



People and neighbourhoods

ANNUAL REPORT **2002-2003**

Growing Up

Delivering Promises

Since its birth three years ago, Whitefriars Housing Group has learned to place its trust and confidence in a new culture of co-operation and openness with its customers and key partners.

Investing in the power of positive solutions is enabling the Group to enjoy performance levels beyond its business targets.

Not only are promises made to tenants being kept on time and on budget - they are being exceeded. The programme to install new windows, kitchens and bathrooms will be completed nearly a full year ahead of its original schedule. Whitefriars will meet the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard' by 2005 - five years ahead of the national deadline.

Whitefriars' planned programme to re-model areas that contain unpopular or obsolete social housing is also on schedule.

Valuable new members of the Whitefriars' family of contractors include CBS Construction Ltd, bringing a multi-skilled workforce, 75 per cent of which is drawn from African Caribbean backgrounds.

Vitality, innovation and proven performance are helping Whitefriars to earn a reputation as a leading agency in the national programme to deliver a better future for social housing. Whitefriars was the only housing association specifically referenced in John Prescott's flagship Communities Plan published in February 2003.

Understanding our Housing Market

House by house, street by street, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, Whitefriars is committed to getting to the heart of the communities it serves to ensure that the housing and services it provides match the needs and aspirations of its customers.

In partnership with Coventry City Council and other registered social landlords, Whitefriars has commissioned the most comprehensive study of housing demand in the city.

On-the-ground knowledge of what type of homes and neighbourhoods people want, and why, will help to shape future provision. The study is an important driver for delivering housing strategy in the city.

Further research conducted by Whitefriars under its Asset Management Strategy has helped to define neighbourhoods, so that environmental improvements can be targeted and potential sites for new development identified.

First stages in developing a strategy to deliver new homes have focused on forging partnerships and obtaining joint commissioning status with Coventry City Council.

Progress has been made on new developments at three city sites, including a 300-unit mixed tenure development in Stoke Heath, a partnership scheme in Tile Hill, and 41 family homes in south Coventry, which have been acquired as a rapid response to local demand.

In Wood End, Henley Green and Manor Farm, Whitefriars is assisting a New Deal for Communities programme to develop a master plan to ensure that future needs and aspirations are anticipated and fulfilled.





Transforming

Changing the Culture

The importance of putting people first starts with the dedicated workforce responsible for turning Whitefriars' aims into actions.

Significant changes have been made to the way that the Group manages its business.

At the core is a strong commitment to individual empowerment - motivating staff members by increasing their skills-base, spreading the responsibility of decision-making, and increasing access to essential information.

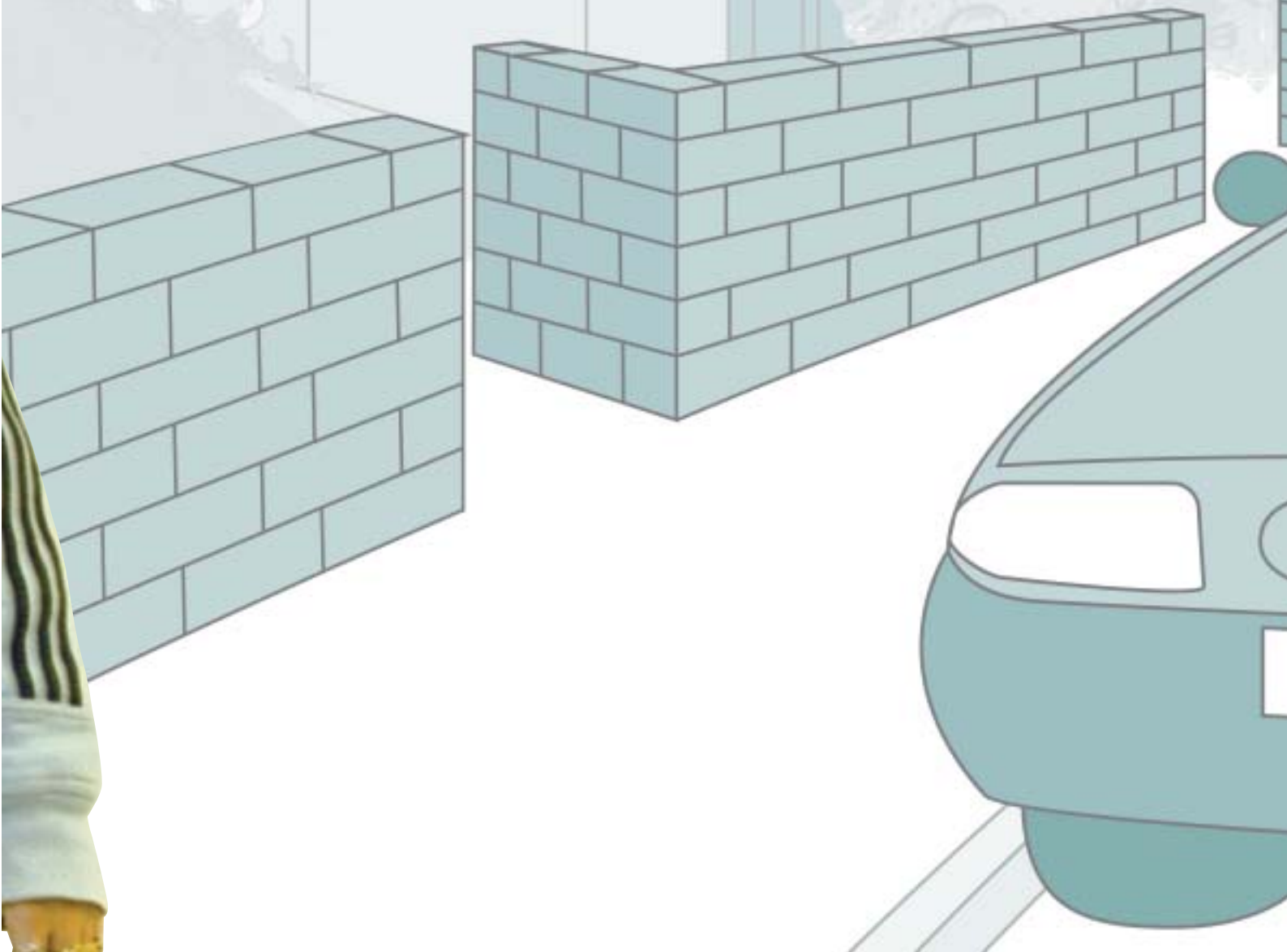
The Stardust Strategy, to instill core values and improve customer service, encourages collective ownership of the challenges that face Whitefriars and the quest for solutions.

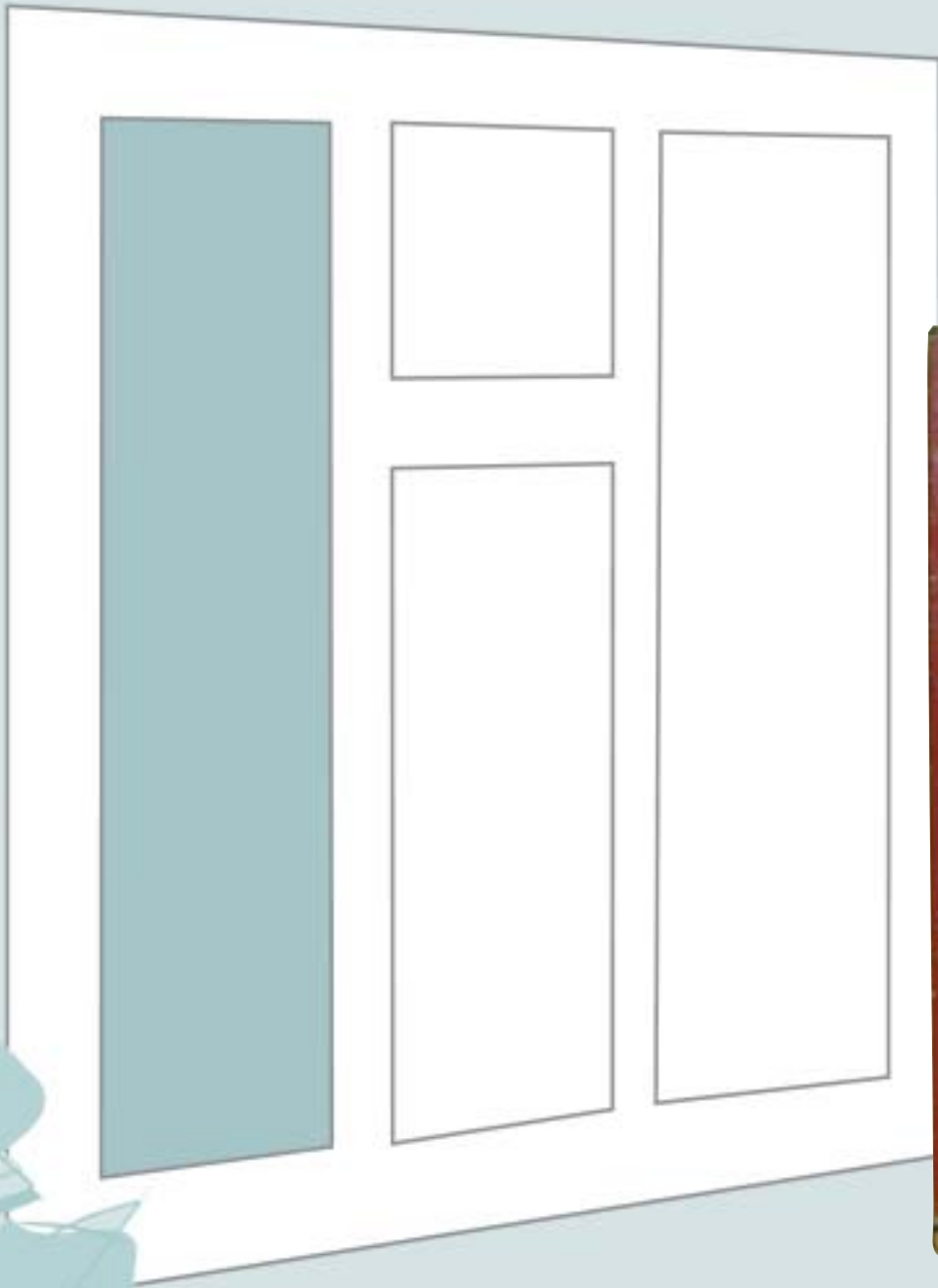
The work of Whitefriars' IT in developing a modern, independent and robust system has improved the way that staff members communicate with each other. The new Finance System has streamlined authorisation procedures and put up-to-the-moment, accurate information at managers' fingertips.

Accurate data collection and analysis will help Whitefriars to compare its performance indicators with peer organisations through a new project with benchmarking specialist HouseMark.

Nearly 500 employees have taken advantage of formal training in skills ranging from management techniques to basic IT.

Whitefriars and the three recognised trade unions that represent its workforce have agreed a two-year pay strategy, moving the organisation away from the National Local Government pay and conditions inherited on transfer. Stage one of the strategy has been successfully implemented. Further developments will involve the creation of a merit framework in which individual excellence is rewarded.







Developing

More than Housing

Energy, commitment and grassroots understanding places Whitefriars in a powerful position to deliver social change and build sustainable communities.

Hundreds of local people are already benefiting from the work of the Training and Development Agency in helping them into employment and careers. The agency is starting to spread its wings into the north of Coventry.

Working hand-in-hand with Coventry City Council, the CovWise Partnership and other partners, including CBS Construction, Whitefriars is generating new opportunities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, including Willenhall and Stoke Aldermoor, as well as for job seekers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and the long-term unemployed.

Whitefriars' success was recognised through the national award of the Chartered Institute of Housing's Regional Innovation prize for 2002.

Seizing the Government's 'Supporting People' agenda, Whitefriars set up a dedicated team to research and develop schemes to make a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable tenants.

A multi-agency approach has included the establishment of schemes to support refugees, provide information and advice about money, and assist tenants with learning difficulties and mental health issues.

Attention to detail is vital. Experience has proved that even small-scale projects in neighbourhoods can bring big improvements to quality of life, not just for today, but for tomorrow.





Progressing

Housing Management

Whitefriars seeks to let all its available properties all the time.

That most basic ambition will only be achieved if each and every Whitefriars dwelling is brought up to standard and kept there.

The Repairs Service performance in 2002/3 illustrates the high value the Group places on reliability and efficiency in managing routine repairs and responding to emergencies.

Further improvements will be made in the near future. Whitefriars is looking at the option of transferring Coventry City Council staff engaged on repairs and maintenance work to form a new in-house team, offering the potential to further extend the Whitefriars culture into this area of customer service. It will also allow for more co-ordinated planning of the regeneration programme. In partnership with English Churches Housing Association, Whitefriars has introduced an emergency, out-of-hours repairs reporting service, speeding up and prioritising repairs.

Rent arrears have been reduced through a determined programme of activity including a hard-hitting publicity campaign, a new reward scheme for good customers, streamlined processes and focused training for staff members. There has also been improvement in turnaround times for void properties.

Whitefriars continues to act as a national trailblazer in tackling anti-social behaviour. The vigorous approach to tackling neighbourhood unrest includes securing court orders against individuals, supporting victims by providing funding to enable other people to act as witnesses on their behalf, installing alarm systems, and promoting the Mediation Service as a means to resolve disputes.





Shining Through

Developing the Business

Whitefriars has laid the foundations for its future.

A proven track record of delivery on core commitments is allowing the Group to explore wider business opportunities.

Within the Coventry heartland, the challenge of transforming deprived neighbourhoods is still in its infancy.

As a strong social company, Whitefriars is in a unique position to translate national regeneration strategy into actions that will make a lasting difference to local, every-day life. Its pro-active engagement in the plans to regenerate the NDC (New Deal for Communities) and Swanswell areas, along with parts of Stoke Heath, demonstrates the organisation's commitment. The Group's solid financial status means that it can act as a conduit for grant funding, while its commitment to putting people first means that the money will be spent according to local priorities.

Whitefriars' holistic approach to regeneration means that it looks beyond bricks and mortar to revitalise the environment and neighbourhoods in which people live. It promotes safety measures, care of green spaces and, importantly, social inclusion.

Across the West Midlands region, Whitefriars is eager to share its experience and expertise by actively seeking new partners.

As it grows, Whitefriars will remain loyal to the principles of being:

- In business for its customers
- In business for neighbourhoods and the wider community.

Listening

Customers First

Whitefriars will always stand or fall on its ability to deliver what its customers want.

The commitment is to give customers not only a voice but also an active role at every level of the organisation.

A specialist Customer Involvement team has been established to develop a new vision for customer communication and involvement. Whitefriars is also comprehensively consulting with tenants and stakeholders on ideas for improving customer communication, involvement, participation and accountability.

During 2002/2003 other activities included running the Springboard 2003 consultation event, attended by more than 200 customers, to look at ways of working and supporting customer involvement in the future. In addition, customers were consulted on new approaches to involvement through a questionnaire reply card inserted into the tenants' HOME magazine. Furthermore, individual residents' groups had the opportunity to discuss the proposals.

Initiatives and ideas consulted on include:

- Establishing a Customer Forum with members nominated from tenant groups
- Working with 28 residents' groups to look at their constitutions and how we can work with and support them in future
- Better support and training for existing tenant groups
- Help and encouragement to form new tenant groups
- Establishing a Tenants' Auditor project
- Running customer conferences
- Establishing an editorial group to be the driving force behind the tenants' HOME magazine.

During the year Whitefriars has also:

- Developed the award-winning 'Gardens in the Sky' initiative with residents and partners
- Acted on feedback from tenants gained during the implementation of the home improvement programme
- Consulted residents on proposals to change the way services are delivered at a local level
- Involved residents in service reviews such as those on lettings and customer involvement.

Important achievements secured by the Group's Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Action Plan include:

- Gaining funding for a BAME development officer
- Commissioning a survey to measure satisfaction among BAME tenants
- Creating a database of local BAME contractors and organisations
- Establishing a BAME staff focus group.



Governance and Accountability

Whitefriars Housing Group was set up specifically to receive the transfer of housing stock from Coventry City Council, and was the first group structure to be established following a single ballot for this purpose. The transfer took place on 25 September 2000.

The Group consists of Whitefriars Homes North Limited, Whitefriars Homes South Limited, which jointly own and manage the housing stock, and Whitefriars Services Limited. Whitefriars Services Limited is the parent company, which provides business, strategic and other professional services to its two subsidiaries.

All the companies within the Group are incorporated and registered in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and are limited by guarantee.

As Registered Social Landlords, under the meaning of the Housing Act 1996, all three companies in the Group are regulated by the Housing Corporation. Each company has a board of directors comprising tenants, local authority nominees and independent members.

Tenant members are elected by the body of tenants.

Boards and Committees

Whitefriars Services Limited has a board comprising a maximum of 18 non-executive members - six each of tenant, local authority and independent representatives - and is responsible for group funding, policy, strategy and governing the Group's affairs and performance. The tenant and local authority members also sit on one of the subsidiary boards.

Each of the subsidiary companies, Whitefriars Homes North Limited and Whitefriars Homes South Limited, has a board comprising a maximum of nine non-executive members - three each of tenant, local authority and independent representatives.

The Group's finance and human resources committees, and its repairs contract panel, include members drawn from all three Group companies. These committees have specific responsibilities in the given areas.

Corporate Governance

The principles underlying good corporate governance set out in the National Housing Federation code of governance are supported fully by the Group's boards, all of which have undertaken a specific review of compliance with the code during the last year. A process to examine and address, on an ongoing basis, the development needs of the boards and their individual members, is being established to ensure the continuance of high standards of governance of the Group.

Executive Directors



Group Chief Executive **Howard Farrand**
Previously Strategic Director (Living Environment),
Coventry City Council
Age 56



Group Finance Director **Inge Kettner**
Previously Group Finance Director,
Orbit Housing Group
Age 47



Executive Director North **Alison Hadden**
Previously Executive Director,
Elgar Housing Association
Age 39



Executive Director South **Roger Griffiths**
Previously City Housing Officer,
Coventry City Council
Age 55



Director of Property Investment **Mike Brown**
Previously Operations Director,
Somerset Community Housing Trust
Age 45

Board Members

Whitefriars Housing Group - April 2002 to March 2003

Tenant Board Members

Jim Cotterill: Whitefriars Services, South, Human Resources Committee and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since March 2001
Age 59

Richard Donovan: Whitefriars Services, North and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since March 2001
Age 70

Ellen Emms: Whitefriars Services, South, Human Resources Committee and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since April 2000
Age 74

Jene McKean JP: Whitefriars Services, North and Chair Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since April 2000
Age 67

Paul White: Whitefriars Services, South and Finance Committee.

Board member since May 2002
Age 53

Colin Young: Vice Chair Whitefriars North and member of Services, Finance and Human Resources Committees.

Board member since April 2000
Age 55

Local Authority Board Members

Dave Chater: Whitefriars Services, South and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since April 2000
Age 55

David Garland: Whitefriars Services and Finance Committee.

Board member since April 2000
Age 53

Peter Lacy: Chair Whitefriars Services and member of Whitefriars North and Human Resources Committees.

Board member since April 2000
Age 62

Joe Clifford: Whitefriars Services, South, Repairs Contract Panel and Human Resources Committee.

Board member since July 2000
Age 60

Ken Taylor: Vice Chair Whitefriars South, Chair Finance Committee and member of Services.

Board member since April 2000
Age 62

Independent Board Members

Hari Das: Whitefriars Services.

Board member since May 2001
Age 52

Barrie Day: Whitefriars Services and Human Resources Committee.

Board member since April 2000
Age 52

Mary Wood: Whitefriars Services and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since July 2000
Age 50

Roz Lilley: Whitefriars Services and Human Resources Committee.

Board member since April 2000
Age 44

John O'Shea: Vice Chair Whitefriars Services, member Human Resources Committee.

Board member since April 2000
Age 64

Peter Roach: Chair Whitefriars North.*

Board member since April 2000
Age 49

Vibert Cornwall: Whitefriars North.

Board member since December 2000
Age 65

Richard Drew: Whitefriars North and Finance Committee.

Board member since October 2000
Age 57



Bruce Walker: Chair Whitefriars South and member of Finance Committee.*

Board member since April 2000
Age 54

Mike Beardmore: Whitefriars South and Chair Human Resources Committee.

Board member since April 2000
Age 55

Peter Wills: Whitefriars South and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since March 2001
Age 58

The following people also served as board members during the year April 2002 - March 2003

Alan Kay:

Board member since March 2003

Ram Lakha:

Board member since October 2002

Margaret Lancaster:

Board member since May 2002

The following people have been appointed as board members since March 2003

Tom Ruddy: Whitefriars Services, North and Repairs Contract Panel.

Board member since May 2003
Age 62

Catherine Harper: Whitefriars Services and North.

Board member since May 2003
Age 68

Joan Allen: Whitefriars Services and South.

Board member since October 2003
Age 45

* **Peter Roach**, Chair of Whitefriars North and * **Bruce Walker**, Chair of Whitefriars South, also became co-opted board members of Whitefriars Services from October 2003.

Performance

Whitefriars Housing Group - April 2002 to March 2003

Rent Collection	North	South	Group
Rent collected as a % of gross rental income	95.0	95.6	95.3
Rent arrears as a % of gross rental income	5.1	4.8	4.9
% gross rent lost due to empty homes	9.6	7.0	8.2
TOTAL RENT COLLECTED	19.3m	23.1m	42.2m

Average Weekly Rents (assured tenancies)

	North	South	Group	Average RSL rent Coventry*
Bedsit	39.31	40.73	40.02	36.03
One bedroom home	41.63	43.73	42.68	41.53
Two bedroom home	43.47	47.34	45.41	46.84
Three bedroom home	45.91	48.26	47.09	47.70
Four bedroom/+ home	50.36	52.46	51.41	56.83
Weighted average	43.76	46.15	44.96	45.21

* Source 61: The Housing Corporation's published guide to local rents 2002

General Needs Assured Tenancies

	North	South	Group
Bedsits	488	772	1260
One bedroom homes	2206	2486	4692
Two bedroom homes	2563	2938	5501
Three bedroom homes	3157	2593	5750
Four bedroom/+ homes	130	195	325
TOTAL	8544	8984	17528

Other Tenancies

	North	South	Group
Hostels and other letting arrangements	203	483	686
Supported Housing	418	442	860
TOTAL HOMES IN MANAGEMENT	9165	9909	19074
Leasehold flats	225	866	1091

Repairs	North	South	Group
% emergency repairs completed in target time (1 working day)	98.8	99.0	98.9
% urgent repairs completed in target time (7 working days)	95.7	96.0	95.9
% routine repairs completed in target time (1 calendar month)	90.2	93.3	91.8
% completed by Local Housing Repairs Team (3 working days)	99.1	96.0	97.6

Empty Homes

	North	South	Group
Empty homes available to let	96	111	207
% of homes available to let	1.0	1.1	1.05
Empty homes not available to let	848	490	1338
% homes not available to let	9.3	4.9	7.1
Total number of empty homes	944	601	1545
% empty homes	10.3	6.1	8.1
Re-let times (weeks)	4.0	3.8	3.9

Lettings

	North	South	Group
Lettings	1110	1721	2831
Turnover of tenancies %	12.1	17.4	14.8

Investment Programme

	North	South	Group
Windows and doors	1166	2219	3385
Kitchens and bathrooms	1639	2210	3849
Rewiring	1529	1653	3182
Roofing	547	62	609
Fascias/soffits/gutters	886	116	1002
Environmental improvements	680	648	1328
Other (e.g. security, heating)	3865	4338	8203
TOTAL	10312	11246	21558



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Email: info@whitefriarshousing.co.uk
Website: www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk



Whitefriars
HOUSING GROUP

Other useful numbers:

Whitefriars Mediation Service	024 7663 5315
Whitefriars gas enquiries	024 7683 2934
Out-of-hours emergencies	0116 242 4399
Whitefriars Customer Involvement Team	024 7676 7027
Whitefriars Training and Development Agency	024 7676 7023
Gas emergencies (smell of gas)	0800 111 999
Electricity emergencies	0800 056 8090
City Council including allocations and Housing Benefit	024 7683 3333