

# Welcome

ECHG is a national housing association, providing accommodation and support for over 26,000 people through affordable, sheltered and supported housing services.

Affordable high-quality accommodation.

Shared ownership properties.

Homes for essential workers.

Security and independence for older people.

Supported housing services.

Floating support workers supporting individuals.

Customer Service Centre providing 24/7 service.

Customer Service Centre providing out-of-hours services for over 100,000 homes.

£70 million annual turnover.

£25 million development programme.

Fully compliant with Egan 'Re-thinking Construction' principles and awarded *Client Charter* status.

Tenant involvement in local decisions.

Actively supporting community regeneration.



# Chairman's report

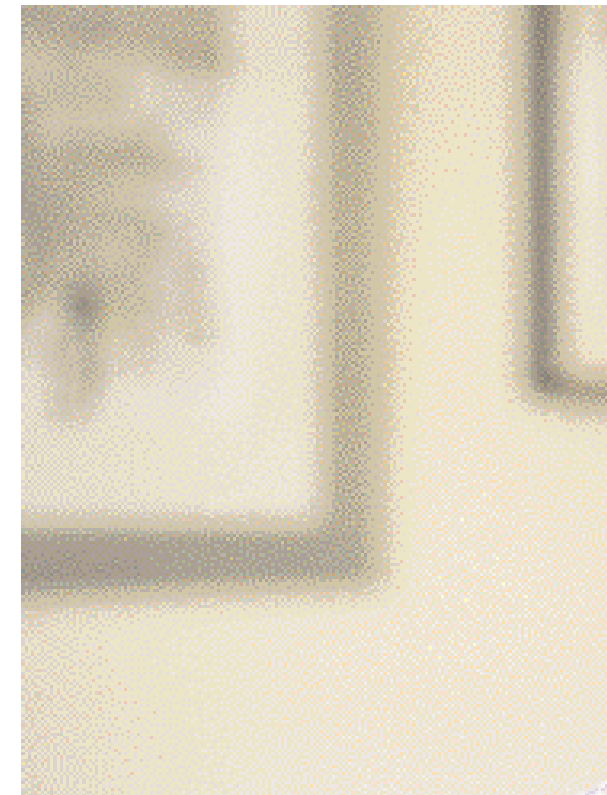
'Life's a journey' is the theme of this year's annual report and my own journey with ECHG is ending, as I step down from the Chair's position after three years. ECHG's journey continues and I am pleased to report that the group is in good financial health, with a surplus of £3.6m in 2002 – 03, the highest for many years.

But our work is far more important than any financial measures and we continue to help 26,000 residents and tenants on their life journeys, by providing services to every age group and every kind of customer. These range from affordable homes for families to supported housing for homeless people and many other services in between. We work in every region of England, so can genuinely say we cover all kinds of customer in all parts of the country.

This year we launched several new schemes, including the refurbishment of Manchester Prison Visitors Centre and providing accommodation in Richmond, Yorkshire, for young men and women leaving the armed forces. We were also delighted to see the first families move into our affordable homes scheme in Carterton, West Oxfordshire. Other successful initiatives included our multi-faith conference in London, which attracted a large audience of colleagues from other housing associations, looking at the role of faith within the housing sector and local communities.

Of course, providing services over such a wide geographical area brings its own practical challenges. In recent years we have made great strides by re-focusing services and streamlining our management into six business units. But we still need to change, not least because of the Government's agenda to increasingly focus resources on localities and neighbourhoods. Many regional housing associations with more concentrated housing stock are better placed than we are to reflect this agenda, as they may work in a handful of local authority areas while we operate in over 150. In our corporate strategy we have been adapting to these changes by seeking regional housing associations to work with and this year we had initial discussions with a number of potential partners about closer working at this regional level. We are hoping to make further progress on this front in the year to come.

Looking at our wider performance, our determination to embrace a culture of continuous improvement, in which we constantly look at and try to improve each element of our work, is leading to major benefits. This year we have built on our





*Tackling antisocial behaviour. ECHG works closely with tenants to find local solutions to local problems.*



*Staff at ECHG run Manchester Prison Visitors Centre worked closely with children to produce 'Visiting my daddy', a comic explaining in simple terms what happens during a visit to someone in prison.*



*Golden Jubilee fun. ECHG tenants held over 100 street parties and events to celebrate Her Majesty's 50th Anniversary.*

quality assurance methods to review all our services in supported housing, sheltered housing and general family homes. We propose to extend our quality assurance methods to technical services in the year to come.

Hand-in-hand with this continuous improvement goes tenant involvement. I'm proud of the work we've done to encourage tenants to get involved in the management of ECHG. I am particularly pleased to have welcomed Ingrid Reinbach to the Board this year, joining Eric Bowman as our second tenant Board member. Our customers influence policy, not only on the Board but also as members of the editorial committee of our newspaper on other policy groups, on Best Value Steering Groups, through local scheme meetings and Business Unit-wide Customer Focus meetings. We also have a Readership Group, for those tenants who prefer to comment on our services in writing.

In the coming year, as well as those priorities mentioned above, we will be focusing on building more homes, especially in partnership with local authorities, and

redoubling our efforts to have a real customer focus. We will also, of course, continue our efforts to deliver quality services across the board. Our journey is also taking another direction with the move of our headquarters from Hendon to Leicester. This is an important move, better reflecting our status as an organisation covering the whole country, and allowing us to unite all our corporate activities, including our call centre, on one site. We confidently expect that this will provide a better quality of service to all our tenants.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the ECHG staff, and particularly our Chief Executive, Peter Walters, for their commitment to the group in the three years that I have been Chair and wish them every success for the future.

Thomas Hughes-Hallett  
Chairman

visiting Calverley Close, Bromley



*Tenant Carla Joseph with her son Philip, aged 18 months. New door entry systems and other security measures have resulted in a more secure environment in Calverley Close, Bromley, Kent.*

# Safer neighb

For nearly 80 years ECHG has provided affordable homes for families and single people. Building safer neighbourhoods is one of our key aims.

We provide good-quality homes and housing services across the country for a range of customers, including single people and families, shared ownership developments to help people join the property ladder and accommodation for key-workers such as doctors and nurses.

Continuously improving our performance and customer service is paramount. For our customers that means improving the repairs service. Under the Best Value Review programme we looked at the way we work with our contractors and are introducing changes designed to improve both efficiency and the delivery of repairs, in a way that will enhance the experience for our customers.

Our **Customer Service Centre** harnesses the latest technology to provide customer-focused services to our tenants 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



# ourhoods

We have also invested in our properties to build safer neighbourhoods.

At Calverley Close in Bromley, Kent for example, we raised matched funding from the London Borough of Bromley to spend on security measures across the estate. This was carried out following consultation with the Police and the local tenants. Tenants are reporting that the changes have resulted in a safer and more secure environment and have brought about an improved quality of life. The local authority is so impressed that we have been awarded further funding to extend the scheme, and phase two is now in progress.

Meanwhile, in West Oxfordshire we are building the second phase of our Carterton development. Featuring a mixture of rental, shared ownership and private accommodation, it attracted widespread praise for blending traditional Cotswold stone materials with modern thinking on estate design and security.



*Brian Watson, one of the first tenants to move in to Calverley Close 25 years ago, chatting with ECHG's Service Delivery Officer, Antoinette De Souza, about the changes over the years.*



# A home from home



Our services for children and young people include a variety of supported housing schemes, including accommodation for young homeless people, training and education schemes, and mother and baby units.

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*Carol Garner, with daughter Kimberley and son Kyle soaking up the sun. The family moved into Barley Close, Barnsley after on-going housing problems where they suffered shocking facilities under a private landlord. Initially unsure about the move, Carol says she's now enjoying living in Barley Close and its community atmosphere.*

We offer a safe and supportive environment for young people, such as children in vulnerable families, homeless youngsters, teenage mothers or those with problems like drugs and alcohol misuse.

For the very young our services include mother and baby units offering accommodation with training on how to be a good parent. For 16-25 year olds who are homeless, we provide direct-access accommodation. To break the cycle of 'no home, no job', we also run

Tenants can contact the [Customer Service Centre](#) to report repairs, make rent payments and seek advice on housing and benefits, at a time convenient for them.



a number of foyers; projects that provide vulnerable teenagers with accommodation, together with support for education and vocational guidance.

In many of our young people's projects we provide skills training, counselling and support. We also have links with local colleges and employers that can lead to nationally recognised qualifications for young people. Other services based around our accommodation include help with managing drugs and alcohol misuse.

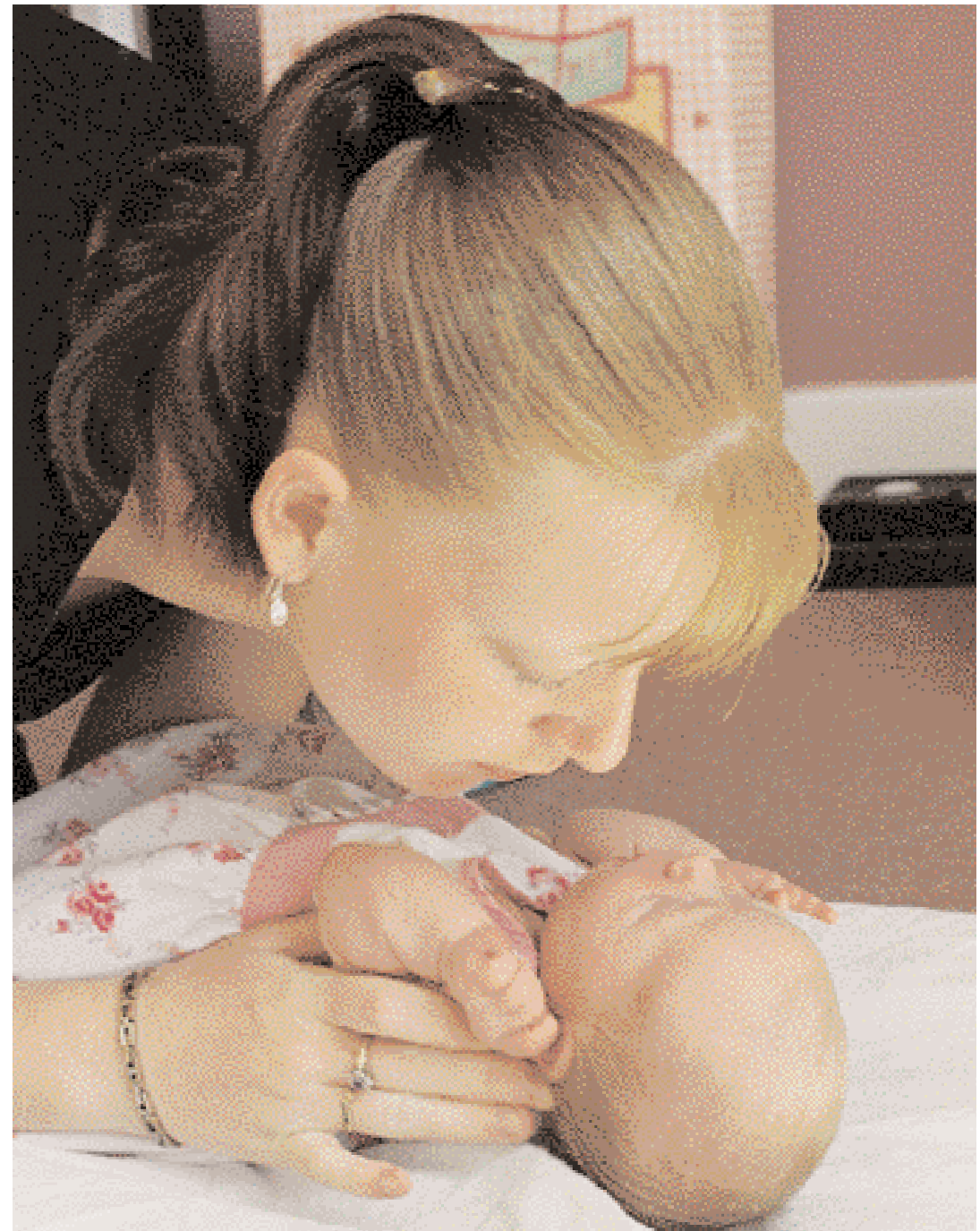
The Barnsley Homeless Families Project in Yorkshire is a new-build housing scheme in the town. Six high-quality semi-detached houses and one bungalow, all with their own garden and play areas, provide attractive and safe homes for homeless families, referred by the local authority.

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*Helen Watson and her daughter Abigail, aged just 5 days at Barley Close, part of the Barnsley Homeless Families Project.*

*Unable to stay in the family home, Helen moved into a bungalow at Barley Close a week before Abigail was born. Helen receives invaluable support from the child support workers and the other residents on-site.*

At another project in Derby, we have opened an 18-bed scheme for teenage mothers who are referred by the local council, offering support to help them through the early days of motherhood.



*visiting Victoria Street, Bristol*

ECHG adopts innovative approaches to help people tackle issues before they move on to more independent living. Our projects include accommodation for rough sleepers, drug and alcohol services, mental health services, care in the home and training and education. We also work with people with learning difficulties and frail older people.

# Innovative support

ECHG's [Customer Service Centre](#) provides 'out-of-hours' repair services to the tenants of 14 other housing associations, totalling over 100,000 homes.



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**Victoria Street resident  
John Wynne Jones.  
During the first six months  
of operation, the project  
successfully helped  
18 residents move-on  
into independent  
accommodation.**

As one of the country's biggest providers of supported housing and care, last year we helped more than 10,000 adults through a wide range of schemes. We are known for developing new and imaginative services that help people with the issues that first rendered them homeless, and assist in creating sustainable tenancies.

This year ECHG has been working with local authorities on the introduction of Supporting People, the Government's new funding system for supported housing. This gives councils the strategic role in commissioning supported housing in their area.

In Victoria Street, Bristol, we have been working in partnership with the council to provide refurbished accommodation for rough sleepers. The site has been redeveloped to offer 20 rooms for single homeless men and women. Before this the council had to use expensive bed and breakfast accommodation. The new scheme allows the council to assess individuals, giving them intensive support and finding appropriate longer-term housing.

In many areas our work is enhanced by charitable funding (page 24). We are also grateful to The Community Fund for supporting social skills and resettlement workers in Manchester and a volunteering project in London.

Meanwhile, in Maidstone we are developing a £2.5 million scheme in partnership with the local authority. Our challenge has been to convert a fifteenth-century Grade I listed building in the town centre, whilst leaving the historic façade intact. The scheme includes two new buildings providing 30 bed spaces for single homeless people, six beds for families and ten 'move-on' flats.

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**Resident Mark Askew, talking to Janice Potter, Senior Supported Housing Officer at Victoria Street supported scheme in Bristol. All referrals to the project come from the Emergency and Temporary Accommodation Team of Bristol City Council. External agencies working with residents include Second Step, floating support for clients with mental health needs, West Country Training Council and East Bristol Youth Housing.**



visiting Buckinghamshire very sheltered housing

# Older people power

Our sheltered housing enables older people to maintain their independence, whilst knowing that help is close at hand if they need it.

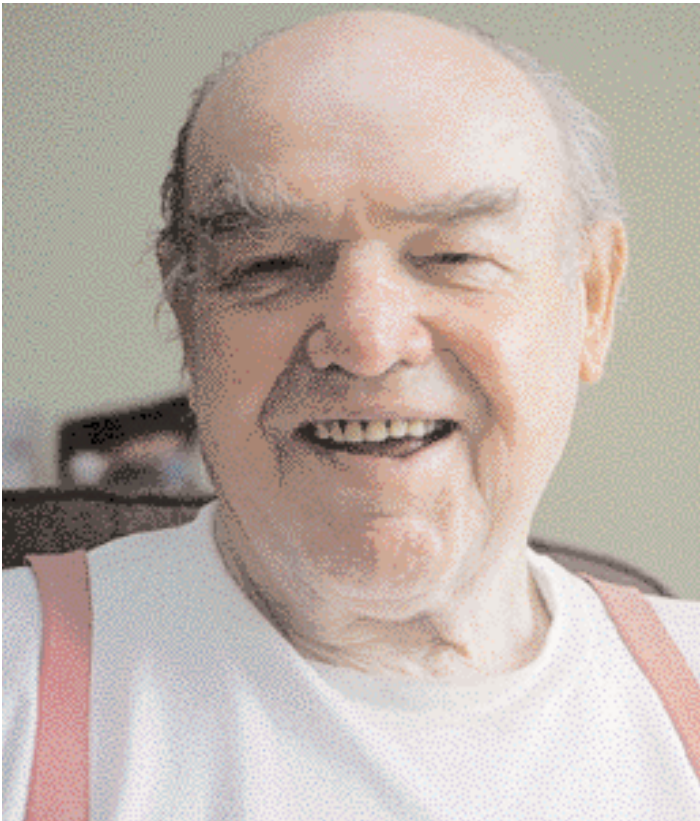
We are one of the largest providers of sheltered services for older people, with 98 schemes across the country. Our aim is to provide independence and security for residents, whilst focusing on keeping people active and in touch with their local community. We are designing homes that can be adapted to meet changing needs, such as disability access. In some cases we

offer extra care services so that people can stay in their own homes. We also have 93 homes where the schemes are particularly suitable for the elderly by reason of their design and locations, which are linked to an alarm system. We are constantly looking to improve our sheltered services and have carried out a comprehensive review with residents of our older people's housing.



*Jack and Jean Newton lived in a bungalow in Winslow until Jean broke her hip. When she returned from hospital Jack found it difficult to cope with everything on his own, but they didn't want to move into a residential home. Social Services suggested they look round Willow Court and the flat and care services on offer seemed ideal. Both keen gardeners, they are given a good-sized part of the communal garden to look after and feed the birds.*

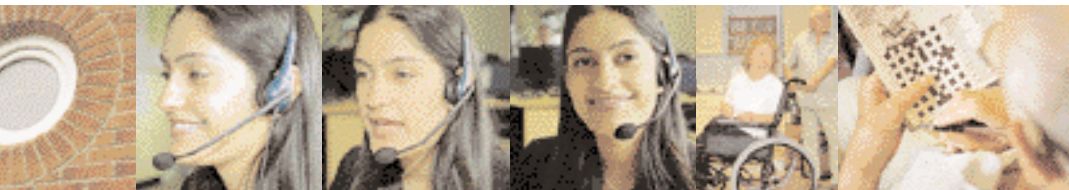




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*As Jim Hallahan's care needs increased, the council suggested he move where there was more care available. He moved in to a residential home for a month, but was unhappy at the loss of independence. Fortunately, Jim's care manager found him a place at Willow Court, which he says has proved to be the perfect solution to his needs.*

Tenants can speak to our highly trained **Customer Service Agents** in over 100 different languages, through our use of Language Line translation services.



We have invested significantly in improving IT links with our sheltered schemes and some also have internet access for residents. This year we ran a well-attended conference for our sheltered housing residents in the south-east region.

ECHG's Buckinghamshire Care Homes scheme has enabled the County Council to move from providing dated and below-standard residential care properties to new and refurbished accommodation. Faced with the challenge of bringing its existing care homes up to modern standards, they decided to transfer them to ECHG for redevelopment. We now provide 48 beds in four locations, offering differing levels of care. They range from 'very sheltered' accommodation to flats for independent living, which have care workers on site to help residents with their individual needs such as dressing and meals. The scheme has helped the council meet its commitments in care services and at a lower cost than under the previous system.

At another scheme in Manchester and its surrounding area, we have developed support services for older people and for those from black and minority ethnic communities. As part of our floating support services our staff visit residents to support them in their tenancies, which may mean helping them in areas like paying bills, reporting repairs or developing links with the local community.

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*Jack, Jean and Jim have formed a tenants' committee to organise games evenings, movie nights in, birthday events and outings. They were also on the panel interviewing prospective carers for Swan Court, a second very sheltered scheme nearby. It has proved to be invaluable to have tenants putting candidates 'through their paces', and based on this success this approach is now being used in the recruitment of permanent staff.*

# Customer voices

ECHG recognises the need to involve tenants and residents more closely in the delivery of our services, and has taken an active approach to consulting and engaging with our customers. Our 24-hour Customer Service Centre handles calls around the clock from tenants on issues such as repairs, rents and benefits advice. Building on these services, we continue to develop increasing opportunities for tenants' voices to be heard.

ECHG's **Customer Service Centre** undertakes a rolling programme of surveys to monitor customer satisfaction levels in order to improve the services we provide.



*Avon Road, Manchester, is a development of 10 bungalows for tenants aged 55 years plus, designed to be adaptable to meet differing care needs as they arise. Shortly after moving in to Avon Road, Manchester, Judith McPhie and Jean Quinn formed a tenants' association with the other residents. ECHG supported them with a grant to get them up and running. The tenants' association has been successful in presenting a collective view on repairs and other issues, leading to improved response times. Members have also actively engaged in other tenants' forums such as attending quarterly Customer Focus Meetings in their area and the national ECHG tenant participation event in London last September. Both Judith and Jean say the experience is invaluable; overnight stays, workshops and meeting other tenant associations is both informative and enjoyable.*



Two years ago we had few mechanisms for involving our customers in service development, but since then we have made significant progress. For example, we are consulting on issues like rent increases, maintenance and neighbourhood renewal, as well as talking to black and minority ethnic communities on how we can encourage greater use of our services by members of these communities.

We now consult tenants more widely on designs for new developments and on refurbishment schemes, as well as including them on interview panels to choose maintenance contractors. We now have two tenant Board members, tenants playing active roles on various working groups and readership panels, together with the tenant editorial group for our publications. ECHG actively supports the setting up of tenants' associations and their activities, by offering resources and guidance.

In Manchester there are several initiatives underway to involve customers in general needs, sheltered and supported housing. Through Customer Focus meetings in the city we have encouraged residents to get involved in the running of their estates and some have set up their own tenants' associations as a result. We also organised a well-attended conference for residents of our supported housing in the city.

In Painthorpe, West Yorkshire, staff have developed a new initiative which works with children who are causing nuisance or annoyance to other people. By developing an 'agreed behaviour' clause, children, our future tenants, are addressing the causing of our behaviour and taking responsibility for ensuring community life improves for all.

*Supported housing residents in Manchester have been leading the way on participation and organising activities. Keen to maintain a positive atmosphere among residents, Jason McGuffie and Matthew Kearney, both residents at Brydon Court supported scheme in Manchester, started a residents' group. Former drug users, they wanted to promote a pride of where they were living into the other residents. They organise a relapse prevention group and discussion groups which meet three times a week. The residents organise these groups themselves. Events now include regular five-a-side football matches with other supported housing schemes nearby.*

*They are also organising a weekend activity holiday in Wales, where activities will include camping, cave walking, horse riding and team building. Both Jason and Matthew are developing personally as a result of their involvement and initiative. They recently ran a workshop for other residents at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference and AGM, where they looked at ways to encourage resident participation.*



# Chief Executive's review



There has been a lot of activity in ECHG this year. We've successfully opened new schemes, gained new contracts, increased our income, and restructured our staff 'reward and remuneration' arrangements. We have contracted to build a new corporate centre in Leicester, which will house the great majority of our corporate and support services, as well as our call centre (the CSC), which has outgrown its existing premises in Leicester. We continue to seek partners among other housing associations with whom to deliver services in the future, and we are expanding our development activity in exciting ways, not least in building on our successful care model with new care provider partners.

All in all, an exciting time with much to look forward to. But, whilst ultimately all this activity is designed to improve services, the great majority of our current tenants and residents judge us on the quality of our current service, rather than promises for the future, and there are still improvements to be made before we can satisfy the reasonable expectations of many of our customers. We have been rigorous, and in some cases radical, in making changes to achieve the quality we are aiming for. Much of it – quality assurance, training, 'scheme evaluation', customer focus projects and the like – sounds unexciting but, be assured, ECHG is investing considerable resources in terms of time and money in ensuring that all our services are of the quality our residents would expect, and more investment is planned for next year.

Who are our residents? This year, we welcomed 741 new tenants into our general family homes, and 4,703 new people came and stayed in our supported housing for some part of the year. About half of the tenants who moved in to our general family housing applied directly to ECHG, and another third were referred to us by local authorities. 10% of the lettings in the last year were to ECHG tenants, who needed to move, either to a bigger home, or to be near family and friends. The picture in supported housing is very different. Only a quarter of tenants came to our supported

housing directly. Most came to us through another agency, such as the Youth Service, Social Services, the Probation Service and other voluntary agencies that work with people in housing need. We need to work closely with all the agencies in the field, both government agencies and voluntary agencies in order to ensure that all resources can be used effectively to solve people's housing problems.

The main reason why people apply to us for general needs housing is simply that they need to live independently. They may have been living with family or friends, but now need a home of their own. A second reason, which appears often, is relationship breakdown. 9% of people, who were housed last year, came to us as a result of relationship breakdown. A small proportion of these applicants had suffered domestic violence. A further 10% had been overcrowded in their previous home, and 8% had only had a short-term tenancy, before that came to an end and they needed help.

In our supported housing one in five people who were allocated a place had been sleeping rough. Despite the concerted efforts of the Government's Rough Sleepers Unit over the past five years, the problem of rough sleeping has not gone away. People who have been asked to leave by family and friends is an important reason why people need supported housing too. There are a lot of other reasons which give rise to a need for housing, such as physical and health problems, people leaving institutions and people needing specific support, such as rehabilitation from misuse of alcohol or drugs.

This is the reason why ECHG exists, to provide good quality homes and services for those in need, and we are determined to continue to expand those services which are needed so much.

We are justifiably proud of the excellent services we provide in many schemes and in many areas. In some areas, we need improvements and we know there is more to do to achieve the quality of service expected by all our residents. I look forward to reporting on the outcome of further investment and innovation in 2003/4 in next year's annual report.

Peter Walters  
Chief Executive



*Dr Indarjit Singh speaking at ECHG's conference on working in multi-faith communities.*



*Having fun at the conference for supported housing residents held in Manchester this year.*



*Residents and staff from ECHG's Livingstone House in North West London helped organise the capital's biggest celebration for Jamaican Independence Day with a Family Fun Day.*



*Perserving local heritage. Developing a new scheme for homeless people within the heart of historic Maidstone means building challenges as we preserve parts of the fifteenth-century Grade I listed building.*

# Performance 2002 to 2003

## Where do our tenants come from % of new tenants

	General needs	Sheltered	Supported
Nominated by Local Housing Authority	28.1	16.6	
Statutory agency (e.g. Social Services)	1.6	5.4	
Voluntary agency (e.g. CAB/MIND)	3.0	2.9	
Direct application to housing association/RSL	49.6	55.2	
Nominated under the HOMES mobility scheme	0.4	1.8	
Internal transfer	9.2	9.0	
Moving from another housing association/RSL	1.2	1.8	
Other	7.0	7.2	
Nominated by Local Authority Housing Department			12.3
Local Authority Housing Department (not nominated)			5.9
Social Services			6.2
Probation Service/prison			9.8
Health Service/GP			2.2
Youth Service			1.7
Advice agency			6.1
Other voluntary agency			13.7
Internal transfer			8.4
Another housing association/RSL			3.7
Self referral/direct applicant			24.0
Police			0.9
Domestic Violence Unit			0.4
Other			4.7

ECHG works closely with local authorities and other similar bodies to provide housing to those most in need and more than a third of new tenants in general

needs come from these sources. However, an increasingly large proportion are by direct application. A similar picture is seen in sheltered housing, whilst

in supported housing the majority of tenants are by referral from local authorities or other voluntary or official bodies.

## Ethnic origins of tenants % of new tenants

	General needs	Sheltered	Supported
White British	80.5	83.0	86.0
White Irish	0.8	1.4	1.2
White other	3.8	0.7	2.0
Mixed white and black Caribbean	1.2	–	1.0
Mixed white and black African	2.4	5.8	0.5
Mixed white and Asian	0.6	–	0.3
Mixed other	–	–	0.5
Asian Indian	0.6	0.4	0.4
Asian Pakistani	0.4	–	0.5
Asian Bangladeshi	0.6	–	0.2
Asian other	0.4	0.7	0.8
Black Caribbean	3.0	0.7	1.8
Black African	1.4	–	3.3
Black other	0.4	–	0.6
Chinese	0.6	0.4	–
Other ethnic origin	1.0	0.7	0.7
Refused	2.4	6.1	0.2

ECHG is an equal opportunities organisation. We monitor our lettings to ensure that these reflect the

make-up of the population around its schemes. Within general needs 17.1% of lettings were to ethnic

minority groups. In sheltered housing this was 10.9% and in supported housing 13.8%.

## Registered disabled % of new tenants

	General needs	Sheltered	Supported
Tenants who consider themselves having a disability	16.5	30.7	8.8
Household members using a wheelchair	2.4	8.3	0.4

## Performance 2002 to 2003

### Main reason for re-housing % of new tenants

	General needs	Sheltered
Overcrowding	10.6	1.4
Under occupation	1.0	1.8
Problem with health/disability	7.4	17.7
Permanent decant	0.4	-
Poor housing conditions	5.0	1.8
Relationship breakdown	9.2	2.5
Need for independent accommodation	21.9	4.7
Difficulties paying rent and mortgage	1.2	-
Eviction/repossession	1.6	0.7
Rehousing from prison/hospital/other institution	2.4	2.2
Need for sheltered housing/warden	2.2	34.3
Desire to move near friends/family	4.6	13.7
To be near work	1.6	0.4
Asked to leave by friends/family	5.6	0.7
Racial harassment	-	-
Other harassment or neighbour nuisance	4.2	4.3
Refugee	0.6	0.4
Domestic violence	0.4	-
End of short-term tenancy	8.8	1.1
Loss of tied accommodation	1.4	0.7
Other	10.2	11.6

There are many different reasons why people seek housing with ECHG. Within general needs the most common reason is the need for independent accommodation, followed by overcrowding in their present home. In sheltered housing apart from the

obvious need for this type of accommodation, the other most frequent cause of moving is because of problems with health or disability, or to be near family or friends.

ECHG is a major provider of services to rough sleepers and this is reflected in the reasons for seeking

supported housing accommodation, with 19.5% in this category. This is followed by applicants being asked to leave their current home by family or friends.

An increasing number are being re-housed by us from other short-stay hostel accommodation.

### Main reasons for providing supported housing % of new tenants

Re-housed from short-stay hostel	10.7
Re-housed from institution	8.2
Move-on to supported self-contained housing	5.9
Needing accommodation providing higher support	7.6
Requires specially adapted accommodation	0.1
Asked to leave by friends/family	14.8
Leaving home of friends/family by choice	7.0
Rough sleeper	19.5
Racial harassment	0.1
Other harassment	2.4
Domestic violence	5.8
Problems related to physical health	0.3
Refugee/asylum seeker	2.2
Requires alcohol/drug rehabilitation	5.6
Probation service order	0.9
Evicted from housing	3.0
Other	6.1

### Economic status of head of household % of new tenants

	General needs	Sheltered	Supported
Full-time work	24.7	4.7	1.6
Part-time work	6.0	0.7	1.3
Government training	0.8	-	0.8
Job seeker	20.3	0.7	50.7
Retired/Pensioner	11.8	79.4	0.2
Not seeking work	15.1	2.2	11.3
Full-time student	2.0	-	0.7
Long-term sick/disabled	16.5	5.8	26.1
Child Under 16	0.2	-	-
Government New Deal Programme	-	-	0.5
Other	2.6	6.5	6.7

Perhaps reflecting an improved economic environment, the biggest grouping under this

category is those in full-time work (last year the biggest group was the unemployed/

job seekers). There is also a higher proportion of retired tenants this year.

## Performance 2002 to 2003

### Number of properties and units as at 31 March 2003

General needs properties	5369	Sheltered units	3411	Supported units	2438
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As one of the largest housing associations, ECHG manages more than 11,000 properties and accommodation units throughout England.

These are managed locally by six Business Units providing a range of housing for single homeless people, families on low incomes and older people in need of sheltered accommodation.

Our supported housing schemes provide specialist help for mental health, drink, drugs and other problems.

### Property type General Needs and Sheltered

Non self-contained/bedsit 977

1 bedroom 4343

2 bedrooms 1832

3 bedrooms 1448

4 plus bedrooms 180

### Housing quality and efficiency

#### Decent Homes Standard 79.6%

The Government's target is to ensure that all social housing meets set standards by 2010. A decent home is one that is weather-tight, warm and has modern facilities, according to four criteria:

- it meets the current

statutory minimum standard for housing;

- it is in a reasonable state of repair;
- it has reasonably modern facilities and services;
- it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (with efficient heating and effective insulation).

#### SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) 63.2

This is an index of the annual cost of heating a self-contained dwelling to achieve a standard heating regime which runs from 1 (highly inefficient) to 100 (highly efficient).

### Rent levels

	Weekly rent level £	
	assured	secure
Bedsit	42.11	40.32
1 bedroom	50.77	48.83
2 bedrooms	63.79	59.48
3 bedrooms	75.93	69.18
4 plus bedrooms	88.55	81.14

### Rent collection levels

	percent
<b>General needs and sheltered</b>	
Rent collection rate	93.00
Rent arrears as percentage of gross rent	6.65
Rent loss due to void properties	4.21
<b>Supported housing</b>	
Rent collection rate	94.10
Rent arrears as percentage of gross rent	8.30
Rent loss due to void properties	6.24

## Performance 2002 to 2003

### Utilisation of housing stock

General needs and sheltered average relet time	10.50 weeks
General needs and sheltered voids	4.8%
Supported housing average relet time	0.78 weeks
Supported housing occupancy	93.2%

#### Average relet time

This is the time taken to relet a property once it becomes vacant. This is a key measure which ensures the maximisation of rental income and the utilisation of properties by those in need. The performance for supported housing is a leader among its peers, while for general needs ECHG has set itself a target of 5.9 weeks for the coming financial year.

#### General needs voids

This is a percentage of total stock void on the 31 March 2003. This may be because of a short-term repair need, major refurbishment or simply a gap between ending a tenancy and commencing a new one. ECHG aims to reduce this to 3% by March 2004.

#### Supported housing occupancy

Within supported housing, rooms can be let on a daily basis. ECHG measures its effectiveness in letting these rooms by calculating how many bed days it has in the year (i.e. rooms x 365) and the figure above tells us what percentage of these were occupied days.

### Average maintenance and management costs

#### General needs (including sheltered housing)

Total housing management costs	£ million	5.72
Average housing management costs per unit	£	651.00
Total routine maintenance costs	£ million	6.20
Average routine maintenance costs per unit	£	706.00

Throughout 2002/03 ECHG continued its major stock improvement programme started in 2001/02 and

set to run over five years. The priorities for this were set following consultation with tenants and include

replacement windows and doors, central heating and loft and cavity insulation.

### ECHG staffing

Staff engaged in managing or maintaining housing stock **223 (16.8%)**

Staff engaged in developing or selling housing stock **9 (0.75%)**

Staff providing central administrative services **81 (6.1%)**

Staff providing care **0 (nil%)\***

Staff providing other housing services (including supported housing staff) **1003 (75.6%)**

Staff providing other services (not housing or care services) **10 (0.75%)**

**Total full-time equivalent staff 1326 (100%)**

The largest proportion of staff (75%) are employed to provide support and other housing services to ECHG tenants in general needs, sheltered and supported

housing. Staff engaged in managing or maintaining housing stock include those managing lettings, rent collection and repairs.

\*ECHG delivers its care services through partnerships with third-party providers.

## Performance 2002 to 2003

### Customer Service Centre: responses

Calls answered during year to 31 March 2003

ECHG **126,665**

External clients **65,217**

Total calls **191,882**

Calls answered within 20 seconds

**78%**

target 80%

Calls unanswered and lost

**8%**

target: less than 10%

Calls resolved first time

**60.3%**

### Breakdown of call types

Maintenance **42%**

General enquiries **29%**

Rent queries **29%**

Our Customer Service Centre (CSC) in Leicester monitors how well it deals with telephone calls it receives. It sets itself

targets in line with the call centre industry norm. The growth in external client calls is a consequence of the CSC's success in

attracting new business to its pioneering out-of-hours repairs service.

### Properties covered by CSC out-of-hours service

The CSC call centre is increasingly respected among other housing associations for the quality of service it provides and

has been successful in securing new business for these services. By the end of March 2003, it was providing emergency

out-of-hours service to a total of 14 housing associations, which amounted to 88,782 properties.

**11,218**

**88,782**

ECHG properties

Properties of other RSLs

### Repairs completed within target timescale

Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours **90.4%**

Housing Corporation target 95%

Urgent repairs completed within 7 days **80.9%**

Housing Corporation target 90%

Routine repairs completed within 28 days **88%**

Housing Corporation target 90%

When tenants report repairs to the CSC they are classified according to Housing Corporation guidelines under three headings: Emergency (2-hour response, 24-hour completion);

Urgent (to be done within 7 days) and Routine (to be done within 28 days). These orders are placed with one of 13 contractors based across England and we then

monitor their performance against set targets. The failure to achieve any of these targets is being actively addressed, as part of ECHG's Best Value Review programme.

## Performance 2002 to 2003

### Tenant satisfaction

#### Questions asked to our tenants

##### General needs and sheltered tenants

Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your landlord?



Thinking about the housing services that your landlord provides, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the opportunities for your participation in management and decision making?



- Tenants very or fairly satisfied
- Tenants neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Tenants very or fairly dissatisfied

In January 2003, ECHG also carried out a major survey of its general needs tenants using a random sample. This was managed and analysed by external consultants and the above figures are taken from this.

##### Supported housing tenants

Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your landlord?



Thinking about the housing services that your landlord provides, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the opportunities for your participation in management and decision making?



A similar survey is carried out with a sample of ECHG 's supported housing tenants. These are done every two years. For this reason the figures shown for supported housing refer to a survey carried out in 2001/02 and these will be updated next year.

In addition to this, each month a percentage of ECHG tenants who have contacted the CSC are surveyed to find out their perceptions of the service provided by the call centre. This is then used to train and develop the call centre agents.

We also sample a percentage of tenants who have recently had a repair carried out, so that we can monitor their feelings on the service provided by the contractor. We then use this information to feed back to contractors (omitting tenant details) in order to improve services.

## Income and expenditure 2002 to 2003

	2002/03 £'m	2001/02 £'m
<b>Income</b>		
Rents and service charges	53.3	45.9
Rent loss from vacant properties	(2.5)	(2.7)
Grants and fees	15.4	15.5
Other social housing income	2.6	16.8
Interest receivable	0.2	0.2
Donations	1.1	0.0
Surplus on disposal of properties	0.5	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>76.0</b>

	2002/03 £'m	2001/02 £'m
<b>Costs</b>		
Housing management	21.4	19.4
Services	20.8	18.0
Other social housing costs	0.1	14.0
Routine maintenance	7.5	9.5
Major repairs expenditure	4.9	2.3
Rent losses from bad debts	1.2	0.4
Depreciation of housing properties and impairment	2.1	0.9
Other costs	2.2	1.4
Interest payable	6.7	7.2
Amortisation of goodwill	0.1	0.1
Loss on disposal of subsidiary	0.0	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>74.2</b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>



## Income and expenditure 2002 to 2003

The Group's financial position continued to strengthen during the year with the surplus by 97% over the previous year to £3.63m. Three primary reasons stand out for the strong performance this year: stronger income flows through supported housing, reduced interest costs as a result of favourable economic conditions and an active treasury management policy, and the bequest of almost £1m from Anthony Ireson in Kettering.

Rent and service charge incomes increased by 16% as the combined result of new schemes coming into management during the year, a rent increase of 2.2% and new income generated in supported housing schemes. The group has also benefited from an overall reduction in rent loss arising from vacant properties, from 6.7% to 5.9% of gross turnover.

The reduction in other social housing income from £16.8m to £2.6m is the result of the disposal of Heritage Care

in March 2002. The Group no longer incorporates the former subsidiary's income or costs into the year end results for the first time this year.

Housing management and service charge costs increased from £37.4m to £42.4m as a result of the growth in supported housing activity (which is more than compensated for by the increase in income), coupled with the additional costs generated by the 'Reward and Remuneration' salary restructuring program which was implemented during the year. Although the Group will continue to meet the ongoing costs of the 'Reward and Remuneration' project, 2002/03 has also suffered from the additional one-off costs, which will not recur in future years.

Total maintenance costs have been kept at a level consistent with 2001/02 with a small increase from £11.9m to £12.4m. However, it is pleasing to note the improvement in the balance of expenditure between reactive and planned maintenance. The ratio for 2001/02 was 80:20 in favour of

reactive works compared to 60:40 in favour of reactive works for 2002/03. This is an important development for the Group marking the first step towards a more rational asset management strategy. In addition to the costs charged to the income and expenditure account, the Group also spent £5.5m on improving our properties, which has been added to the value of the Group's assets.

During the course of the year the Group carried out a thorough review of former tenant arrears balances and wrote off all those that were considered to be irrecoverable. This has resulted in an increase in the charge for bad debts, written off from £0.3m last year to £1.2m this year, however, clearing these balances will improve the quality of our Housing Management information by leaving only those debts which we have a reasonable chance of recovering.

The charge for property depreciation has increased from £0.9m last year to £2.1m this year as a result of the Group making additional provisions for reductions in the value of our properties, caused by demand issues and long-term void problems.

Interest charges have been reduced from £7.2m to £6.7m despite a net increase in borrowings of £8.4m during the year. This was the result of both favourable economic conditions and a continued focus on active treasury management, which saw the average cost of borrowing reduced from 7.76% to 6.57%.

Full copies of the statutory accounts are available on request from the Company Secretary at ECHG's Head Office.



# Church Housing Trust

Church Housing Trust (CHT) has made grants of over £4.5 million in charitable funding since 1991 to help improve the living conditions and opportunities for tenants living in our supported housing projects.

A charity with nearly 20 years' experience of securing funding for homeless people, Church Housing Trust works exclusively with ECHG, and the partnership has greatly enhanced our work. The refurbishment of the Manchester Prison Visitors Centre, and the furnishing and equipping of The Galleries supported housing project for the ex-Services in North Yorkshire, were just two charitable projects for which they raised funds in the past financial year.

Church Housing Trust's appeals and help with accessing Lottery funds have allowed us to employ nine specialist workers (in Barnsley, Cambridge, Leeds, London, Manchester and Southampton) over the past three years. Minibuses have been purchased for use in Oxford and Gloucester, and training facilities and refurbishments have been provided in various supported housing projects.

A new appeal for 'Resettlement Packs' of basic household items is allowing us to increase the support we offer our homeless clients when they move on to independent accommodation.

*Emma Davies, Specialist Children's Worker, chatting with a young resident at Judith House in Barnsley, which provides accommodation and support for those fleeing domestic violence. Since 1999, Church Housing Trust has raised over £90,000 to furnish the refuge and provide toys and a play area for the children, as well as funding two Family Support Workers for three years.*



*Tenants at the new Galleries Project in Richmond, North Yorkshire, Craig Bevan, Andrew Wann and Gary Flynn, in front of the historic Richmond Castle in the town. ECHG and CHT are working closely with the MoD to reduce homelessness among ex-Services personnel once they leave.*



*Staff and tenants of Lucy Faithfull House supported scheme in Oxford, pictured with the new minibus provided for their use by Church Housing Trust.*

Church Housing Trust continues to provide a Welfare and Resettlement Fund to benefit all our supported housing tenants. This covers anything from clothing and toiletries, a gift at Christmas, group outings, or enrolling on a training course. CHT's recent partnership with the In-Kind Direct scheme, which channels donated goods from businesses to charities, allows us to purchase many useful items at greatly reduced prices.

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