

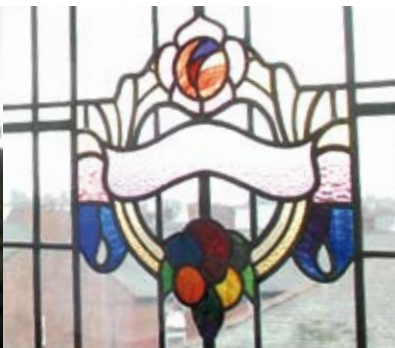


**GOLD AWARD 2008**

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

# Gold Award for Excellence

Winners 2008



# The Gold Award 2008

**After only three years, the Gold Award scheme is firmly established as the most coveted and valued annual housing award in England, with its programme of seminars, visits and information exchange driving up standards in social housing.**

Three themes this year, one more than in previous years, attracted entries from 71 associations, large and small. Tackling worklessness (28 entries) was the most popular. Twenty associations competed for the delivering joined-up development award. Building cohesive communities, the extra theme added at the personal request of Housing Corporation Chairman Peter Dixon, attracted 23 entries.

All of which meant 18 visits around the country to short-listed finalists for the judges and a bigger team of experts to inform the selection process. Once again, former NHF Chair Helen Cope was one of the experts, addressing the tackling worklessness theme, with the help of Kate Stanley of the Institute of Public Policy Research.

Expert advisers in the business of building cohesive communities were Miles Hewstone, professor of social psychology, University of Oxford, and Patrick Harkness of Dome Consultants. Andrew Drury, HATC consultants, and Graham Maunders of Graham Maunders Consultants, helped the judges in their deliberations on delivering joined-up development.

Each theme had a champion in the Housing Corporation: David Carrigan (Building cohesive communities), Fiona Cruickshank (Delivering joined-up development) and Kurshida Mirza (Tackling worklessness). Each provides an insider's view of the way the Gold Award scheme works on page 4, 8 and 12 respectively.

Faye Magellan and her Gold Award team colleagues organise the competition each year. However, this is only part of their task. Running national seminars and workshops at the Chartered Institute of Housing annual conference and developing information exchanges to showcase the work of the winners are also on their annual 'to do' list. In addition, Faye and her colleagues work closely with the winners, who each receive £50,000 to fund a one-year dissemination programme.

The awards are making an impact. According to the first findings a survey of the 2006 Award scheme, service standards have improved among those associations that have taken part in the dissemination programme.

"The Gold Awards really do work at every level," says Peter Dixon. "All the winners report a sense of organisational pride and improved staff morale, and they also believe 'going gold' has helped them raise the profile of their work, nationally and locally. Furthermore, it is also plain to me and to anybody attending the seminars or visiting winning associations that residents draw a great deal of self-esteem and satisfaction from being part of a winning team."



# A view from the Housing Corporation

**The inspirational work of this year's nine Gold Award winners is dramatically changing the lives of thousands of people for the better, says judging panel chair, Sir Duncan Michael.**

The judges were witness to the astonishing transformation of run-down estates and neighbourhoods, community cohesion programmes that bring together divided communities and ground-breaking training and employment schemes that help men and women into work in areas of high unemployment.

The winners, who work in rural areas, market towns and inner city areas, range in size from a small community-based association with 2,000 homes to a nationwide group with more than 60,000.

While they all tailor their projects thoughtfully to meet the needs and priorities of local communities, they share common qualities. In every case, they have enthusiastic and committed board members and staff who work in partnership with a large number of private, public and voluntary organisations. By bringing together many funding streams they avoid duplication, provide value for money and safeguard the sustainability of their projects. All of them work closely with their customers whose contribution is a defining factor in their Gold Award success.

Innovation – large and small – is at the heart of everything they do: from the installation of Europe's largest solar array at the Arsenal Stadium redevelopment to funding bus passes for those who temporarily move off estates so they can keep in touch with their communities.

Most importantly, their work can be replicated by other housing organisations facing similar challenges. Spreading good ideas and practice is the whole idea of the Gold Award scheme, and I hope a great many associations will take part in the dissemination programme in the coming year to share the experiences and expertise of the winners and thus improve the lives of thousands more people.

I congratulate all those who made the short list and all the other associations who submitted entries. The high standard of all those received made choosing the winners a difficult task.

My thanks go to my fellow judges and the expert advisers for bringing their expertise and experience to the table and to the Gold Award staff for organising the awards scheme and the dissemination programme.

## The judges

**Sir Duncan Michael (Chair)** Housing Corporation board member and a Director of the Arup Trustees Company. Former Chairman of the Arup Group, his career as a consulting engineer focused on work in the built environment.

**Shaukat Moledina** Housing Corporation Vice Chairman. Vice President of United Response, a charity providing care for people with learning disabilities. Trustee of Save the Children. He also sits on the Housing Finance Corporation Board.

**Peter Dixon** Housing Corporation Chairman. Housing association voluntary board member since 1974, most recently of Anglia Housing Group and London and Quadrant Housing Trust. Chairman of University College London Hospitals.

**Chris Holmes** Housing Corporation board member. Former Director of Shelter, London Borough of Camden, CHAR (the housing campaign for single people) and East London Housing Association.

**Donald Hoodless** Housing Corporation board member. Chair of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital Trust and Chair of Skills for Care. Former Chief Executive of Circle 33 Housing Trust and the Notting Hill Housing Trust.

**Lord Richard Best** Chair of Hanover Housing Association and President of the Local Government Association. Former Director of the National Housing Federation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.

**David Orr** National Housing Federation Chief Executive. Former Chief Executive of Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

**Roy Irwin** Chief Inspector of Housing at the Audit Commission. Former Director of Housing Services in Bristol, he also worked in housing at Sheffield and Derby City Councils. Member of the Local Government Task Force.

**Ted Cattle** Chaired the Government's Community Cohesion Review and is a member of the Environment Agency Board and chairs its Urban Advisory Group. Chair of charity Sustainability First.

**Pam Temple** Deputy Director leading housing strategy and legislation division at Communities and Local Government. Former Deputy Director Thames Gateway strategy division.

**Professor Michael Kelly** Professor of Technology at the University of Cambridge and former Executive Director of the Cambridge-MIT Institute. Part-time Chief Scientific Advisor to CLG since July 2006.

# Building cohesive communities

**Housing Corporation Equalities Policy Manager David Carrigan explains what the judges and experts were looking for in the Building cohesive communities category.**

High-quality affordable homes are the foundations of our neighbourhoods, enabling individuals and their families to play an active role in their communities. The Housing Corporation has an ongoing commitment to building and supporting strong and cohesive communities, helping people to enjoy similar life chances. We are working to enable people to live alongside each other in communities that are integrated and forged by a common vision and shared values based on mutual respect.

Building community cohesion and integration can be complex and challenging. Entrants to this theme have demonstrated a range of innovative and creative approaches to bringing together people of different backgrounds. They are supporting positive community relations, addressing exclusion and empowering whole communities to work together to address issues that matter to local people. Work to deliver cohesive communities has been founded on the development of strategic partnerships with local stakeholders such as local authorities, health providers, employers, the police and services working with the young, older people and the vulnerable. This has ensured that change has been visible, driven by local people and based on opportunities to participate.

The three winners have helped foster a real sense of belonging, collective vision and common values in local neighbourhoods. Their work has resulted in much more stable, productive and cohesive neighbourhoods in which all people value, respect and support each other in meeting their individual and collective aspirations.

Each of the three winners has taken approaches that other affordable housing providers could learn lessons from and replicate.



## Other schemes that made the shortlist

### **Bradford Community Housing Trust and Manningham Housing Association**

A range of initiatives, from summer play schemes to support for a cricket club, has increased cohesion in Bradford's most impoverished neighbourhoods. "A positive approach to delivering mixed communities. Housing of mixed size and type and allocation policies ensure all communities gain a stake in neighbourhoods," said the judges.

### **Industrial Dwellings Society**

A team of young people is actively involved with their estate, engaging and representing young people and providing activities for them through the Industrial Dwellings Society's Makin' It Happen project. "A good example of the engagement and empowerment of young people, which demonstrates effective methods of reaching hard to engage groups," the judges said.

### **William Sutton Homes**

"Good evidence of resident involvement and empowerment in setting the goals of the neighbourhood action plans," said the judges of the Long Streets, a William Sutton project that is building community cohesion and tackling multi-deprivation in the Rekendyke neighbourhood of South Tyneside. The judges described the work as "fantastic partnership support".

## Building cohesive communities

# Ashram



**“Hits all the buttons to reach difficult groups,” was the judges’ verdict on Ashram’s work to promote community cohesion in Birmingham that has seen the association change from a specialist provider for black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to a mainstream organisation working with a diverse cross-section of communities.**

This approach is evident through its work in a number of areas, including sport, community design and advocacy. Its work using sport includes:

- The East Birmingham Sports Inclusion Project seeks to break down community and territorial tensions and barriers between the predominantly white communities in Outer East Birmingham and the predominantly BME (South Asian) communities of Inner East Birmingham. Ashram is leading the project on behalf of Sport England, the Football Foundation, five housing associations, Birmingham City Council and sports governing bodies; and
- Football Futures has worked with thousands of young white, black, Asian, mixed-race and refugee boys from diverse faith groups since the early 1990s. With strategic business support from Ashram, it is expanding as a social enterprise across the region and diversifying into night football and football for girls. It will offer training for volunteers to gain Football Association coaching licences. An increasing number of coaches employed at both projects are former volunteers who have gained their coaching badges.

Ashram also uses the less likely vehicle of community design to bring people from different communities together. Following a series of successful urban design workshops attended by more than 100 local residents, including a large number of Muslim women, it set up the Centre for Urban Design Outreach and Skills (CUDOS) in partnership with the Birmingham Institute for Art and Design.

The centre is sponsored by multi-national engineering company Atkins and opens career pathways into further education, training and employment, particularly for people who are economically deprived or displaced,

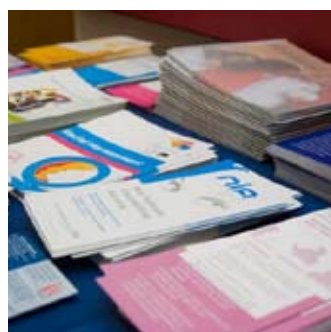
The third main strand of Ashram’s community cohesion work is a combination of training, awareness raising, network development, campaigning and research. A 200% increase in domestic violence reporting in the South Asian community in East Birmingham, for example, followed a multi-media awareness campaign. The association recently produced a DVD which addresses mental health issues in forced marriages, and it is undertaking a study of health inequalities and experiences among South Asian women in the West Midlands.

Ashram helps local residents develop the skills and confidence needed to take an active part in a Regional BME Women’s Housing Network, which participates in the West Midlands Regional Housing Forum and advises the Housing Corporation and local authorities.

The association works with a formidable range of partners, including the city council, Birmingham Rep, schools, industry, the police and community groups. Funders include Comic Relief, Sport England and the Football Foundation.

“Ashram has carved out a modern approach that meets the needs of diverse communities and provides added value locally through excellent and wide-ranging projects,” said the judges.

**“The association recently produced a DVD which addresses mental health issues in forced marriages, and it is undertaking a study of health inequalities and experiences among South Asian women in the West Midlands”**



## Building cohesive communities

# Old Ford Housing Association



**“An extremely impressive example of an association working with residents from different ethnic groups, age groups and backgrounds, and actively promoting community cohesion and integration.” That is the judges’ verdict on Old Ford Housing Association’s project Creating the Conditions for a Cohesive Community.**

Launched in 1999, the association’s community inclusion team has launched an astonishing range of initiatives to promote community cohesion in an area of former Tower Hamlets council estates in Bow. The neighbourhood was blighted by high levels of crime, low levels of integration, inadequate community facilities and widespread poverty at the time of stock transfer.

At the centre of the work are eight community centres offering a huge range of services across the neighbourhood. Each centre meets the needs of a specific group, among them young people, the over 50s and families. One is a construction training centre. Another houses a credit union.

The centres are always busy. Advice sessions, construction training, a credit union office, Arabic classes, short-mat bowls, a mother and toddler group, alternative and holistic therapy, a Bengali women’s group and a Somali women’s group are among the dozens of services on offer.

The association resisted pressure from different ethnic communities to provide for their needs separately. It persisted with its inter-cultural approach of creating generic community centres that meet the needs of different communities. All centres now have inter-cultural and inter-faith management committees made up entirely of users. Inter-faith festivals are organised throughout the year.

This high level of community cohesion impressed the judges. “The sheer mix of people across cultural, religious and generations using the resources provided has established a working model for cohesion,” they said.

About 20% of the association’s staff are local residents, and Old Ford is moving towards a board made up of an equal number of resident directors and others by 2009. Meanwhile, the role of the community initiatives team has grown. Now 28-strong, it spends about £500,000 a year and has raised about £5 million since it was set up. Most of the money is generated from outside the borough.

Partnerships underpin the work, and Old Ford works very closely with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The education department supports the construction training programme and Life-Long Learning supports the ICT training programmes and language courses. Old Ford has a five-year contract to deliver centre-based and detached youth work for the council in the Bow area and it works closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

The Primary Care Trust, through the Terence Higgins Trust, supports the association’s award-winning Young People’s Sexual Health Programme. Close working with the local police has reduced crime and anti-social behaviour.

The judges applauded the decision to promote cohesion and cross cultural interaction, by avoiding single community initiatives. “This is particularly courageous, considering the prevalence of established Bangladeshi and Caribbean-targeted work. It predates a similar approach advocated by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. It is highly evident that cohesion and a community-first approach to housing and community development were key objectives from the beginning.”

**“The association resisted pressure from different ethnic communities to provide for their needs separately. It persisted with its inter-cultural approach of creating generic community centres that meet the needs of different communities”**



# Building cohesive communities

## The Papworth Trust



**The Papworth Trust's Foundations for Living project is "an inspiring example of a scheme which enables disabled people to live independently in an inclusive mixed tenure development", said the judges. "Although different from the other short-listed applications for the community cohesion theme it displayed the key elements which were sought."**

Customer choice was the main driver for building the scheme of 24-wheelchair accessible homes on three sites, one of them shared with 22 flats for sale for able-bodied people, in the centre of Huntingdon.

When consulted about the replacement of their rural care home in 2001, the residents said they would rather live in a town with greater independence and not have to rely on inaccessible public transport to reach leisure facilities, shops and, perhaps, places of work.

It has been a life-changing experience for many of the residents who live independently in self-contained flats with wide corridors and doors, level-access showers, height adjustable kitchen units, easy-to-access sockets and alarm/intercom systems, and assistive technology as required.

The judges were impressed by the effects of the increasing independence, which have reduced support levels dramatically. 'One wheelchair-bound resident described his new life – living independently, cooking his own meals for the first time, doing his shopping in the town and going to the local pub.'

The resident learned to cook at the Saxongate Community Learning Centre, which adjoins one of the three sites. Built by the Papworth Trust as part of the project, it has nine rooms, including two IT suites, an art room, an accessible kitchen and two rooms with height adjustable interactive whiteboards, plus staff offices, an atrium café and a hot-desking area.

Huntingdon Regional College has based some of its services at the centre, which has a steady throughput of disabled visitors: over 2,500 attended meetings or training courses at Saxongate between September 2006 and the end of November 2007. But they are only part of this story of integrated communities. A total of more than 9,500 people used the centre in that period. The project also supports migrant workers, ethnic minority groups and people with low skills levels. People with mental health issues visit Saxongate as part of a community integration project.

Taster sessions are held at the centre to encourage people to access a range of leisure activities and skills courses including cooking, IT training, exercise classes, numeracy and literacy. A wide range of local organisations and community groups promote their work and volunteering opportunities in the community. Disabled people have volunteered at the open days.

The cost of the whole project, excluding the private flats, was £7.5 million. Of that, £4.3 million came from the Trust's reserves, £1.2 million from land sales and £2 million from fundraising. And it was money well spent, as far as the judges were concerned. "It is highly innovative project that demonstrates the ability to develop full accessible housing with a mix of social and private for sale housing," they said. "The design of the housing scheme has been handled in a way that makes the athletic challenges of achieving Lifetime Homes a commercial reality."

**"It has been a life-changing experience for many of the residents who live independently in self-contained flats"**



# Delivering joined-up development

**Housing Corporation South East Field Director Fiona Cruickshank explains what the judges were looking for from entries in the Delivering joined-up development category.**

Ministers have made it clear that simply delivering numbers of homes is not sufficient – particularly when so many new homes are being provided across England. Housing associations have shown that they can do more than put roofs over people’s heads. As major social businesses, they have the capacity and the will to do much more to improve the lives of the people living in the communities where they work.

Entrants to this Gold Award theme have demonstrated effective and close working relationships with a range of public and statutory partners which collectively improve both the built and social environment for local communities. They have actively linked development programmes to the provision of services such as education, transport and health care.

The three winners have done the most to ensure their developments are fully integrated with the wider and longer-term vision for cohesive and productive neighbourhoods. They have worked proactively with their partners, in particular the local authorities, to help them in their place-making roles – often as key partners in Local Strategic Partnerships and contributing to other cross-sector initiatives such as Local Area Agreements.

## Other schemes that made the shortlist

### Gentoo Group

The Southwick regeneration programme embraces the joined-up thinking that is at the centre of all the Gentoo Group’s renewal and regeneration work in Sunderland. The judges were impressed. “A very focused organisation which uses its power effectively to make things happen which is closely connected to the LSP arrangements in the city,” they said.

### Peak Valley Housing Association

Peak Valley sold parcels of land to developers on the Hattersley estate, Tameside, to raise the money to support a £40 million improvement programme for the rest of the estate. The association has “taken a broad and thorough view of how to tackle a classic peripheral estate suffering potential terminal decline”, said the judges.

### Sentinel Housing Association

A template, first used for the regeneration of the Oakfield estate, Basingstoke, is now used by the association for the renewal of other unpopular estates in Hampshire and Berkshire. Oakfield, said the judges, “is an attractive scheme which has regenerated the area and provided a model for future developments”.



## Delivering joined-up development

# Great Places Housing Group



**Ten years of hard work and innovation by Manchester Methodist Housing Association (part of the Great Places Housing Group), Manchester City Council and the local community have transformed the Northmoor area of Longsight. It is an unusual housing association regeneration scheme in an area dominated by private sector housing where the association owns less than 25% of the local stock. Nevertheless, said the judges, the model should transfer well.**

The first housing association regeneration project to receive Housing Corporation funding for demolition, the Northmoor scheme paved the way for the introduction of the Housing Renewal Programme.

A programme of gradual renewal has seen new houses built, existing houses refurbished, others demolished and, in some cases, two knocked into one to provide homes for large families. Streets have been remodelled and the UK's first Home Zone completed. An alley-gating project led to a huge reduction in crime.

An area formerly dogged by empty homes, crime and anti-social behaviour, Northmoor is now a neighbourhood with a 200-strong community association where people want to live.

Central to the success has been community involvement. "There was a good understanding of the diverse community's needs," noted the judges, "and genuine involvement in the design and detail of the regeneration work." An ethnic community link officer works with people from the local black and minority ethnic communities who account for 30% of the area's residents.

More than a dozen organisations have worked with the residents and Great Places, among them the city council's private sector housing and the environment and development teams. Other partner organisations include the local police, the fire service, the ambulance service, the Streetmates Youth Group, the We Care tenants' association and the Groundwork Trust.

Improved community safety emerged as a priority for residents, and the introduction of an award-winning community warden scheme, managed and part-funded by Great Places, is one of the great success stories of the rebirth of Northmoor. The last annual residents survey revealed that 90% of respondents are reassured by the presence of wardens in their neighbourhood and 100% want them to continue.

Northmoor Community Centre, fashioned from a grade II listed former Co-op building, provides a new focus for the community. Three paid staff supervise the centre, which is used by up to 500 people a week. Services provided include IT drop-in sessions, a homework club, a playgroup and crèche and arts and leisure activities. The centre is used by the local credit union. Councillors hold advice sessions, and local community groups use it for meetings. Volunteers run a community laundrette, which is used by 200 people a week.

"Value for money is a great strength of this project," commented the judges. "Great Places did not have a large investment pot, but took a long-term view and set about steadily and pragmatically tackling the problems. It is a great scheme delivering obvious benefits for residents."

The strengths of the Northmoor experience should transfer well, they added. "It shows that with the right approach and a modest amount of money a lot can be done incrementally over time to achieve impressive change in an area."

**"An area formerly dogged by empty homes, crime and anti-social behaviour, Northmoor is now a neighbourhood with a 200-strong community association where people want to live"**



## Delivering joined-up development

# Newlon Housing Trust



**Newlon Housing Trust won an award for its work as a star player in the Arsenal Regeneration Team (ART), which is creating a 21st century neighbourhood around the new Emirates Stadium in Islington. “A very good regeneration scheme with a ‘wow’ factor that has delivered results very quickly,” said the judges.**

The other main players in the team delivering Islington’s biggest ever regeneration scheme are Arsenal FC and the borough council. Partners who work with the team include specialist housing associations, the police, the health service, local schools and local residents’ groups.

Key elements in the scheme include 1,400 affordable homes, among them 500 flats for key workers in Newlon’s Ashburton Triangle development next to the new stadium. All the affordable housing developments, which account for nearly 50% of the new homes, are car-free.

Europe’s largest solar array will supply heating and hot water for the 700 private sector homes and 55 new housing association homes provided through the redevelopment of the old Highbury Stadium, which includes the conversion of the East and West stands into new flats.

The regeneration programme, which stretches across brownfield sites in four of the most deprived wards in England, also includes new office, commercial and retail spaces, improvements to existing homes and a new waste transfer station. New parks and open spaces are taking root in the London borough with the least amount of green space.

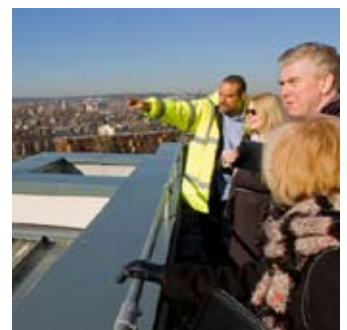
Beyond the bricks and mortar, ART promotes a range of local initiatives through a community trust set up with funding of £620,000 from Arsenal FC. Newlon runs a small grants fund that supports local voluntary and community organisations and was set up with Neighbourhood Renewal funding and money from the European Social Fund.

Through this work new residents’ groups have formed, and ART works with the local education authority on anti-bullying projects and to provide support for young people who have been excluded from school or at risk of exclusion. A new community IT centre at the Triangle has doubled the capacity for the community training learning programmes run by Arsenal FC. Construction skills training for local unemployed people from the regeneration area is provided through a partnership with the Islington Employment Service and the London Development Association.

Early community wins from the scheme include a reduction in all categories of crime in the Arsenal Regeneration Area in the 12 months from June 2006 to June 2007, even though the population has grown by several thousand.

All in all, the judges were impressed by the way Newlon works in a joined-up way with Arsenal and Islington and the many other organisations on this large and complicated scheme. “There is an obvious passion among all Newlon staff for this project, and strong corporate support.” The association’s contribution to the scheme has been crucial, they added. “The involvement of Newlon from an early stage helped improve the overall scheme, increasing the proportion of affordable housing and the amount of community involvement associated with the development.”

**“Europe’s largest solar array will supply heating and hot water for the 700 private sector homes and 55 new housing association homes provided through the redevelopment of the old Highbury Stadium”**



## Delivering joined-up development

# Nomad E5 Housing Association



**“An outstanding example of joined-up development,” said the judges of a £90 million regeneration scheme that is transforming South Tyneside’s Cleadon Park Estate and has struck gold for Nomad E5 Housing Association.**

The transformation is the work of the Cleadon Park Community Partnership (CPCP), set up by the association, South Tyneside Council, Ridgeway School and Family Support Centre and Bellway Homes. It meets regularly to plan, develop and manage the scheme. Most importantly, the partnership includes the residents’ association, which worked on the masterplan for the project, Residents helped select the builder, draft the local lettings policy and draw up a children’s charter and neighbourhood agreement.

The police, community wardens, Cleadon Park Community Association, Friends of Cleadon Park, Groundwork Trust, the local credit union, Welfare Rights, Temple Park Sports Centre, Connexions, the fire brigade and Community Safety Team have all added their expertise to the community mix.

Once blighted by crime, anti-social behaviour, empty homes and high levels of deprivation, the estate is now a place where people want to live. The partnership is demolishing 580 older homes to make way for 750 new homes for sale and rent built in tenure-blind clusters, plus a primary care centre, a library, a customer service centre and a community centre. Built with timber frames from sustainable sources, the new homes all meet the EcoHomes ‘very good’ standard and are fitted with condensing boilers.

The work, which is scheduled for completion in 2010, is funded by the Housing Corporation, the Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP), the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and private sector sources.

Of 94 rented homes completed so far, most have been let to Cleadon Park residents through a lettings policy that gives priority to residents returning after

temporary rehousing. Friends and families are offered the opportunity to live side by side. CPCP funds bus passes for those who temporarily move off the estate so they can keep in touch with their community.

An initiative to reduce anti-social behaviour through a partnership of Nomad E5, the council, South Tyneside Homes and the Northumberland Police has produced a 50% drop in reported crime and arson since the project’s launch. Tenants with a history of creating problems, who have shown a renewed commitment to act responsibly, were given new tenancies. However, ten particularly disruptive residents were refused rehousing.

Outreach services support local people back into work and training, and 21 local people are engaged on the regeneration scheme or completing apprenticeships, with a further three working with the Groundwork Trust on landscaping. Arts Council funding has supported the work of local artists as part of the scheme.

The development received a regional design award from the Housing Corporation for its application of an approved design code that emphasises the importance of space, quality buildings and community focal points.

The judges applauded Nomad E5’s joined-up development and the involvement of residents in making decisions about the regeneration of their community. They also praised Nomad E5’s “close involvement with the local school involving children in a range of projects relating to the development of the area”.

**“Most importantly, the partnership includes the residents’ association, which worked on the masterplan for the project. Residents helped select the builder, draft the local lettings policy and draw up a children’s charter and neighbourhood agreement”**



# Tackling worklessness

**Housing Corporation Policy Manager Kurshida Mirza explains what the judges and experts were looking for in the Tackling worklessness category.**

Levels of worklessness are higher in social housing than in other tenures – and more than they should be, given that social housing rents act as an incentive to work. Breaking the link between social housing and multiple deprivation is a huge challenge for the housing sector. Providers should ensure that affordable homes give people a platform from which they can access opportunity and improve their life chances. We need to think beyond physical regeneration, so that meeting people's needs becomes synonymous with help to access jobs. That way, housing becomes the means rather than an end.

Housing associations can make a big difference in tackling worklessness, as all of the entrants in this category have shown. They know their tenants and the communities in their neighbourhoods. They are able to build on this and reach people where others might have more difficulty.

Acting as catalysts for change, the winners demonstrate how they have transformed lives, communities and neighbourhoods. Through a range of flexible and personalised approaches, bringing housing, training and employment support together, they have pursued bold and imaginative initiatives that help to support individuals, groups and whole communities in reducing worklessness and the negative social effects that worklessness can fuel. Their efforts have involved effective partnership working with a range of agencies. Importantly, it is clear that their approaches can be replicated by others in the affordable housing sector.



## Other schemes that made the shortlist

### East Thames Group

"A creative and well-thought-through series of projects designed to assist people into employment," was the judges' view of the East Thames I Can Achieve programme, which helped more than 1,000 people prepare for work. Many of them have found jobs in occupations ranging from construction to office work.

### Wakefield and District Housing

More than 1,000 young people at risk of failure have attended construction training courses at Wakefield and District Housing's eight learning satellites. Of them, 212 have found jobs. "Good and effective opportunities for people to put the learning into practice and a high success rate in getting people into permanent work," said the judges.

### St Mungo's Community Housing Association

Pathways to Employment links employment with housing as a route out of homelessness and rough sleeping. Many of the clients have drug and alcohol problems. "St Mungo's has shown how it can maintain its enthusiasm and integrity year after year," said the judges. "It is an inspiring example of supported housing provision."



# Tackling worklessness

## Accent Group



**“Brilliant...”, “extremely replicable...”, “no weaknesses...” and “a sector leader..”. The judges were overwhelmed by Accent Community Partnerships’ success in training people from local black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to work in local construction projects in Bradford.**

The Bradford initiative is one of several construction skills training programmes run by the partnership. The others are in Middlesbrough, West Lancashire and London. More are in the pipeline.

Each scheme is tailored to the meet the needs of the local community and fill skill gaps for the local market. In Bradford, where unemployment is 17% and BME unemployment is 3.5 times that of the white population, three initiatives were launched in 2005:

- **Youthbuild** – which helps young people from ethnic minorities into construction, with a focus on those at risk of offending and outside of the education system;
- **Women into Construction** – which has a particular focus on women from ethnic minorities. An additional programme has been developed in response to demand from Accent’s own tenants; and
- **Finance and Business** – which encourages women, particularly from ethnic minorities, to gain administration, business and financial skills.

Accent works in partnership with Bradford City Council, training bodies, local colleges and employers, but the underlying strength of the project comes from its mentors, who are recruited from local targeted communities. Their work enables Accent to follow and look after trainees from initial recruitment into the first year in a job.

Mentors raise awareness and build trust at all levels of local communities – through meeting families, talking to community leaders and presentations at mosques. They are frequent visitors to local schools, community groups and centres – promoting the project and identifying potential trainees.

Recruitment is directly from the community rather than through traditional advertisements in Jobcentres or newspapers. Often this will be a mentor walking round town and talking to groups of young people just ‘hanging out’.

The scheme is funded by Access and eight other organisations, including the Learning and Skills Council, the European Social Fund and the Construction Industry Training Board. More than 50 local employers are involved, including Yorkshire Building Society, Abbey and local construction companies such as Lovells, Wates and Bullocks.

A redundant building in an area of high unemployment and social deprivation has been converted into a training unit. Plans are in hand to redevelop the site to provide 18 incubator workspace units, focusing on new construction companies. A 1,500 sq m office and training centre will also be provided.

Accent has hit or exceeded all its targets, an extraordinary achievement in what is recognised as a particularly difficult market. In the past two years, 1,000 trainees have gone through the YouthBuild project alone, with 83% achieving qualifications.

The judges applauded the way mentors worked to reach the often hardest to reach – young women and men in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community who would not have considered a career in either construction or business. “The uniqueness of the project is its ability to understand the needs of both the employer and those available for work,” they added.

**“Each scheme is tailored to the meet the needs of the local community and fill skill gaps for the local market”**



## Tackling worklessness

# Derwent and Solway Housing Association



**Derwent and Solway Housing Association's Routes 2 Work initiative has helped 1,280 people into employment since it opened its doors in 2005. "A unique approach to tackling worklessness in an area which is geographically isolated and has high level of deprivation," said the judges, "and one that can be replicated in other rural areas."**

One of the most deprived communities in the UK, West Cumbria has been in economic decline for more than 30 years. Many households are experiencing second and third generation unemployment in an area where jobs are hard to come by.

Routes 2 Work was set up by Derwent and Solway, a member of the Harvest Group, to help its tenants and others break through the employment barrier. Its clients include people with mental health problems, homeless people, ex-offenders and people with drug and alcohol problems. A special programme helps lone parents and those with child care responsibilities into work through a programme of interventions.

Clients are offered vocational training and help with the hidden costs of returning to work, among them fares, work clothes and tools. The project works closely with Jobcentres. Indeed, one Jobcentre Plus manager told the judges he depends on Routes 2 Work to meet his floor targets for the area.

Working in partnership with Allerdale Borough Council and a large number of other organisations, Routes 2 Work set up a training and economic development centre and launched a series of initiatives. Among them:

- a retail training project run in partnership with the Workington Single Regeneration Budget, which has helped 330 local residents into employment. Routes 2 Work played a valuable role at the time of the redevelopment of Workington town centre.

It worked with more than 30 retailers to help people who lost their jobs when businesses closed down by introducing them to new and existing businesses acquiring retail outlets in the town, among them Debenhams, Next and River Island;

- a classroom assistant training programme that has trained 24 women to an NVQ Level 3 standard. The trainee support package included financial support to cover child care and travel costs. Twenty-three of the 24 participants have found permanent jobs; and
- a local labour in construction project that has provided training for 173 people and helped 48 find jobs. A subsidy that meets most of the wage costs for the first six months of employment supports the project and has made it possible for small businesses to invest time in training and supporting the employees.

Routes 2 Work has rolled out in Cumbria through drop-in centres and outreach facilities provided in partnership with other organisations from Wigton to Keswick.

This ability to work with others deeply impressed the judges. "They were plugged in at every level of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), using their partnerships to ensure their programmes did not duplicate other provision. An excellent example of how LSP and Local Area Agreement targets are translated into local delivery and real outcomes through partnership working."

**"The project works closely with Jobcentres. Indeed, one Jobcentre Plus manager told the judges he depends on Routes 2 Work to meet his floor targets for the area"**



## Tackling worklessness

# Places for People Group



**“An exceptional range of initiatives,” said the judges of Places for People’s success with tackling worklessness across England. The group’s many local projects work with the most economically disadvantaged groups, among them the long-term unemployed, incapacity benefit claimants, people from minority communities and lone parents.**

The facts of the Places for People Gold-winning scheme speak for themselves:

- number accessing worklessness services: 5,987;
- clients placed into employment: 1,277;
- clients accessing learning: 2,301;
- number accessing self employment awareness raising sessions: 1,399;
- number of new businesses established: 245; and
- number of existing businesses supported: 836.

The group has more than 25 projects, each of them delivered in partnership and focused upon specific neighbourhoods and target groups. “People for Places is a big and very professional organisation which still retains an element of smallness,” commented the judges. The projects include:

- **Building Links:** Bridges the gap between those seeking work in the construction sector and the skills needed by employers. The project matches individuals with contractors using expert advisers and a skills database. Training is developed and procured, financial assistance is provided to remove specific barriers. Continuing support is available to both the employer and the employee;
- **Business Plus:** A partnership with three small black and minority ethnic housing associations (Tung Sing, Mosscares and Arawak Walton) in Manchester to deliver ‘pre-start’ and ‘post-start’ business support and training;
- **Working Rite:** A scheme on the Manor Estate in Sheffield that helps young people not in employment,

education or training to grow into employable and mature young adults. They are matched with small, local tradespeople to give them full-time paid work experience for six months; and

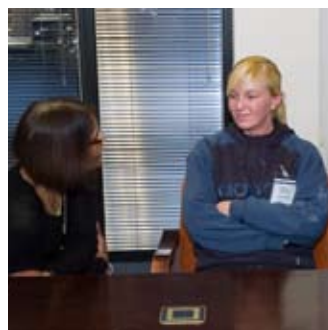
- **AKABA:** Offers support and guidance to vulnerable African Caribbean people with mental health problems in London to give them the confidence and competence to enter training and employment. The project is being developed into a social enterprise providing services to the local Primary Care Trust.

Places for People works in a series of partnerships to deliver the projects and accesses a range of funding streams to support the work, among them SRB projects, the European Social Fund, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Lottery. The judges were impressed by the new routes to funding the group has developed, particularly a zero-interest investment bond, which is returned to investors after five years. The interest foregone is used to fund the worklessness projects.

Each project is monitored and evaluated rigorously to measure performance against key milestones, outputs and outcomes. Some are externally evaluated to ensure objectivity. The AKABA project, for example, was independently evaluated by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health.

“The programme is strategically integrated within the housing association’s core business and a clear route is mapped out to sustain it beyond current funding,” the judges said.

**“The project matches individuals with contractors using expert advisers and a skills database. Training is developed and procured, financial assistance is provided to remove specific barriers”**



For more information about the Gold Award and how you can learn from the winners' best practice, contact us at:

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