

# THE MOSSCARE HOUSING GROUP



**MOSSCARE  
HOUSING**



**MOSSBANK  
HOMES**

# NHMF Best Practice Awards 2011 Application



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**Involvement at MossCare**

## **Background**

Mosscare is a charitable, not for profit housing association committed to communities and neighbourhoods. We have around 3300 properties in management through the Greater Manchester area and an additional development programme of 120, and aim to deliver a continuously improving high quality, high value, housing service that is sensitive to individuals. For many years now, Mosscare has been at the forefront of regeneration and is working to continue that commitment.

Mosscare Housing is a charitable, not for profit housing association, regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenant Services Authority. Our mission is as follows:

*Mosscare aims to be a quality housing association committed to communities and to individuals in the City of Manchester, the City of Salford, the boroughs of Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and other surrounding areas where a quality housing service can be delivered.*

We are church sponsored and several members of the Management Committee are drawn from local churches. A number of people are involved in the Association in a voluntary capacity, particularly as members of committee. Mosscare has 79 ordinary and 4 tenant shareholders and welcomes the support shareholders give. The work of Mosscare is directed by and administered through a voluntary Management Committee and sub-committee.

Mosscare Housing is the parent organisation to a group consisting of Mosscare Developments Limited, a company limited by guarantee used to carry out development agency and regeneration work, and Mossbank Homes, which is a not-for-profit organisation, which was set up in response to the successful takeover bid for Manchester City Council's Stockport stock. Mossbank Homes consists of 1300 homes across eight Stockport estates. We also have an associate joint venture company, Reviva Urban Renewal Limited.

## **Introduction**

Just under 4 years ago, Mosscare undertook a complete review of the way it delivered its legislative safety checks relating to gas service. An in house team was established in 2007. The team quickly brought compliance and cost down, while at the same time increasing customer satisfaction in the services they provided. The annual cost for gas service with a significant amount of breakdowns has been reduced by circa 30% demonstrating excellent financial value.

Mosscare is constantly looking to new heating technologies to improve the cost and comfort of our properties. In conjunction with Worcester Bosch Mosscare was the first social landlord to introduce air-to-air heat recovery systems, units were fitted in Stockport with all staff being trained on the retro agenda and relevant technical provision. New technologies have also been implemented to improve information sharing within the team and increase the efficiency of mobile working.

To further establish value all Mosscare's engineers [at each service] carry out a full fire alarm test and service but more importantly have carried out a detailed fire risk assessment on the properties. All staff have been trained by Greater Manchester Fire, Rescue service on the delivery of the assessments, and are able to explain to residents about prevention, attention and escaping a property. The service uses a digital information collection system to automatically record CP12 data and transmit back to the management office to remove waste in travel and time. The data collection device will also be used to update resident profile and vulnerable resident data.

At Mosscare we are trying to drive innovation and become a leader in our sector this is highlighted by being chosen by Gas Safe to trial the management systems and audit for the new sector watchdog and attaining a high recommendation.



### Innovation

Mosscare gas team have implemented a number of innovations to the way we work and the services we provide that we believe qualify us for NHMF best practice awards.

Mosscare has developed a strong relationship with Worcester, part of the Bosch Group and the boiler manufacturer is now our sole provider of heating systems for our properties. In the majority of our properties, we are able to fit high condensing, energy efficient boilers but were faced with difficulties where a gas supply was not possible. When faced with this challenging situation we had to look to innovative new technologies and find a renewable alternative to conventional gas boilers. We decided to trial the new air-to-air heat pump technology. Working in a similar way to the air-to-water units, the technology inside the air-to-air heat pumps operates on similar principles to a domestic fridge. An external fan draws air from outside the building into the unit, converting energy stored in the air useable heat.



The benefits of air source heat pumps

- Can lower fuel bills, especially if using conventional electric heating.
- Can reduce carbon footprint
- Can providing space heating and hot water
- Fuel efficiency

Our trial properties with these units have proved to be very successful and we are now looking to roll these out to other properties where a gas main supply is not possible or is too costly. Feedback from the tenants on this new technology has been positive and many have compared them favourably with other forms of heating that they have previously had installed to the property. Mosscare housing was the first social landlord to fit any of these units in the country.

Mosscare is constantly looking at innovative ways to help our DLO team with access to properties. We have in place a robust program for access that now includes the use of Honeywell Timers. These programmers allow a date to be entered for the next annual safety checks. As this date nears, the tenant is prompted to contact and make an appointment and



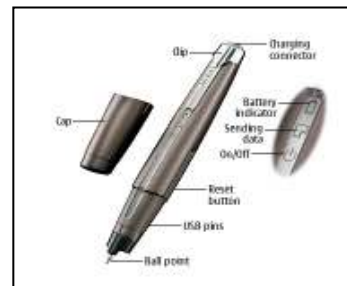
once the date has passed, the functionality of the boiler becomes limited. This has led to a greater success in accessing troublesome properties without spending large amounts on court costs.

In implementing its first in house DLO team, Mosscare housing has been confronted with problems of data sharing and communication. In a critical business process and legislative requirement like annual gas servicing, information and communication are critical. The solution to this problem was found in an innovative new technology by Destiny.

The digi pen is used like an ordinary pen but the written information is then electronically transferred via a mobile phone to a designated email address and can be manipulated in any way. Simple to use and with endless possibilities this new innovation has increased efficiency for both field based staff and office based staff. It also provides a new method for our Mosscare tenants to communicate with us in a quick and confidential manner.

The benefits of digi pens

- Quick transfer of information
- Time saving for engineers and office staff
- New communication tool for tenants



Mosscare provides high quality customer focussed services and has a national reputation for community and resident led services. Mosscare has a strong record of accomplishment of engaging with and commitment to projects, neighbourhoods and communities with the aim of bringing about positive and sustainable change and excellent levels of service delivery.

Providing high quality, customer focussed services is at the heart of what we do. In 2007, Mosscare achieved a 'rating following our audit commission inspection. The report highlighted our positive approach to customers, with the following quote: "Demonstrating a Strong Commitment to Customer Service". We are hoping through the work of our Gas team DLO to build on the success.

We welcome and encourage involvement by our customers in our governance and in the review of our service delivery. Through our Resident Involvement Strategy and approach to Equality & Diversity, residents have a range of opportunities to be involved with Mosscare in a number of ways, to ensure their needs and aspirations are taken into account in a meaningful way.

Promoting opportunities for staff to deliver services in different ways based on the principles of continuous improvement and the individuals needs. It was this focus that lead to the Gas team engineers undertaking home fire risk assessments (HFRA) in all of our properties. A HFRA provides tenants with basic fire safety guidance and highlights to the association any potential areas of risk. This was a huge undertaking for the DLO and was done without any additional resources while not impacting on the services we already supply. It is our understanding that we are one of the first housing associations in the North West to undertake this work and the first to do so by not using existing staff and resources. We are looking to develop the in house gas team beyond a 'gas team' and looking towards a one stop service for our tenants and their homes, meaning a better service, costs savings and added value to the work we do.



Mosscare has a high reputation in the sector for recruiting from our communities and offering training opportunities and this has further been continued by the innovative work of the gas team

DLO. We target a percentage of spend to support training from within the organisation and to support external organisations such as B4box and SMaRT in innovative partnerships. These partnerships see skills, jobs and resources shared to benefit the local community.



B4box delivers quality-building services to local authorities and housing associations and at the same time guarantees to employ and train a high volume of local people. B4Box takes 80% of its employees from people on benefits, who are distant from the labour market or live in the locality to the work. They provide people with a skill and training to NVQ level 2 and 3.

By working with and for B4box Mossclare look to share skills and knowledge that would not normally be accessible to either party on their own and are committed to helping people from its local community.

A further extension of Mossclare gas team's commitment to training and development of people from the local community can be seen when we recently took on two trainee gas engineers through Groundwork. Groundwork is a group of charities helping people and organisations make changes in order to create better neighbourhoods, to build skills and job prospects, and to live and work in a greener way. We believe Mossclare commitment to training and development people from the local community and the way we deliver on this is innovative to many of our peers.

The way in which Mossclare DLO tackles its fleet management also reinforces our commitment to the local community. First Step Smart trust run a garage service centre and operates as a social enterprises delivering high quality service at competitive prices whilst providing the long-term unemployed and others disadvantaged within the job market an opportunity to develop skills in the automotive trade. SMaRT gives people access to the demands and challenges of real work so that they can gain the experience and confidence needed to return to work.

All of the above initiatives highlight Mossclare's innovative way of implementing a Gas DLO. We provide a strong, robust service to our tenants while being committed to training and developing people from our community. We believe in using new innovative technologies to heat and maintain our properties and to enable our team to work more efficiently and safely. We look to drive value by doing more than just gas serving and hope that we provide a new way for our tenants to communicate with Mossclare Housing.

### **Benefits**

The benefits of the Mossclare gas DLO to the organisation are great. Financially large savings have been made on the previous costs of gas servicing; additional money is being saved by the added value of the gas team undertaking breakdowns and installation, which is then invested into other areas of the organisation. The organisation has also seen a reduction in the number of complaints regarding heating and a general increase in the levels of customer satisfaction, meaning Mossclare now has a great confidence and control in one of the services that it is providing to its tenants.

Residents are benefitting from a clearer more transparent service that it is tailored to their needs. They have a clear communication path with their housing association and are building relationships with 'their' engineers. They also benefit from the additional services that the gas DLO supplies like HFRA.

People from the Mossclare neighbourhoods have benefited from the work we do in the community. Our initiatives with B4Box, groundwork and SMaRT have seen local people from the community

gained skills, knowledge and experience that could help them into full time employment or education. We believe that our commitment to green initiatives and reducing Mossclare's carbon footprint can be of benefit to our neighbourhoods in the long-term future.

### **Financial Info**

The financial costs and benefits of implementing Mossclare DLO gas team have been great. Consideration was given to initial setup costs by off setting these against the savings that the team would make in the first 3 years. Setup costs of 100k were required for a full working team; however, the savings in the first 3 years have come to 400k. This in itself is a huge saving, coupled with this the increase in customer satisfaction and the greater control of the services the team provide has made Mossclare M&E a resounded success.

Further savings can be found in the reduction of reactive breakdowns that are now being reported by tenants, by providing more stringent quality control on gas service visits we are seeing the lifecycle of some boilers extended. Through the accurate heating stock profiling undertaken by the team it has allowed us to target the most needed systems for heating upgrade, meaning that any upgrade programme is targeting the most cost effective upgrades. Savings can also be found for our tenants as they new heating technologies we install are more economical to use and are cheaper to run.

It is our intention that any further savings made by the team are invested in the upgrade of our heating stock and in further investment in providing training and experience to people from our communities.

### **Relevance to other organisations**

Mossclare believes in the work of its DLO team and its commitment to improving the service it provides to its tenants and the wider community. We believe we are sector leaders that other housing associations could use to base their Gas serving and breakdowns on.

Industry bodies have continually praised us and our customer satisfaction levels are exceptionally high. Four years ago, Mossclare housing was in a unique position where they could implement a DLO, it took careful consideration and planning but if similar circumstances were presented to other housing associations, we would not hesitate in recommending the choices that we have made.

Mossclare has exceptional members of staff that are highly trained, enthusiastic and determined and it is these qualities that have ensure that the DLO has been innovative and successful. Key members of staff have not only gas industry experience but also many years experience of the unique demands of providing a repairs service to the housing sector; this has helped to overcome many of the initial problems quickly and effectively.

If other organisations are determined to make a difference to the tenants and communities that they work, they must look at their own circumstances and try to apply the same model and ideas that Mossclare has. Mossclare is currently working with other associations in the Greater Manchester area to give them the benefit of our knowledge and experience. We do not believe in standing still, by sharing ideas with like-minded organisations we can look to improve and innovate on the ideas we already have.