



Housing Corporation Assessment

Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association

A3213

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Housing Corporation Assessment

The 'traffic light' system used below illustrates our overall assessment of the association's compliance with the Regulatory Code and development performance. A green symbol indicates no material concerns about performance, the association is either complying with the Regulatory Code or taking sufficient steps to comply with the Code within a reasonable timescale; an amber symbol indicates some material concerns about performance, resulting in Corporation action above the minimum; a red symbol indicates serious concerns about performance.

VIABLE

Measuring compliance with the Regulatory Code part 1

Green

The association meets the expectations set out in the Regulatory Code in terms of Financial Viability

PROPERLY GOVERNED

Measuring compliance with the Regulatory Code part 2

Green

The governing body, supported by appropriate governance and executive arrangements, maintains satisfactory control of the organisation

PROPERLY MANAGED

Measuring compliance with the Regulatory Code part 3

Green

The association demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement and to effective and efficient service delivery. Given the context in which it works and the available resources it achieves high quality outcomes

DEVELOPMENT

Development with Housing Corporation funding

N/A

The association has not received Corporation funding in the past year

In preparing this assessment the Corporation has placed reliance on the completeness and accuracy of information supplied to us by the association and other parties. This information was used to inform our risk based approach to regulation and to identify areas of possible non-compliance with the Regulatory Code for further investigation. Our risk based approach also results in low levels of regulatory engagement with some associations, for whom the information provided in this assessment could necessarily be in less detail. We increasingly rely on associations' self assessment.

The assessment has been compiled to assist the Housing Corporation in its statutory duty of regulation of Registered Social Landlords. Our assessment makes clear to the association's board the conclusions we have reached regarding the association's compliance with the Regulatory Code and its suitability to receive public funding. The Corporation accepts no liability whatsoever for the accuracy or completeness of any information or assessment contained herein. No third party may rely on its contents, but must make its own investigations or enquiries.

Description of the association

Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association (DAMHA) was established in 1898 and is the largest almshouse in the country. DAMHA's initial purpose was to provide housing for retired mineworkers. Following the decline of the coal industry, DAMHA relaxed its housing criteria and now welcomes applications for housing from all people over the age of fifty who are in housing need.

DAMHA owns and manages just over 1,500 homes. The stock is made up of bungalows and flats with the exception of one residential care home with 27 bed spaces. DAMHA manages a further 86 homes on behalf of a number of smaller almshouse charities including The Hartlepool War Memorial & The Crosby Homes, Jacob Wright Almshouses, Brandon Aged Persons Homes, Cockfield Aged Miners Homes, The Hunter Memorial Homes and Tyne Mariners' Benevolent Institution.

DAMHA's housing stock is situated mainly in Easington, Durham, Sunderland and Sedgefield. In total it operates in nine local authorities. These areas have been affected by low demand in recent years and dealing with the changing housing needs of older people is a challenge DAMHA is addressing.

DAMHA's activities are driven by six core aims which include 'placing residents at the heart of everything we do to provide an appropriate high quality and continually improving service,' and 'to ensure the association is viable and well managed and provide equal opportunities for all.'

The four main local authorities where DAMHA operates have black and minority ethnic (BME) populations ranging from 1.2% in Easington and Sedgefield to nearly 4.6% in Durham. However the BME population that is over 50 years of age in these four authorities averages at 1.3%.

DAMHA is a member of the ISOS development partnership led by NomadE5.

Viable – Regulatory Code part 1

The association meets the expectations set out in the Regulatory Code in terms of Financial Viability

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DAMHA continues to be a financially sound organisation. The financial outturns for 2007 showed a good operating margin and satisfactory balance sheet ratios. This is expected to continue. Operating cash flows are forecast to continue to cover interest payments. There is no dependence on income from property sales.

The association is a member of the ISOS development partnership. It is expected that development for DAMHA under this partnership will be in the region of 30 units each year.

DAMHA has recently increased its loan facilities and has funding in place to cover its forecast requirements for 5 years. No breaches of covenant are forecast.

Average rents continue to be below target and are increasing within the rent restructuring guidelines. The association forecasts that convergence will be met by 2012.

The association reports that 97% of its stock meets the Decent Homes Standard. At March 2007 53 homes did not meet the standard, of these, 49 reflect the tenant's

preference to retain solid fuel heating.

Properly Governed – Regulatory Code part 2

The governing body, supported by appropriate governance and executive arrangements, maintains satisfactory control of the organisation

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There are currently 15 members on DAMHA's board, including 2 residents. Two thirds of these members have coal industry service. The board consists of mainly long standing members who have the necessary skills and experience to govern the organisation and pursue its current strategic objectives.

DAMHA is risk averse and strategically focused on providing housing and services to its traditional client group of older people.

An annual governance review takes place which considers board attendance, skills and training needs. A board appraisal system and annual training plan is in place.

The board is supported by four sub-committees, one of which has a resident nominee and two resident board members.

In 2005 DAMHA recognised the need to review its approach to resident involvement. Whilst satisfaction levels for participation were in the second quartile, they were lower than other satisfaction levels. Expanded opportunities have been available to tenants and this has led to an increase in the numbers of residents becoming involved.

We are satisfied with the approach to equality and diversity adopted by DAMHA and consider that it meets the requirements of the Regulatory Code and Good Practice Notes 4 and 8. The association has focused on developing its understanding of the equality and diversity issues it faces and has an equality and diversity action plan in place. The board and senior management team have developed a sensible strategic approach to ensure DAMHA is best positioned to deliver services to as wide a client group as is possible, including those with a disability, a group which has significant prevalence in the association's client base.

DAMHA's most recent self assessment statement of compliance was satisfactory and we concur with the board's view that DAMHA meets the requirements of the Regulatory Code.

Properly Managed – Regulatory Code part 3

The association demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement and to effective and efficient service delivery. Given the context in which it works and the available resources it achieves high quality outcomes

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DAMHA has an able management team which has an effective working relationship with the board. DAMHA is open and information is readily shared with the Housing Corporation.

DAMHA was inspected by the Audit Commission in July 2005 and was assessed as providing a 'good' two star service with excellent prospects for improvement. DAMHA has now completed the action plan which arose from the inspection.

DAMHA's service provision reflects a strong customer focus. Most performance indicators in are in the top two quartiles and there is a continued focus on improving services. An updated STATUS survey is currently being carried out. DAMHA has consistently high levels of resident satisfaction and has sought to improve the quality of resident feedback through service specific surveys. This information is then used to improve services for residents. Overall satisfaction and satisfaction with repairs and maintenance are at 95%.

Development with Housing Corporation funding

The association has not received Corporation funding in the past year

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For the 2006/08 programme the association has continued to work with NomadE5 via a development agreement within the ISOS partnership.

DAMHA will be considered for future allocations through the ISOS partnership, subject to meeting any agreed targets, having sufficient capacity, and a programme of schemes that meet regional priorities and offer good value for money.

Sources of information and regulatory activity

The following information is generally received from all associations and is reviewed by the Corporation for each association:

- Audited annual accounts, including the internal controls assurance statement
- External auditors' management letter
- Annual self-assessment of compliance with the Regulatory Code
- Five year financial forecast
- Performance indicators
- Regulatory and statistical return
- Annual efficiency statement

In addition to the above, the following specific activities were carried out for DAMHA:

- Inspection action plan follow-up (2006/07)
- Meeting with chief executive (September 2007)

Additional information about the association can be accessed on the Housing Corporation and other websites and may include:

- Performance indicator information (www.housingpis.co.uk)
- Inspection report (www.housingcorp.gov.uk for Housing Corporation reports or www.audit-commission.gov.uk for Audit Commission reports)
- Extracts from the Public Register (www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/nav.489)
- Rent information and other key facts and figures (www.rsrsurvey.co.uk and www.dataspring.org.uk)