

## **New Charter Housing Trust Group Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2009**

The report presents the headline results and findings of our 2009 tenant opinion survey. A key result is that the New Charter Group has recorded yet again some of the best tenant satisfaction results in the country. This year, the survey was extended to Gedling Homes to give us a starting point to measure improvement in future years.

The survey provides a wealth of data on tenants' opinions about our services, their home, their estate, as well as demographic/social data such as age, family type, work status, disability, etc.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Each year New Charter commissions an opinion survey to see what our tenants think of us. It is conducted by telephone interview because we believe this is the best method to get a well-structured accurate sample of opinion.

The survey was carried out in January/February by PH Research, an independent, market research company. Over 1700 tenants were interviewed, to give a very statistically robust set of results for the Group. This year, Gedling Homes joined the survey.

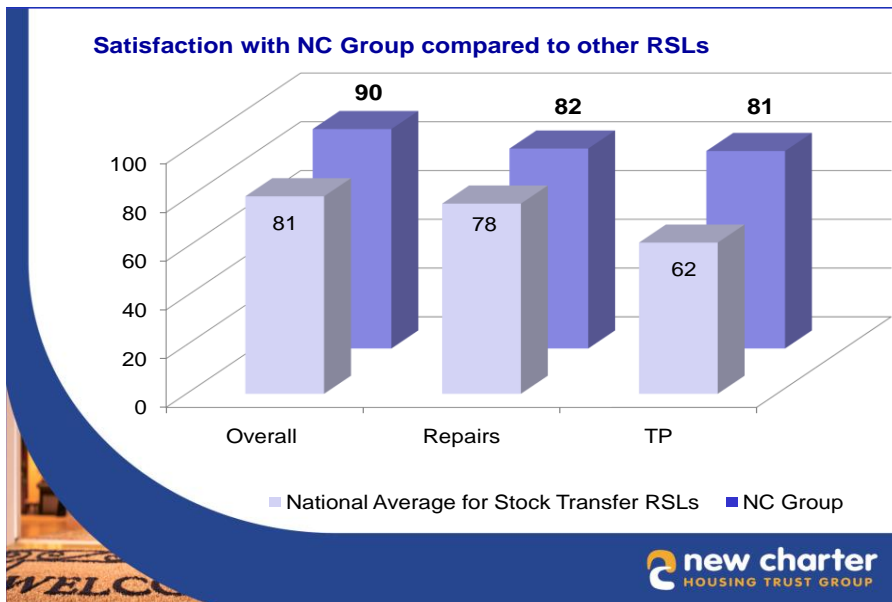
As part of regulation, the Tenant Services Authority requires registered providers of social housing to gather information for performance indicators about tenant satisfaction once every three years. Our survey exceeds that requirement: we ask more questions than those required and we do it every year.

### **2 KEY RESULTS**

Yet again we have one of the top results in the country. We can say this with confidence because no similar registered provider has posted a higher result for the 2008 round of performance indicators. We know our results are not just "one offs" because the survey is annual.

The three key performance indicators are:

- Overall satisfaction with the landlord
- Satisfaction with the repairs service
- Satisfaction with tenant views being accounted for (ie tenant participation)



The chart above shows the KPIs for the New Charter Group as a whole versus the national averages for stock transfer landlords for these indicators. All three indicators show the Group's performance well above the average.

It should be borne in mind that stock transfer landlords produce above average levels of satisfaction compared to traditional providers. This is because in stock transfers major stock investment is being made. So our result means that we are top of the top-performing landlord sub-sector. Further, the national context is that in the last few years satisfaction with housing associations has been slightly falling. Our satisfaction levels have been growing through the years. Simply maintaining our high level has been a major achievement this year, given the wider context of recession which has a negative impact on all customer surveys.

### **3 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LANDLORDS IN THE GROUP**

Despite very different locations and household types it is remarkable how similar are the views and opinions of tenants of Aska, New Charter Homes and Gedling Homes. Detailed figures are reported to our boards.

When asked to rank services by importance, repairs and improvements come top every time, much more important than other services. There is a strong proven correlation between the overall satisfaction of the landlord and repairs satisfaction. All other studies have found this. It leads to a simple policy conclusion: if you want to improve overall satisfaction, you have to have a first rate repairs service. Improving other services may be desirable but they will have limited effect on the overall satisfaction KPI.

Satisfaction across the Group is broadly high with rent collection, value for money, and neighbourhood management, but there are some differences with repairs among the three registered providers. This is where improvement activity needs to be focused.

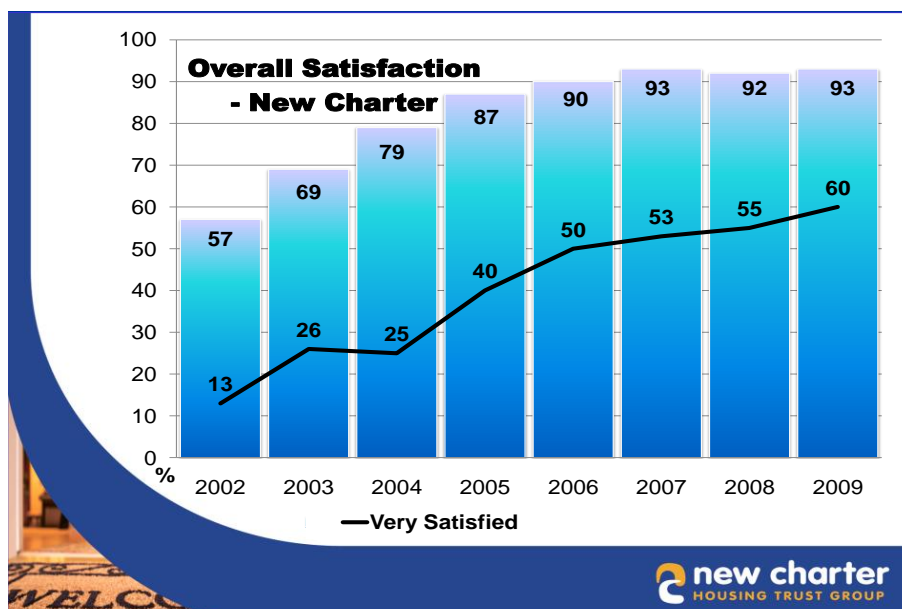
Of the concerns about the wider neighbourhood, litter and rubbish again top the poll. This has been constant for many years. However, the issue of a lack of car parking has grown down the years and now vies for top position. Environmental schemes will have to include more off road parking to counter this.

The statistics give some interesting insights about our customers. About two thirds of tenants are on Housing Benefit but this rises to 85% for Aksa. Nearly half of New Charter Homes/Gedling Homes tenants are retired. Only one in five of all our tenants have a paid job. About half say that they have a long term illness.

Strong differences exist between Aksa tenants and transferred stock tenants (New Charter Homes/Gedling homes). About 70% of transferred stock tenants comprise of only one or two person households. For Aksa this is only about 20%. Aksa households are predominantly larger families and younger. An important issue for New Charter Homes/Gedling Homes is how to cater for a growing elderly population of small households. Aksa households are about 80% BME, for the other two landlords only 2 or 3% of their tenants are BME.

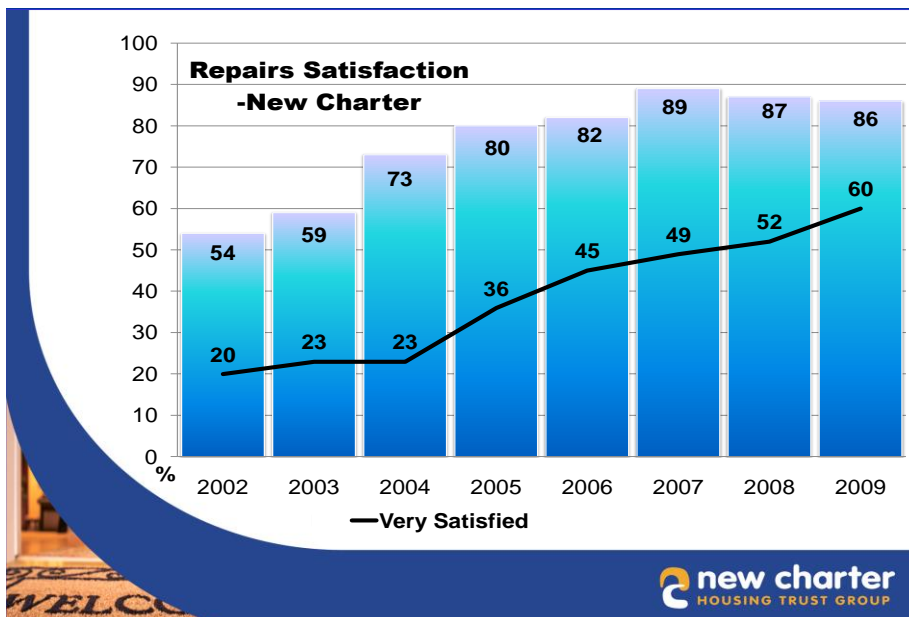
#### 4 NEW CHARTER HOMES

The survey interviews 1000 tenants in Tameside with minimum quotas in each of the townships to allow for a good cross section of opinion. It began in 2002 and each year there has been a steady growth in general satisfaction. In recent years this has levelled off to the low 90s % mark and is very difficult to grow any more.



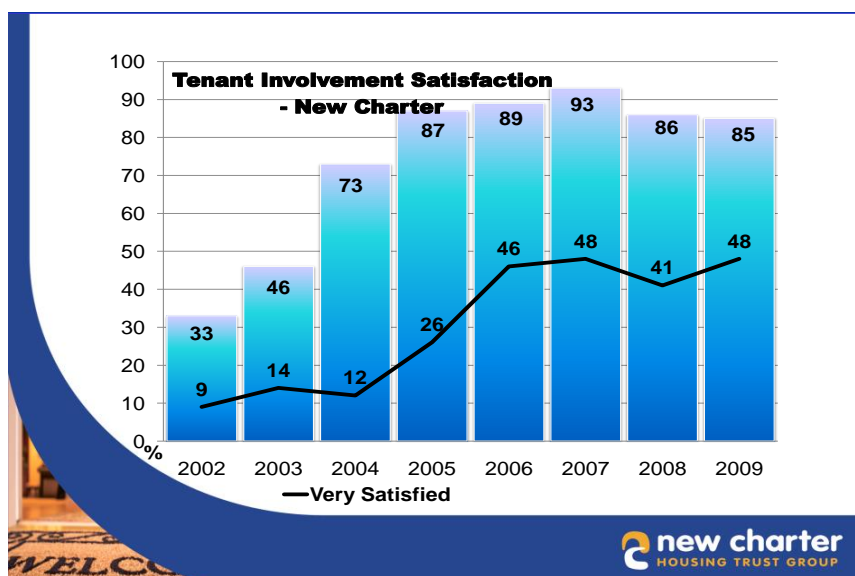
The levelling off is understandable but what is remarkable is the continued growth in the “very satisfied” category. The questions are based on a five point scale from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”. Each year satisfaction rises but

this is not reflected in the KPI. Less than 5% of tenants expressed any dissatisfaction.



Repairs satisfaction has also levelled to the mid 80s%. However, there continues to be a good growth in the “very satisfied”. The two graphs of general satisfaction and repairs satisfaction are a close match. There is limited room for further improvement with dissatisfaction at only 10%. The data shows that the cause of any limited dissatisfaction is not the quality of repairs or workers attitudes, but more about the time taken before start of works and not always knowing when work will start.

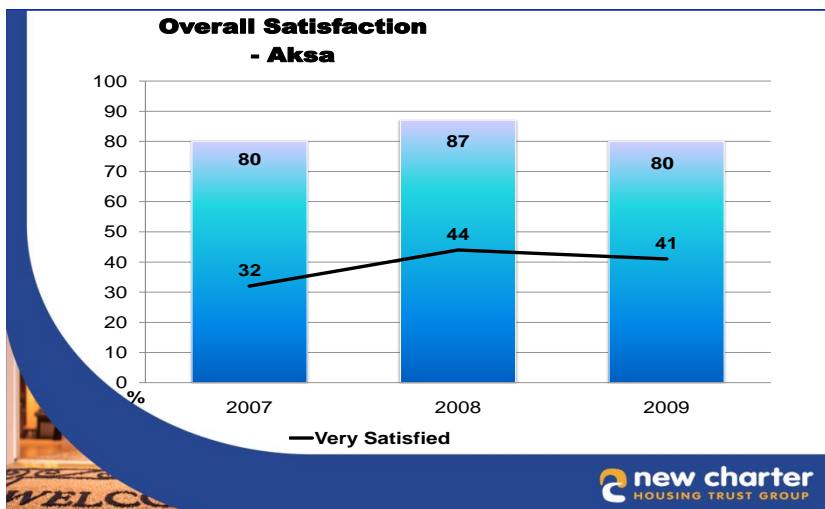
Investment works and a great repairs service have driven increased satisfaction. With investment activity starting to decrease in the coming years it will be more essential than ever to keep satisfaction in repairs very high.



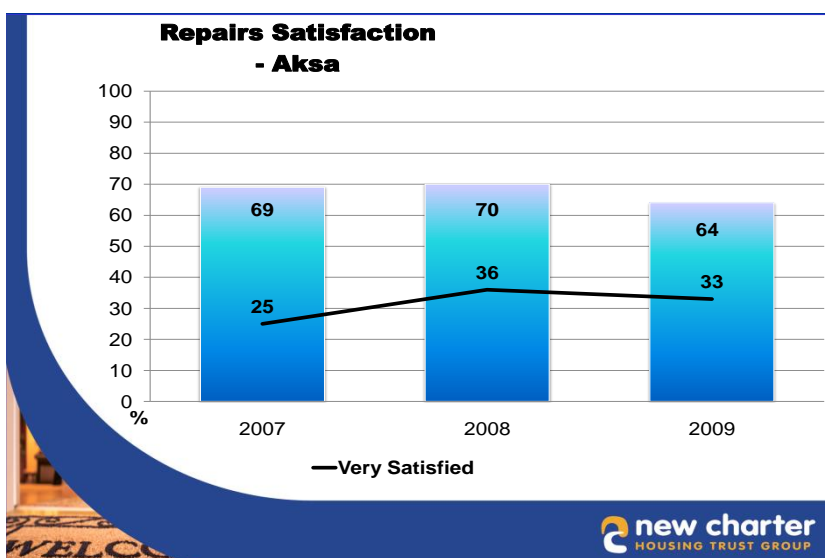
The change in the tenant participation KPI has been a little more erratic with strong early growth and now a small decline. However, the long term trend is very similar to the other KPIs.

## 5 AKSA HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Aksa's stock is small and scattered making sample surveying a little less accurate. 250 tenants are interviewed each year, with minimum quotas in Tameside, Bury and Manchester, but the bulk of the survey occurring in Oldham. It has been running now for three years. The smaller sample size means that results have greater error ranges. Too much reliance should not be placed on a single figure but overall trends and proportions are valid.

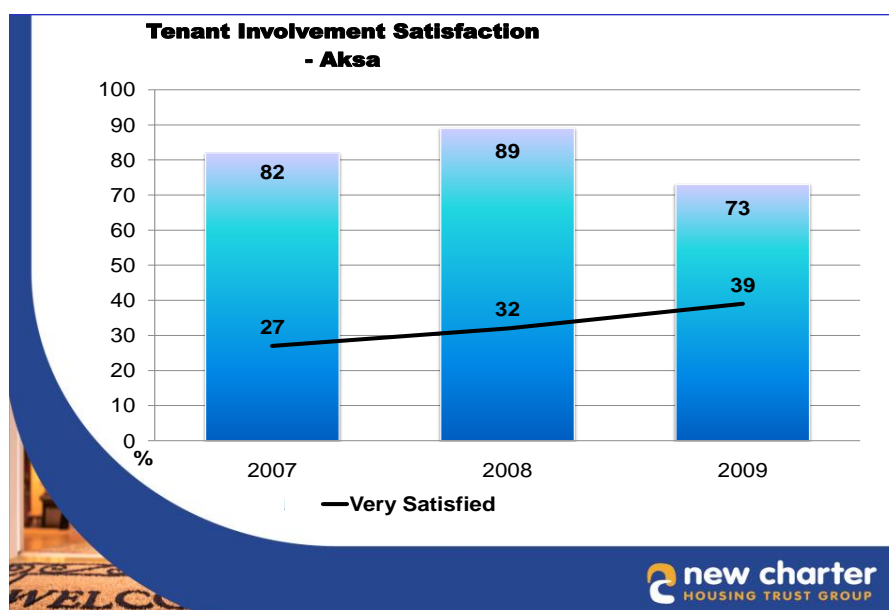


General satisfaction is broadly level in the early 80s%. Whilst this is lower than the Group, average comparison is difficult given very different areas and client groups. Traditional housing associations tend to have lower scores. The 2008 national average for traditional associations was 78%, making Aksa's still well above average.



Satisfaction with repairs is an area where improvement could be made. The 2008 national comparison figure for traditional housing associations is 73% satisfied; for Akxa it is 64%. One particular cause for this is not evident in the data, satisfaction is lower across all the component parts of the repairs service. However, there is also lower satisfaction with the general condition of properties and the overall quality of housing.

Tenants tend to put together issues of repairs, improvements and property condition. Akxa properties tend to get more wear and tear due to the household type - larger families. Although much of the stock is relatively new, it is reaching an age where reinvestment may be needed. It could be a combination of such factors reducing satisfaction.

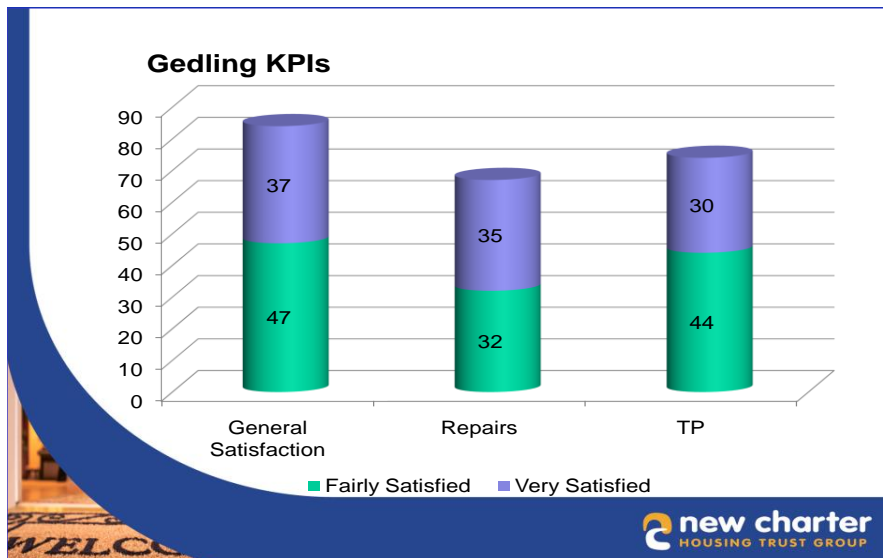


The tenant participation KPI at 73% is well above the national average for traditional housing associations which in 2008 stood at 59%. There has also been good growth in the “very satisfied” category.

## 6 GEDLING HOMES

This is the first year the survey was conducted in Gedling. The main purpose was to establish a baseline from which future change could be measured. Given that it was conducted so soon after transfer, it is more a reflection of the Council as a social landlord rather than Gedling Homes.

450 tenants were interviewed, a third in Arnold, a third in Carlton, and the balance distributed across all the other ten towns and villages with stock in the Gedling borough.



The initial conclusion is that satisfaction is already quite high and improving the figures will be a hard task. Overall satisfaction stands at 84% (national average 87%), the repairs KPI is at 67% (c.f. 78%), tenant participation 74% (c.f. 62%). The repairs service is again the obvious candidate where improvements will have the most impact on overall satisfaction. Those tenants of Gedling Homes expressing dissatisfaction with repairs totalled nearly 30%. This compares with just 10% of tenants of New Charter Homes.

## 7 DETAILED DATA

The survey is based on the NHF nationally agreed survey (STATUS), but also asks additional questions to suit our circumstances. It therefore produces a wealth of data about our tenants and their opinions. All results are based on sampling. The bigger the sample, the more accurate the result. As a rule, New Charter Homes' data has an error range of +/- 2%, Gedling Homes' data +/-3.5%, and Aksa +/-5% (based at 95% confidence limit).

We are happy to share our detailed data and you can request it by e-mailing us at [contact@newcharter.co.uk](mailto:contact@newcharter.co.uk).

We can provide data sectioned into themes:

- **KPIs and tenant priorities.** Tenants are asked what are the three most important services to them
- **Rent.** Value for money, Housing Benefit status, whether tenants have a bank account.
- **Neighbourhood Management.** Views about their home, neighbourhood, caretaking, and what is a problem on their estate.
- **Improvement Works.** Satisfaction with various improvements completed and whether these encourage tenants to stay.
- **Repairs.** A series of questions taking tenants through the process of their last completed repair.
- **Tenant Information and Participation.** Preferences for contact, knowledge of how to get involved, and responsiveness of the landlord.

- **Contacting the landlord.** A series of questions about the process of contacting the landlord and satisfaction with outcomes
- **Anti-Social Behaviour.** Satisfaction with the process of reporting and how cases are dealt with. Please note these are often drawn from very small samples. Only about 1 in 10 tenants have ASB issues.
- **Advice and Support Services.** A mix of general questions about services not covered in above.
- **Moving Intentions.** Tenants' views about leaving this tenancy.
- **Demographics.** Age, household type, disability, BME status, work status, age.