintenance and those terminating their tenancy to obtain customer feedback. Review services as a result of the findings.
- Establish a recording and monitoring system for all anti-social behaviour and harassment cases and undertake reviews to identify trends. Anti-social behaviour case details should be filed under the perpetrator's name.
- Log customer complaints and compensation cases together, and strategically review the cases to determine where improvements to the service can be made.

- Provide a statement in all the key documents for tenants and potential tenants that the information is available in other languages on request.
- Produce leaflets on the key service areas and display them in the office reception area.
- Work with local authorities to ensure applicants are fully aware of the nomination and selection procedure, and thus avoid confusion and raised expectations when they are being considered for vacant properties.

We keep in regular contact with all the large housing associations that we regulate. We have asked Cotman Housing Association to produce an action plan to show how it intends to respond to these recommendations, and we will monitor the Association's progress in working to deal with these issues.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION RESPONSE

Cotman Housing Association Response to Inspection Report

The Board would like to thank those involved in the inspection process, particularly the tenants and staff who took the time to meet the Inspection team during the visit, the staff who co-ordinated the Inspection programme, and the Inspection Team themselves.

The Report was presented to the Board of Management on 4th September, and an Action Plan for implementation of the recommendations will be finalised by December 2002.

We are pleased with the positive findings of the report, and satisfied that where recommendations for improvement are made, they relate to issues of which the Association was already aware and had, in the main, already recognised the need to address.

In particular, we are pleased that the Inspection found the Association's existing tenant participation structure to be good, and we welcome this opportunity to work with our tenant representatives to develop further our strategy for involving them more in the operation of the Association.

The Association acknowledges that tenants and staff were not adequately involved in its first best value service review. Steps to address this issue had commenced prior to the Inspection visit, including the formation of working parties from the Tenants' Advisory Committee to consider and develop the Association's Performance Plans. We will work with these working parties to develop their role further.

The Association accepts that it does not have a written repairs policy, and steps are already being taken to remedy that omission. We also intend to work with the Tenants' Advisory Committee to prioritise the planned maintenance programme. We are pleased with the positive finding of the Inspection in respect of customer satisfaction with day-to-day repairs.

Prior to the Inspection plans to gain feedback through an exit questionnaire were in place and the use of an exit questionnaire has been implemented from 1st August. A method was in place to seek feedback on planned maintenance work currently in progress, on completion of those contracts.

The Association accepts that there have been problems with grounds maintenance, due in part to the extended sick leave of three of its estate staff. We acknowledge that this has led to a decline in service provided, but we are confident will be remedied by the additional staffing resources now being employed.

The Association identified the issues raised in the STATUS report with perceptions of high levels of problems with other crimes, neighbour nuisance and drugs, and, prior to the inspection, had asked the NHF to provide more detailed analysis in order that we can work with tenants and local agencies to develop appropriate strategies to address these issues.

The Association welcomed the Inspection as an opportunity of independent review of the service it provides, and found the process to be useful and constructive.

The Board of Management would like to express its thanks to the Inspection Team for working so positively with the staff of the Association in organising the Inspection Visit, and for allowing the Association's Officers the opportunity to comment on the draft document before finalisation.

1. The Inspection: terms of reference and coverage

1.1 The inspection of Cotman Housing Association took place in June 2002 as part of the Housing Corporation's inspection programme launched in April 2002.

1.2 Our inspection concentrates upon the Association's service delivery, assessing performance against the Regulatory Code. It aims to answer the following questions:

- **How good is the service delivered to tenants?**
- **Is the Association working towards continuous improvement?**

1.3 We tailored the inspection to take account of Cotman Housing Association's role and the local context in which it operates. The inspection team looked primarily at the main housing services, this and the methodology used to gather evidence to support our judgments is detailed in Appendix 1.

1.4 We thank the tenants, staff and Board of Management at Cotman Housing Association for their co-operation and openness during the inspection which ensured that the inspection ran smoothly. We hope the report adds value to the Association's future operations.

2. A profile of Cotman Housing Association.

2.1 Role and History

- Cotman Housing Association was formed in 1970 and was registered by the Housing Corporation in 1975. It is a non-profit-making housing association registered as an Industrial and Provident Society with the Registrar of Friendly Societies and having charitable status.
- The Association manages approximately 1,200 properties in Norwich, Norfolk and north Suffolk areas. The Association moved to its current purpose built offices located in the centre of Norwich at the end of 2000.

2.2 Context and Performance. Key statistics and performance indicators.

Performance Indicator	This RSL	Field Average	Field Top Quartile	National Average	National Top Quartile
Average Wkly 2Bed Rent (£)	52.71	54.06	52.04	57.13	52.11
Average Wkly Rent (£)	52.45	54.8	51.17	58.26	52.95
Annual Rent Increase %	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.3	1.5
Average Wkly Mgmt Costs Per Dwell (£)	12.9	10.91	9.09	10.31	8.38
Average Wkly Repairs Cost Per Dwell (£)	10.88	12.7	7.52	13.49	8.57
Vacant Available Stock %	0.8	1.3	0.3	1.5	0.4
Vacant Unavailable Stock %	0.3	0.8	0.1	1.5	0.2
Average Relet Times Wks	3.5	4.5	2.3	5.5	3.3
Relets of True Voids %	11.3	9.4	5.9	7.4	4.3
Lettings to BME Households %	1.2	13.2	n/ap	12.2	n/ap
Average SAP Rating %	n/av	57.8	61.5	58.2	65
Average Annual Change in SAP Rating %	n/av	1.8	1	2.1	2
Rent Collected %	89.8	94.3	96.6	94.6	96.7
Rent Arrears %	9.5	5.7	3.3	5.8	3.4
Arrears Due to HB %	3.3	1.8	0.6	1.7	0.6
Rent Written Off %	2.3	1.4	0.6	1.2	0.3
Rent Lost Through Voids %	1.1	1.8	0.9	2.3	0.9
Emergency Repairs %	100	95.9	99	95.4	99
Urgent Repairs %	93	92.6	96	91.8	96
Routine Repairs %	96	93.7	97	92.8	97
Repairs Appts Kept %	n/ap	96.1	99.4	93	99.4
Tenants Satisfied With Overall Service %	n/ap	79.2	87.5	79.8	87
Tenants Satisfied With Opps For Participation %	n/ap	59.7	75	62.1	72.8

This shows that Cotman Housing Association is above the national average performance in terms of average weekly repairs cost per dwelling, vacant available stock, average relet time and repairs completed within target time. The Association is below the national average performance in terms of average weekly management costs per dwelling and percentage of rent collected.

2.3 Size and location of stock

- At 1 April, 2002 the stock level was 1,201 properties. Of these:
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2.6 Structure and organisation

- The Association is functionally divided into four divisions:
 - Housing Services incorporating general needs, sheltered accommodation, maintenance, shared ownership and customer services
 - Development
 - Finance including computer services
 - Office Services incorporating administration and reception.
- There are 32.34 full time equivalent staff employed by Cotman Housing Association.
- Housing services are provided by two area teams based at Norwich, with estate based staff providing caretaking, cleaning and ground maintenance functions. In addition, Cotman Housing Association employs specialist warden and care staff at its two sheltered schemes in the Norwich area.
- The Association does not have a direct labour organisation, with maintenance of properties being undertaken by a range of contractors on a patch basis.

3. How good is the service?

3.1 Are the services easily accessible?

- Cotman Housing Association has one office located near the centre of Norwich. However, due to the dispersed nature of the stock many tenants interviewed said that they contacted the Association by phone. When they did contact the Association in this way, they were able to access the service quickly, and were satisfied that this met their needs. In addition there are some estate based staff who provide a link between tenants and the Association.
- During the inspection, tenants said that staff were generally able to give good advice and assistance.
- In addition to day to day contact with staff, tenants received information about Cotman Housing Association's activities from the annual report and newsletters, in addition to day to day contact with staff. However, during the inspection there was little evidence of information being available to tenants for the key services apart from through the tenants' handbook.
- The Association has a formal Customer Complaints Procedure. However, there was no evidence of customer complaints being strategically reviewed for trends and to identify where improvements could be made to services.

3.2 Is the Association responsive and informative?

- Tenants generally believed staff were helpful, responsive and informative. There were examples, however, of where tenants perceived that the Association had failed to respond adequately to issues of anti-social behaviour and poor standards of grounds maintenance.
- Cotman Housing Association has aims and objectives with performance indicators to monitor whether the objectives are being met. Performance information is regularly reported to the Board of Management and its Committees.

3.3 Are the services provided value for money?

- Cotman Housing Association's current average rent is £52.44, compared to the central field average of £54.80 for the previous year.
- In the STATUS survey conducted in 2001, 73% of tenants were satisfied that the rent for their property represented good value for money. However, compared to the other 11 social housing providers in the survey this was the second lowest satisfaction level in the group, the average being 79%.
- A number of tenants were dissatisfied over value for money for their service charges. This was mainly due to grounds maintenance either not being provided or not to a suitable standard.

3.4 Are services revised in response to customer feedback?

- Customer views are gained through a variety of ways. For example, there are seven tenant and resident associations that meet on average every six weeks. In addition, there is a Tenants' Advisory Committee which reports to the Board of Management and whose role is to give tenants a greater insight and say in the way their homes are managed. A tenant from each of the seven groups is nominated to the Tenant Advisory Committee. In addition up to eight members are elected by tenants' ballot. The Committee, founded in 1994, nominates two members to the Housing Management Committee, three members to the Board of Management and one to the Development Committee.
- Tenants are also consulted through surveys, consultation days and customer satisfaction slips on the confirmation of repair orders.
- In 2001 a full scale postal survey to gain tenants views was undertaken, on behalf of Cotman Housing Association, by the National Housing Federation using the STATUS questionnaire. The survey also compares the Association's results with those from 11 other social housing providers in the region. The Association are about to develop an action plan to resolve the issues identified in the survey.
- Some tenants and their representatives felt that although there was a tenant participation structure in place, the Association did not use it to an optimum to gain tenants' views. For example, tenants felt they were informed rather than consulted over the outcomes of the rent arrears collection best value review. Tenant representatives also wished to be part of future best value review working groups. In addition they believed that they were not fully involved in the longer term planning for the Association including the development programme.

3.5 Are services inclusive and non-discriminatory?

- Cotman Housing Association has an Equal Opportunities Policy that explains the Association's position in terms of housing, services and employment. This is detailed in the tenants' handbook. The Association also has a Black and Minority Ethnic Policy which was approved by the Board of Management in June 2001. This Policy endorses the overall Equal Opportunities Policy and recognises that the Association operates in areas which have a very low BME population where additional support may be needed for people from BME backgrounds.
- Monitoring takes place on lettings, employment applications and recruitment to identify to the Board of Management the breakdown for minority groups. The Association let 1.2% of its overall lettings to BME tenants during 2001. This compares with the local BME population of less than 1%.
- Cotman Housing Association has recently become members of and staff are receiving training on INTRAN, the interpretation and translation agency for Norfolk public services. Within INTRAN there are three agencies:
 - Language Line (telephone interpreting)
 - CINTRA (face to face interpreting)
 - Deaf Connexions (British Sign Language and lip-speaking service)
- Cotman Housing Association provides housing for vulnerable people including 15 supported housing units, two sheltered housing schemes for the elderly in Norwich and 62 leasehold retirement units.
- The tenants' handbook and other information does not promote that it is available in languages other than English.
- Staff at Cotman Housing Association have not received any equal opportunities and diversity training in the last two years, and there was generally a lack of awareness of BME issues.

3.6 Are the services informed and forward looking?

- Cotman Housing Association analyses its market position and predicts future trends through being a member of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance including its benchmarking activities. The Association also works closely with local authorities to identify local housing need and aims to produce a sustainable affordable programme.
- Existing stock is analysed through a good on-going stock condition survey. From this and customer feedback, a 10 year planned maintenance programme has been produced which is reviewed and updated annually.
- Cotman Housing Association is seen as a good partner by local authorities and willing to participate in local housing strategies. Similarly, the Association is seen as having commitment to follow through its development programmes.

3.7 Are the services safe and secure?

- During the inspection tenants said that the Association generally treated them with respect.
- The Association does not have a specific anti-social behaviour policy but does have a staff procedure for dealing with neighbour complaints.
- Tenants and their representatives perceived that Cotman Housing Association did not always take effective enough action against perpetrators.
- Secure housing is provided for vulnerable people through, for example, sheltered schemes and supported housing units. Tenants at the sheltered schemes perceived the accommodation provided adequate security.
- Customer confidentiality is provided through records being kept in lockable cabinets and computerised records being secured with passwords. The need for customer confidentiality forms part of staff contracts of employment. Contractors' behaviour is managed through standards that need to be met to be on the approved list.

3.8 Does the service provide quality homes that meet people's needs?

- Local authorities and other partners identified that Cotman Housing Association works well in partnership and builds new developments to meet housing need. It also assists applicants in the lettings process by being members of joint housing registers with most of the local authorities.
- Overall, Cotman Housing Association appears to maintain its properties effectively through an on-going stock condition survey. Tenants believe that the Association maintains the structure of its properties through on-going planned maintenance programmes and were satisfied about the responsive repairs service.

3.9 Does the service make the best use of resources?

- Cotman Housing Association reviews its performance against its objectives through the regular monitoring of performance that is reported to the Board of Management and its Committees. The Association also measures its performance with customers through surveys, such as, the large scale STATUS survey.
- Performance is compared with other service providers through membership of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance benchmarking activities. The STATUS survey in 2001 also compared the Association's performance against 11 other social housing providers in the region.
- The Housing Management Section has recently been re-structured and expanded, in order to provide a more effective service. One of the main reasons for re-structuring was to reduce rent arrears. However, rent arrears collection has not improved as significantly as was targeted.
- Cotman Housing Association's computer systems appear to be satisfactory for staff to provide an effective service to customers.

Overall assessment

Satisfactory – Basis of assessment

- Services are generally informed and forward looking through using various mechanisms, such as, the Association's membership of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance and its on-going stock condition survey.
- Cotman Housing Association maintains its properties effectively through a planned maintenance programme based on the on-going stock condition survey. Tenants believe that the Association maintains the structure of its properties and were satisfied about the responsive repairs service.
- The Association reviews its performance against its objectives through the regular monitoring of performance which is reported to the Board of Management and its Committees. The Association also measures its performance with tenants through surveys, such as, the large scale STATUS survey, conducted by the National Housing Federation in 2001.
- Services and staff are generally accessible.
- Tenants generally believed staff were helpful, responsive and informative. Customers' views are gained through a variety of means and there is a tenant participation structure in place.
- Tenants perceived the rent paid for the property to be value for money.
- During the inspection tenants said that the Association generally treated them with respect.
- Cotman Housing Association has satisfactory Equal Opportunity and Black and Minority Ethnic policies, in the context of their operation, which recognise the needs of minority communities, such as BME groups.
- There is limited written information for customers about the key services.
- Some tenants and their representatives perceived that the Association did not make optimum use of the participation mechanisms to allow their views to shape the service.
- There were some concerns from tenants over services provided through service charges, such as ground maintenance, not being satisfactory. This led to tenants feeling that these services were not value for money.

- There was a general lack of awareness of equality and diversity issues amongst managers and staff at the Association.
- Some tenants and their representatives perceived that Cotman Housing Association did not always take effective enough action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

4. Is Cotman Housing Association working for continuous improvement?

4.1 Are there formal and widely used internal processes for driving continuous improvements?

- Cotman Housing Association is a member of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance (a group of four housing associations in East Anglia), which works on a number of initiatives including best value reviews. A five year programme of reviews has been developed by the respective Chief Executives after tenant representatives from each association decided that they did not wish to be involved in prioritising the reviews.
- The only review completed so far is for rent arrears collection. This was satisfactorily carried out using the agreed mechanism, although rent arrears performance has not significantly improved since the review. Current reviews include estate management services.
- Senior managers from each association review the topic under best value, using the 4Cs (challenge, consult, compare and compete) process, before producing an option plan for improving the service.
- The Eastern Link Housing Alliance is used to compare service performance against other social housing providers. There are no other comparisons undertaken outside this group.
- Cotman Housing Association purchases services, such as staff training, through the Eastern Link Housing Alliance in order to benefit from economies of scale.

4.2 Is it using feedback from residents and other stakeholders to critically examine and improve services?

- There are a number of methods for gaining the views of tenants. These include the Tenants' Advisory Committee, the seven tenants' associations and various surveys and questionnaires. The National Housing Federation undertook a postal STATUS survey (a standardised tenants' satisfaction survey) of all Cotman Housing Association tenants in 2001 and compared results against 11 other social housing providers in the region. As a result of the feedback in April 2002 Cotman Housing Association is about to produce an action plan for improvements.

- There is no evidence of staff being consulted over service reviews, and staff generally did not seem to be aware of the best value process. Although there is to be an external scrutiny on future best value reviews, there are no plans to include other stakeholders such as partners and local authorities.
- There is some evidence that there have been service improvements as a result of other consultation, for example, the installation of security cameras and door entry systems. However, tenants felt that they are consulted over the outcomes of service reviews rather than being involved in the actual review process. Tenant representatives interviewed during the inspection, expressed a desire to be part of the working groups in the future.
- There is some evidence of tenants' consultation being used to shape short term initiatives but some tenants' representatives believed that their views did not play a part in shaping the longer term strategic policy formulation including the development programme.

4.3 Does it have a track record of setting ambitious targets and achieving them?

- Targets are set for the core service areas such as rent collection, repairs and re-let times and generally performance is satisfactory, although the Association recognises that improvements need to be made on managing rent arrears.
- Performance is monitored regularly by the Board of Management and other committees and action is taken where necessary.
- There is evidence of ambitious targets being set independently by Cotman Housing Association for rent arrears collection, but others are based on previous Housing Corporation targets.

Overall assessment

Satisfactory – Basis of Assessment.

- Through membership of the Eastern Link Housing Alliance there is a formal internal mechanism for driving continuous improvement. Cotman Housing Association has a programme of best value reviews covering all services over the next four years. The only review completed so far is for rent arrears collection, and there is evidence of ambitious targets being set independently by Cotman Housing Association for this function.
- There is some evidence of tenant consultation and feedback from customers being used to shape short term initiatives.
- Some tenants' representatives believed that they did not shape the longer term strategic policy formulation including the development programme.
- There is no evidence of staff being consulted over service reviews, and staff generally did not seem to be aware of the best value process. Although there is to be an external scrutiny on future best value reviews, there are no plans to include other stakeholders, such as partners and local authorities.
- There is evidence of ambitious targets being set for rent arrears collection, but others are based on previous Housing Corporation targets.

REVIEW OF SERVICE AREAS

5. Maintaining Homes In Good Condition

Key features of the service

Responsive repairs

- Cotman Housing Association prioritises repairs using four categories. Target response times are:

Emergency	– 1 day
Urgent	- 7 days
Routine	- 28 days
Other	- 60 days
- The Property Surveyor and the Estates Surveyor have responsibility for the repairs and maintenance function and budgets.
- Currently, responsive repairs make up 60% of the overall repairs budget.
- In 2001/02 Cotman Housing Association dealt with 4,000 repairs, or 3.33 repairs per property. This represents approximately 80 repairs per week.
- The Association does not have a direct labour organisation, using approximately 20 contractors currently on the approved list. Contractors work locally on an area basis to obtain the benefit of local knowledge.
- Repairs are either reported to the estate based staff, housing management or maintenance staff in the Norwich office. Estate based staff forward requests to the office each day. The Maintenance Assistant decides on the priority of the repair and raises the order. For urgent and emergency repairs the contractor is contacted by telephone.
- The Association has a repair procedure to help staff order repairs consistently and effectively. However, the most recent copy, dated March 1997, differs in some details from the tenants' handbook.
- A copy of the order is sent to the tenant with a satisfaction slip to be completed and returned to Cotman Housing Association on completion of the job, for which purpose a reply paid envelope is enclosed.

- Cotman Housing Association carries out post inspections of approximately 10% of jobs.
- There is no appointment system for repairs although contractors do arrange access by telephoning the tenant.
- Servicing of gas appliances is undertaken by a dedicated gas contractor.
- An out of hours service is provided by an external agency, who decide whether to contact a contractor or a member of the Association's staff.
- Cotman Housing Association is programmed to undertake a best value review of its day to day repairs service during 2002.
- Tenant satisfaction from the slip sent with the repair order is currently 98% in terms of the overall repair. However, from the STATUS survey only 88% of tenants who had had a repair completed in the last 12 months were satisfied with the overall service. This performance was above the peer group average.
- Responsive repairs equated to approximately £250,000, or £208 per property, during 2000/01.
- Variances in repairs estimates to actual costs of 10% or £100 are followed up by the Association's staff checking work with contractors and undertaking on-site inspections.

Planned maintenance and improvements

- A computerised stock condition survey was completed in 1997 and updated on an annual basis as a desktop exercise, informed by the Estate Surveyor's knowledge of property conditions. This is used to produce the 10 year rolling programme of work.
- During 2001 Cotman Housing Association spent £228,000, or £190 per property, on planned maintenance that included replacement kitchens and central heating installation. Estate improvements included the installation of door entry systems and security cameras.
- The cyclical painting programme involved the external re-painting of four estates during 2001.
- The Association has a projected budget of £5.8million over the next 10 years for planned improvements, aiming to spend £0.5 million per year.
- Cotman Housing Association does not undertake customer satisfaction surveys of improvement programmes when they are completed, except for cyclical decoration.

Void repairs

- Void repairs are carried out by general contractors, undertaking responsive repairs.
- Housing Officers assess void repairs whilst undertaking a pre-termination visit to assess what work can be done whilst the existing tenant is still in the property. Housing Officers also check that work has been completed by signing the new tenant up at the property.

Key Findings

- Tenants interviewed were generally satisfied with the service. This was mainly due to:
 - Repairs being completed within the deadline
 - The responsiveness of the contractors and
 - The standard of work.
- Where tenants were dissatisfied, this was mainly due to the lack of response to some outstanding repairs by Cotman Housing Association staff.
- People who had been tenants more than three years said the service had stayed the same over that period.
- Tenants said they were able to get through to the office or contact the estate staff satisfactorily.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Satisfactory - Assessment based on repair procedures being in place, general tenant satisfaction with the service and the rate of investment in planned maintenance.

What works well?

- Tenants were generally satisfied with the responsiveness of the repairs service and the standard of work by contractors. This endorses the results from the STATUS survey which found above average satisfaction levels with the repairs and maintenance service.
- The quick turn around of void properties by maintenance contractors contributes to the average void period of just over one week.
- Local contractors are employed giving the advantage of local knowledge.
- There is close monitoring of the responsive repair budgets by the Property Surveyor, leading to a value for money service for tenants.

Key findings: 5

Service Area: Maintaining Homes In Good Condition

Issues	Recommendations
<p>Currently the Association does not have a written repairs policy.</p> <p>Tenants did not feel that they were consulted over the planned maintenance programme.</p> <p>Tenants perceived the standard of communal area services to be inconsistent, particularly grounds maintenance. Tenants also felt that Cotman Housing Association failed to keep them informed over what was being done to rectify problems with these services.</p>	<p>Produce and implement a written repairs policy. (Regulatory Code 3.4)</p> <p>Develop a strategy to involve tenants in the production and prioritisation of the planned maintenance programme. (Regulatory Code 3.4)</p> <p>Improve standards of communal area services, particularly grounds maintenance and cleaning, and keep tenants informed of actions, when there are problems with the services. (Regulatory Code 3.4)</p>

6. Involvement of Tenants in the Activities of the Association

Key features of the service

- Cotman Housing Association has a Resident Involvement Policy, last reviewed in 2000.
- There are seven tenant and resident associations that meet on average every six weeks. In addition, there is a Tenants' Advisory Committee which reports to the Board Of Management and whose role is to give tenants a greater insight and say in the way their homes are managed .
- The Tenants' Advisory Committee has clear terms of reference that were agreed by the Board of Management in March 2001.
- A tenant from each of the seven groups is nominated to the Tenant's Advisory Committee. In addition up to ten members are elected by residents' ballot. The Committee, founded in 1994, nominates two members to the Housing Management Committee, three members to the Board Of Management and one to the Development Committee.
- An annual report and twice yearly newsletter are produced and sent to all tenants.
- Tenants are also consulted through surveys, consultation days and customer satisfaction slips on the confirmation of repair orders.

- In 2001 a full scale postal survey to gain tenants views was undertaken, on behalf of Cotman Housing Association, by the National Housing Federation using the STATUS questionnaire. The survey also compares the Association's results with those from 11 other social housing providers in the region. Results from the survey included:

Issue	Cotman satisfaction %	Peer group average satisfaction %	Highest in peer group satisfaction %
Satisfied with the association as a landlord	83	82	87
Satisfied with opportunities for participation in management and decision making	54	55	66
Satisfied the association takes account of their views when making decisions	71	70	74
Satisfied they were kept informed of things that might affect them as a tenant	84	86	91

- In addition the STATUS survey included two best value performance indicator questions.
 - The satisfaction of Cotman Housing Association tenants with the overall service provided by their landlord was 83%, compared with a housing association national average of 80% and a central area average of 79%.
 - The satisfaction of Cotman Housing Association tenants with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord was 66% compared with a housing association national average of 62% and central area average of 60%.
- In comparison with the other social housing providers, Cotman Housing Association performed well and was amongst the highest performers, particularly on repairs and maintenance. The areas where performance was not as highly rated were 'the value for money for services paid through service charges' and 'the environment of their area'.

Key Findings

- The inspection team visited two of the seven tenant associations. It is noted that one was well established but the other had only been reformed in the last six months. Three tenant Board of Management members were also interviewed.
- The tenant representatives interviewed said that the Association provided support, guidance and financial assistance. There were differing views as to whether Cotman Housing Association reacted to their feedback and some felt that they were not involved in shaping the long term future of the organisation, which in part was due to a lack of training.
- Individual tenants visited by the inspection team to discuss services provided by Cotman Housing Association were aware of the tenant associations, mainly through information at the sign up stage and the Association's newsletters.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Satisfactory - Assessment based on that there is a **good** tenant participation structure in place. However, tenants and their representatives perceived that they are not fully involved in shaping the service, particularly in the longer term, and therefore there is **scope for improvement** in terms of practically involving tenants in the Association's business.

What works well?

- There is a tenant participation structure that could provide the opportunity for tenants to shape the service through the tenants' associations, the Tenant Advisory Committee and the three tenant Board of Management members.
- Cotman Housing Association has a model constitution for tenant associations to adapt to their particular circumstances.
- Tenant Board of Management members have received training which allows them to participate in the governance of the Association.
- There are some examples of where customer feedback has led to changes to the service. For example, the installation of security cameras and door entry systems on certain estates.
- The survey of tenants by the National Housing Federation in 2001 is a good postal survey provides thorough analysis and data including comparison with 11 other social housing providers in the region.
The Association is planning to devise an improvement plan to address issues raised in the survey results published in April 2002.

Key findings: 6

Service Area: Involvement of Tenants in the Activities of the Association

Issues	Recommendations
<p>Some tenants and their representatives felt that although there was a tenant participation structure in place, the Association did not use it to an optimum to gain tenant views. For example, tenants felt they were informed rather than consulted over the outcomes of the rent arrears collection best value review. Tenant representatives also wished to be part of future best value review working groups. In addition they believed that they were not fully involved in the longer term planning for the Association including the development programme.</p> <p>Tenant representatives on the Tenants Advisory Committee felt that they had not received adequate training in order to play a meaningful part in the Association's operations. The inspection team recognises that the training need has already been identified and is being addressed.</p> <p>There were no methods of obtaining customer feedback, in order to review services, from tenants whose properties have received planned maintenance (except for cyclical decoration) nor from tenants terminating their tenancies.</p>	<p>In conjunction with tenants' representatives, develop further a strategy to involve tenants more in the operation of the Association, including more effective involvement in best value service reviews. (Regulatory code 3.2)</p> <p>Develop and produce training programmes for Tenants' Advisory Committee members. (Regulatory code 3.2)</p> <p>Consult tenants whose properties have received planned maintenance and those terminating their tenancy to obtain customer feedback. Review services as a result of the findings. (Regulatory Code 3.2)</p>

7. Letting Homes

Key features of the service

- During 2001 there were 236 new lets, including transfers, to the Association's stock. Of these 51% were local authority nominations.
- Cotman Housing Association has a general needs lettings policy and procedure for staff use. These detail sources of referral, eligibility and the points system for offering properties, and details are given to applicants.
- General applicants are awarded points according to their housing need, which is assessed according to their current living conditions and how this meets their needs.
- The Association is part of joint housing registers with a number of local authorities.
- For these areas, new applicants are able to apply to join the register by contacting the Cotman Housing Association office or a participating agency for an application form. The completed forms are sent to the local authority for assessment and entry onto the allocations system. A copy of the assessment and points awarded is sent to the applicant by the local authority.
- Offers are authorised by the Housing Services Director. Details of reasons for not offering to the applicant with the highest number of points have to be noted on the 'Allocation Record Sheet', as an audit trail.
- When the Association has a vacancy, for both nominations and referrals, it contacts the appropriate local authority for names of applicants. Where there is a referral situation the internal transfer list is also consulted by Housing Officers.
- Applicants being considered for a property are visited at home prior to an offer being made to verify details and to substantiate housing need.
- After refusing two reasonable offers the applicant is removed from the waiting list, after agreement by the Housing Services Director.
- The let pack given to tenants at sign up includes a tenants' handbook and leaflets giving details about their local estates.
- New tenants are sent a questionnaire, approximately one month after the start of the tenancy, to measure their satisfaction with the lettings process.

- Where two applicants have an equal number of points and have been on the waiting list a similar length of time, priority is given to the BME applicant. However, there was no evidence that this practice had ever taken place.
- The Association has a lettable standard for its properties.
- The target for void turnaround is seven days.

Key Findings

- Tenants interviewed had either been nominated by the local authority or had been on one of the common housing registers, and therefore did not have experience of the Association's own registration process. Overall applicants were very or quite satisfied with the service.
- All new tenants had been interviewed prior to being made a firm offer.
- Tenants interviewed found staff helpful, and felt that they were well informed about the process.
- Most tenants were visited by the Housing Officer a few weeks after moving in to see if there were any outstanding issues or queries from the tenant.
- All new tenants had received the tenants' handbook.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Good – Assessment based on the membership of common housing registers and the current average relet time of 2.5 weeks. The average relet time for 2000/01 was 3.5 weeks.

What works well?

- Cotman Housing Association encourages sustainability by matching applicants to particular areas and having regular meetings with local authorities to identify nomination issues. The Association also positively facilitates internal transfers and undertakes surveys to obtain tenant views about improving the service. New tenants under 18 years of age are given assured shorthold tenancies until they become 18, at which time the tenancy becomes assured.
- Sign-ups are done at the new property to allow an accompanied viewing and to check for any outstanding repairs.
- A survey of new tenants in 2001, showed that 97% of new tenants were satisfied with the lettings process.
- Local authority and other partners were satisfied with the Association in terms of the nominations process and its commitment to partnership arrangements.

An example of positive practice

- Cotman Housing Association has a good average relet time of 2.5 weeks. The average for 2000/01 was 3.5 weeks. This is achieved by Housing Officers undertaking inspections of properties during the four week notice period. Repairs are identified and, where possible, carried out with the existing tenant still in the property. Pre-let offers are made to potential tenants after referrals and nominations from local authorities within a five day target time. Potential tenants are shown around the property by the existing tenant or the Housing Officer. Once the property is accepted by a new tenant, a tenancy commencement date is arranged.

Key findings: 7

Service Area: Letting Homes

Issues	Recommendations
<p>New tenants felt that the practice by some local authorities of making more than one applicant aware of vacant properties, leads to confusion and unrealistically raised expectations for applicants.</p>	<p>Work with local authorities to ensure applicants are fully aware of the nomination and selection procedure, and thus avoid confusion and raised expectations when they are being considered for vacant properties. (Regulatory Code 3.5)</p>

8. How Customers Receive Services, Including How Complaints are Managed.

Key features of the service

- Cotman Housing Association operates from one office near the centre of Norwich. The office opens from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm from Monday to Thursday and from 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Friday. Outside these hours emergency enquiries including repairs are dealt with by an external agency, who decide whether to contact a member of the Association's staff or a maintenance contractor.
- The housing management service is provided through Area Management staff based at the Cotman Housing Association office, and a number of estate based staff such as Estate Superintendents and Caretakers. These staff act as the Association's representative on estates reporting breaches of tenancy conditions and anti-social behaviour. In addition they maintain communal areas and facilities and undertake minor repairs on tenants' properties or report repair requests to the Association's office.
- The two sheltered schemes are managed by Wardens who provide help and support to tenants including organising social activities.
- The Association has a three stage customer complaints procedure which is detailed in the tenants' handbook. The leaflet in the handbook also includes a customer complaint form. The procedure explains the various stages of redress, including independent arbitration or the Ombudsman, the relevant timescales and the person responsible for dealing with each stage.
- The Association also has a compensation procedure for where there has been a service failure or loss of facilities, and this is explained in the tenants' handbook. The handbook explains the amount of compensation for various circumstances.
- The tenants' handbook gives details of how the Tenants' Advisory Committee can assist tenants in making complaints.
- The National Housing Federation survey in 2001 did not have any questions specifically relating to customer complaints.

Key Findings

- No leaflets regarding key services are available in the Cotman Housing Association office reception.
- In the four customer complaints examined during the inspection, procedures were followed and response timescales achieved in all cases. However, in one of the cases copies of letters were missing from the file.
- Compensation cases are logged separately to customer complaints even though they are complaints about service provision.
- The customer complaints procedure does not give detailed response time targets although these are identified in the tenants' handbook.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Satisfactory – Assessment based on tenants perceiving the services to be easily accessed and the responsiveness and helpfulness of staff.

What works well?

- Tenants and their representatives interviewed were very satisfied with the helpfulness of the Association's staff in providing services.
- Estate Superintendents and Caretakers provide a key link between the dispersed estates and the housing office. They deal with routine estate management issues, take repair requests and inform the office of breaches of tenancy conditions. Tenants considered them to be contactable and responsive.
- The purpose built office has disabled access and toilet facilities and rooms for private interviews.
- Tenants receive information about Cotman Housing Association through the annual report, twice yearly newsletter and memorandums about specific issues on their estates.
- Tenants receive information about Cotman Housing Association through the annual report, twice yearly newsletter and memorandums about specific issues on their estates.

Key findings: 8

Service Area: How Customers Receive Services Including How Complaints Are Managed

Issues	Recommendations
<p>There are no leaflets on the key services amongst those displayed in the office reception area.</p> <p>Compensation claims and complaints are logged separately, and there is no evidence of these being strategically reviewed to see where improvements can be made to services.</p>	<p>Produce leaflets on the key service areas and display them in the office reception area. (Regulatory Code 3.5)</p> <p>Log customer complaints and compensation cases together, and strategically review the cases to determine where improvements to the service can be made. (Regulatory Code 3.2)</p>

9. Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour

Key features of the service

- Cotman Housing Association does not have an anti-social behaviour policy but does have a procedure for staff dealing with neighbour complaints. The tenants' handbook identifies the common causes of problems with suggested remedies including where the Association becomes involved. This also includes details of action on harassment and racial harassment and the possible outcomes including legal proceedings.
- Anti-social behaviour cases are managed on a patch basis by the Housing Officer and referred to the Area Manager when complex or legal action is required.
- Estate Superintendents and Caretakers have a role in identifying and reporting anti-social behaviour on Cotman Housing Association estates.
- The STATUS survey in 2001 found that 72% of tenants were satisfied with the area they lived in, with the top three problems reported by tenants being:
 - vandalism
 - litter and rubbish in the street
 - noise from other people
- Other issues raised by tenants in the survey were high levels of problems with other crimes, neighbour nuisance and drugs.

Key Findings

- There are no customer leaflets explaining shared responsibilities and how the Association will work with tenants to resolve anti-social behaviour issues.
- During the inspection four cases were examined. Generally it was difficult to follow the cases through because of inconsistency in the paperwork. There were no progress forms for each case and no overall log tracking the progress of all anti-social behaviour cases.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Scope for improvement – Assessment based on the Association not having a specific written policy and tenants and their representatives' perception that the Association failed, on some occasions, to take sufficient action against perpetrators.

What works well?

- The Association is part of anti-social behaviour working group with a local authority, Police, Probation Service and Social Services Department. The group has developed a protocol on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, organised training and promoted closer working relationships with front line staff as well as managers.
- There are some examples of door entry systems and security cameras being installed, leading to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and an increase in tenant satisfaction.

Key findings: 9

Service Area: Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour

Issues	Recommendations
<p>The Association has a procedure for dealing with nuisance, but does not have a specific anti-social behaviour policy leading to the potential for an inconsistency in the approach and action taken.</p> <p>There is no overall monitoring record of cases in order to monitor progress and to examine trends.</p> <p>Tenants and their representatives perceived that Cotman Housing Association did not always take effective action against perpetrators.</p>	<p>Develop a written anti-social behaviour policy, and train staff to ensure a consistent implementation through procedures. (Regulatory code (Regulatory Code 3.5))</p> <p>Establish a recording and monitoring system for all anti-social behaviour and harassment cases and undertake reviews to identify trends. Anti-social behaviour case details should be filed under the perpetrator's name. (Regulatory Code 3.5)</p> <p>In conjunction with tenants' representatives, develop a strategy to deal more effectively with nuisance and anti-social behaviour (for example, make use of crime and disorder partnerships, within the areas that they operate) and communicate the Association's work in this respect more effectively. (Regulatory Code 3.5)</p>

10. How the Association Ensures that its Services are Sensitive to the Needs of the Communities it Serves Including Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

Key features of the service

- Cotman Housing Association has an Equal Opportunities Policy that explains the Association's position in terms of housing, services and employment. This is detailed in the tenants' handbook. The Association also has a Black and Minority Ethnic Policy which was approved by the Board of Management in June 2001. This Policy endorses the overall Equal Opportunities Policy and recognises that the Association operates in areas which have a very low BME population, where additional support may be needed for people from BME backgrounds.
- In terms of service delivery, overall responsibility for implementation of the Policy is with the Housing Services Director. The Office Manager has responsibility for these issues in terms of employment for staff.
- The Association let 1.2% of its overall lettings to BME tenants during 2001. This compares to a local BME population of less than 1% for the areas in which Cotman Housing Association operates.
- Cotman Housing Association has recently become members of, and staff are receiving training on INTRAN, the interpretation and translation agency for Norfolk public services. Within INTRAN there are three agencies:
 - Language Line (telephone interpreting)
 - CINTRA (face to face interpreting)
 - Deaf Connexions (British Sign Language and lip-speaking service)
- Cotman Housing Association provides housing for vulnerable people including 15 supported housing units, two sheltered housing schemes for the elderly in Norwich and 62 leasehold retirement units.

Key Findings

- There were no examples of additional support being given to people from BME communities even though BME policy outlines this as part of the Association's strategy.
- Generally, managers and staff had limited awareness about how the Association meets the needs of BME communities, or the Association's BME Housing Strategy. This included joint working with other agencies and the Association's response to recent good practice guidance published nationally, such as the Race and Housing Challenge Report.

Summary of overall performance in this service area

Satisfactory - Assessment based on Cotman Housing Association having a satisfactory Equal Opportunities Policy and a BME Policy in addition to initiatives such as Intran.

BUT there is scope for improvement in terms of staff receiving equalities and diversities training on a regular basis.

What works well?

- Intran provides a translation service for tenants and potential tenants who do not speak or write English. It also provides a service for people with hearing problems.
- Cotman Housing Association has a budget, for 2002/03, of £28,000 for disabled adaptations.
- The purpose built office has disabled access and a disabled toilet in reception.

Key findings: 10

Service Area: How the Association Ensures that its Services are Sensitive to the Needs of the Communities it Serves Including Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

Issues	Recommendations
<p>The tenants' handbook and other information does not promote that it is available in languages other than English.</p> <p>Staff at Cotman Housing Association have not received any equal opportunities and diversity training in the last two years.</p>	<p>Provide a statement in all the key documents for tenants and potential tenants that the information is available in other languages on request. (Regulatory Code 2.7)</p> <p>Implement a regular programme of equal opportunities and diversity training for staff at the Association, to raise awareness. (Regulatory Code 2.7)</p>

APPENDICES

1. The Inspection Team:

The inspection was carried out over three days during June 2002 by a team comprising of :

Pete Field (3 days)	-	Lead Inspector
Nikki Chawda (3 days)	-	Inspector
Doreen Dayaram (1 day)	-	Inspection Assistant
Clive Hutchinson (2 Days)	-	Tenant Inspector

2. The Inspection Process:

The inspection team carried out the following activities as part of this inspection

- Meetings with the senior management team
- Meetings with managers
- Staff focus group
- Meetings with tenant groups
- Meeting with members of the Tenants Advisory Committee
- Meeting with members of the Board of Management
- Meetings with officers from Norwich City Council
- Visits to estates with Housing Officer and Estate Superintendent
- Visit to staff and residents at sheltered housing scheme
- Visit to ready to let properties
- Visits and phone calls to tenants whose properties had had recent repairs
- Visits and phone calls to tenants who had recently moved into properties
- Visits to development sites
- Audit exercise of paperwork for anti-social behaviour, complaints, re-housing and repairs
- Questionnaire sent to local authorities and other partners

Service Inspected:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Lettings and allocations
- Anti-social behaviour
- Influence of tenants over service delivery
- How the association ensures that its services are sensitive to the needs of the communities it serves including black and minority ethnic (BME) communities
- Customer service