

**Pathfinder Inspection Report**  
**Summary**  
**March 2004**

Prospect  
Community  
Housing



## Role of Communities Scotland

1. Communities Scotland is responsible for the regulation and inspection of all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). We inspected Prospect Community Housing in October 2003. This summary report sets out the main findings from our inspection.

## Prospect Community Housing

2. Prospect Community Housing (formerly known as Wester Hailes Community Housing Association Limited) was registered with Scottish Homes in 1988. Prospect has a stock of 860 properties, including 13 shared ownership properties. Prospect is a community based charitable organisation. It operates within the peripheral housing estate and former partnership area of Wester Hailes.

## Inspection Grades

3. These are the inspection grades achieved by Prospect Community Housing:

Overall Performance	B	Prospect is a good performer with many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.  The prospects for improvement overall are promising.
Governance and Financial Management	B	Prospect is a good performer in governance and financial management with many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed. The prospects for improvement in governance and finance are promising.
Housing Management	B	Prospect delivers a good housing management service with many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed. The prospects for improvement in housing management are promising.
Property Management	B	Prospect delivers a good property management service with some strengths but with some areas where improvement is needed. The prospects for improvement in property management are promising.

Property Development	A	Prospect delivers an excellent property development service with many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed. The prospects for improvement in property development are promising.
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## Overall Performance

4. This section describes how good Prospect's services are overall and how well they are managed.
5. These areas are working well overall:
  - ✓ Prospect provides good access to its services.
  - ✓ Prospect has a structured and well-managed approach to tenant participation.
  - ✓ It provides personal feedback to all tenants and service users who participate in consultation exercises.
  - ✓ Prospect uses feedback from service users effectively in most areas.
  - ✓ It makes a good range of advice and information available to service users.
  - ✓ Prospect operates effective complaints and appeals processes.
  - ✓ It has a strong approach to equalities, particularly in its work with BME communities.
  - ✓ It has made a significant contribution to the regeneration of the local community.
  - ✓ Prospect has a good approach to personnel management.
6. These areas could be working better overall:
  - Prospect's information about its appeals process in standard letters.
  - It does not provide sign posting to translation services in appropriate BME community languages in its key publications and information leaflets.
  - Prospect's policy on tenant harassment does not provide adequate guidance on how to deal with the harassment of minority groups, nor does it record and report incidents of harassment.
  - It does not set clear objectives for all its services and activities.
  - It does not always provide service users with clear information on the level and standard of service they can expect to receive.
  - It does not have a procurement strategy or clear guidelines for authorisation of expenditure and procurement.

7. These are our key overall recommendations:
- ❖ Prospect should improve its service planning and performance management by setting SMART objectives for all its activities, and by translating these into clear work objectives and targets for individual staff members.
  - ❖ Prospect needs to strengthen policies and procedures on the level and standard of service that service users can expect to receive, and communicate this information to staff and service users.
  - ❖ Prospect should strengthen its policy and guidance for dealing with and monitoring discriminatory behaviour and harassment of minority groups.
  - ❖ Prospect should include information in appropriate BME community languages on accessing translation services in its key publications and information leaflets.
  - ❖ Prospect should provide clear guidelines to staff on expenditure authorisation and relevant procurement approaches.
  - ❖ Prospect should ensure that its standard letters make reference to its appeals process.

## **Governance and Financial Management**

8. This section describes how well Prospect's governing body control the organisation, and examines the wider opportunities for tenants and other members to become involved in managing Prospect. It also looks at Prospect's financial health and how it manages its finances.
9. These areas are working well in governance and financial management:
- ✓ Prospect has an open and inclusive approach to membership.
  - ✓ Its committee controls the organisation effectively.
  - ✓ Good support is provided to committee members through comprehensive induction and other training.
  - ✓ Prospect has an excellent awareness of the risks it faces and has good procedures in place to minimise and manage them.
  - ✓ There is a very effective relationship between the management committee and management team.
  - ✓ Prospect has a good financial management framework in place covering budget setting, reporting and monitoring of performance.
  - ✓ Prospect has detailed financial projections that it updates annually. These indicate that the organisation will remain viable in the long term.

10. These are the areas that could work better in governance and financial management:
- Membership levels are low for an established RSL of Prospect's size.
  - The management committee was not fully involved in decisions on the recently implemented staff restructuring.
  - Its long-term financial projections do not include balance sheets and key financial ratios and indicators.
  - Prospect does not revise its budget at any stage throughout the year to reflect actual results.
11. These are our key recommendations in governance and financial management:
- ❖ Prospect should ensure that any significant organisational changes are discussed and approved by the management committee before implementation.
  - ❖ Prospect should expand its long-term financial projections to include balance sheets and key financial ratios and indicators.
  - ❖ Prospect should expand its budget to include balance sheets and relevant ratios and indicators.
  - ❖ Prospect should continue to focus on promoting membership particularly among tenants.
  - ❖ Prospect should ensure that it accurately forecasts budget outturns throughout the year.

## Housing Management

12. This section summarises how well Prospect controls access to its houses and rents levels, and deals with empty houses and rent arrears. It also describes how Prospect manages its estates and deals with antisocial behaviour.
13. These are the areas that are working well in housing management:
- ✓ Prospect provides fair and open access to its housing list.
  - ✓ Prospect works in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council through the nominations and referrals process to promote access to its houses.
  - ✓ Prospect is giving reasonable preference to people in defined housing need when it allocates its houses.
  - ✓ Prospect provides a good range of information and advice on tenancy matters.
  - ✓ Prospect has improved its performance in the time taken to relet empty houses and in the recovery of rent arrears.
  - ✓ Prospect has a clear rent setting policy and tenants say that rents represent value for money and are affordable.

- ✓ Prospect involves tenant representatives in estate walkabouts.
14. These are the areas that could work better in housing management:
- The information given to applicants on the allocations policy and on the assessment of their applications.
  - The different treatment of rent arrears for existing tenants and new applicants.
  - The complicated quota system for the letting of houses.
  - Prospect's progress towards the sign up of its existing tenants to the Scottish secure tenancy.
  - Carrying out new tenancy visits within a defined timescale.
  - It's recording, monitoring and reporting of the outcomes of anti social behaviour complaints.
15. These are our key recommendations for housing management:
- ❖ Prospect should review its allocations policy to ensure that it is consistent with its practice and all legislative requirements.
  - ❖ Prospect should amend its tenancy agreement to include all mandatory clauses and should prioritise the sign up of all tenants to the new agreement.
  - ❖ Prospect should extend its quality assurance systems to the assessment of applicant's circumstances.
  - ❖ Prospect should improve the quality of information on its allocations policy and the points awarded to applicants.
  - ❖ Prospect should carry out new tenancy visits in accordance with its set timescales.
  - ❖ Prospect should set challenging targets for the repairing and reletting of empty properties and ensure that staff are aware of these.
  - ❖ Prospect should review its standard letters and include details of the appeals procedure.

## Property Management

16. This section summarises how well Prospect maintains the fabric of its houses. It describes the quality of repairs that are done when they are needed ("responsive repairs") as well as maintenance and improvements planned in advance. It also looks at how Prospect adapts houses so that tenants can stay in their homes when their needs change.
17. These are the areas that are working well in property management:
- ✓ Prospect's houses are well maintained to a good standard.
  - ✓ The quality of information available to tenants about the repairs service is good.

- ✓ It has a good approach to obtaining tenants' views on the quality of its repairs service.
- ✓ Tenants are generally satisfied with the repair service.
- ✓ Prospect is effective at carrying out all necessary gas safety checks.
- ✓ It involves tenants well in the property management service.
- ✓ Prospect's adaptation service is responsive to the needs of its tenants.

18. These are the areas that could work better in property management:

- Performance in the speed of completing responsive repairs.
- It does not report, and it is unclear how it uses, outcome information from post inspection.
- It does not make the most effective use of tenant feedback information on the responsive repairs service.

19. These are our key recommendations for property management:

- ❖ Prospect should review its performance in the completion of responsive repairs including its target timescales.
- ❖ Prospect should improve its use of post inspection of repairs to more effectively monitor and control the quality of its service.
- ❖ Prospect should build on its good approach to obtaining feedback from tenants on the repairs service by improving its use and reporting of the information this provides.

## Property Development

20. This section summarises how good Prospect's newly built houses are. It also looks at how Prospect managed the construction of these houses.

21. These are the areas that are working well in property development:

- ✓ The physical quality of Prospect's new build developments and refurbished houses is very good.
- ✓ Prospect has a good working relationship with its key partners.
- ✓ Prospect is committed to achieving sustainability objectives in its new build houses.
- ✓ Prospect is good at involving tenants and residents in the design and specification of its new houses.
- ✓ Prospect has a clear development strategy and good quality development plans.
- ✓ It has successfully delivered a New Housing Partnership programme.
- ✓ Its development service is well managed.

22. These are the areas that could work better in property development:
  - Prospect does not monitor tenant satisfaction with new and refurbished houses.
23. These are our key recommendations for property development:
  - ❖ Prospect should monitor tenant's view of new and re-furbished property and use this to improve future developments.
24. Anyone can ask for a copy of the full inspection report. All reports are on the Communities Scotland website at [www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk).
25. This summary can also be made available on tape, in Braille, MOON, large print and community languages. For information please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5162 or email [campbellj@communitiesscotland.gov.uk](mailto:campbellj@communitiesscotland.gov.uk).
26. We have asked Prospect to produce an improvement plan within eight weeks of publishing the inspection report to show how it intends to respond to all our recommendations. We will agree the plan with the organisation. We will re-inspect Prospect in five years time.