



ANNUAL REPORT 2015



ABOUT LATCH

**9 new homes created
from empty properties**

**27 volunteers gained
skills and experience**

**118 people currently
housed**

Latch refurbishes empty, rundown houses in Leeds. Much of the renovation work is done by unemployed volunteers, who gain skills and experience working on site.

When they're fully modernised and furnished, our properties provide supported housing for people who are homeless or in housing need and ready to make positive changes in their lives.

By bringing empty properties back into use, we provide good quality homes, training for unemployed people, improve neighbourhoods and create jobs for local people.

CEO'S REPORT

2014-15 saw the growth of previous years continue in a steady and sustainable way. The number of properties Latch owns and manages rose again, from 54 to 64. Our Housing Support Service continued to achieve high quality outcomes for our tenants and participation in training and volunteering continued to increase.

Demand for Latch services remained very high with demand outstripping supply for our housing, support and volunteering services. This high demand is informing our plans for the next few years.

Our plans for the future include:

- Purchasing and refurbishing more empty properties
- Providing more training and employment opportunities
- Continuing to provide high quality housing related support

An extremely satisfying feature of the last year has been the feedback from Latch tenants. The senior team have been interviewing tenants about their

experiences of Latch and their responses have been very positive. Feedback is being used to shape and improve services.

Our financial performance has again been excellent, with the increase in Latch housing stock and subsequent increase in rental income being a significant driver. Expenditure has in turn increased but a sensible surplus has been achieved.

Looking to the future we anticipate that austerity and welfare reforms will bite deeper into the lives of our tenants. As an organisation we are reasonably well placed to absorb the coming changes and will do all we can to assist our tenants and partners with the challenges they face.

Thank you and well done to all of the staff team for the hard work and commitment they have shown. Thank you also to our Management Committee members, tenants, volunteers and partners for their support during the year.

James Hartley

EMPTY HOMES



This year saw the end of our three year Empty Homes Programme, which was funded through grants from DCLG, Nationwide, Jimbo's Fund, and Tudor Trust, plus a loan from Ecology Building Society. In total, Latch purchased and refurbished fifteen empty homes through the programme.

Over the last year, a huge effort by Latch staff, volunteers and contractors saw nine rundown empty houses transformed into comfortable family homes, providing housing for twenty people.

Vinery View, pictured here, was one of the worst properties we have ever refurbished. Empty for seven years, it had structural problems, rotten floorboards, broken windows and needed a complete refurbishment. We did wonder why we had ever agreed to buy it! But a few months later the hard work paid off and it's now a warm and comfortable family home.

LOW ENERGY HOMES

Since 2012, Latch has developed substantial skills and experience in installing high levels of insulation and airtightness works to our homes making them warm and affordable to heat. We fit underfloor, solid wall and loft insulation, install triple glazed windows and high performance external doors, and carry out extensive airtightness works.

A full programme of these works typically gives Victorian terraced houses an Energy Performance Rating of B and can save up to 70% of the energy required to heat a property. Tenants are very positive about the properties we have improved, as they stay warm, cost less to heat and don't suffer from problem condensation.

We have developed and refined our methods and understanding, using a variety of different insulation systems and approaches. We now favour breathable systems using natural materials in most cases.

In June 2015 we started a pilot called Latch Low Energy Homes, offering insulation services to homeowners. We had a really strong response from a small amount of publicity, showing that there is a real desire for this type of service out there.

We visited customers in their homes, to discuss the problems they have and the areas in which they'd like to make improvements. We recommended the most appropriate insulation measures taking into account the property, budget and desires of the customer, and provided quotes for carrying out the work.

From August to November we carried out several jobs, including internal wall, floor and room in roof insulation, all resulting in happy and, hopefully, warm customers. We are reviewing these jobs to establish the financial viability of the enterprise, which will determine future plans.

The photos opposite show Latch staff and volunteers fitting thermal improvements on houses we refurbished.

LOW ENERGY HOMES



The front room of a terraced house before and after internal wall insulation is fitted



Fitting board to the internal insulation ready for plastering



Building a frame over the insulation board

HOW WE HELP

Every year, Latch provides housing and support to enable homeless and unemployed people to get back on their feet. These are the stories of a few of the people we helped this year:

Paul's story:

Before I joined Latch I had been sleeping on various sofas for over a year, bidding for council flats, getting nowhere and feeling very negative.

One of my friends told me about Latch and within 2 weeks of registering I was offered a flat and assigned a support worker. I was really happy but also nervous about how I'd cope as I'd never had a property before. The regular visits and help from my support worker means I've been able to be on top of everything and manage my flat.

My experience with Latch has been great and I can't thank them enough for all the help I've received. It has led on to me having a positive outlook and looking forward to the future.

Alya's Story:

I came to Britain as an asylum seeker in 2007 unsure of the journey ahead and was given a flat by Latch in 2014.

With Latch's support I'm now volunteering with young people and with Chapeltown Carnival. I also do paid work at Black Health Initiative promoting the understanding of female genital mutilation. I am very grateful for the support that I get from Latch whilst I am waiting for indefinite leave to remain.

Jordan's Story:

By the time I was 30 I'd spent 10 years in jail for drug related crimes. I'd done some construction courses while I was inside and my probation officer told me about Latch. I started volunteering for them doing up houses and loved it. My cousin offered me a job in his building company if I stayed out of trouble for 6 months, and now I'm working for him.

HOW WE HELP

Steve's Story:

I started taking drugs to relax on a weekend and after realising that I could make money started selling them. Over time I realised I was unable to stop taking drugs and had many failed attempts at detox.

Eventually I was arrested and charged with supplying drugs. I was taken to hospital following the collapse of my liver. Detox centres and hostels would no longer take me as I was still drinking and had had so many attempts at detoxing. The doctor told me that if I took another drink I'd die.

Through my probation officer I got a place in a dry house and after 6 months there I was referred to Latch. Their professionalism and knowledge of my illness was amazing and I was put on the waiting list for supported housing.

Whilst on the waiting list I relapsed and my Latch support worker helped me and

urged me to seek treatment. They always sent a text of encouragement when everyone else had given up.

When I was admitted to hospital again my support worker was the only visitor I had. I was in the depths and did something that I'd never done before. I asked my support worker for help. They told me to go back to the dry house and never give up on my dream of being sober.

It was the first time I had ever listened to anyone and the best advice I could ever have had. My support worker has encouraged me to keep fighting my illness at times when I've felt low. I'm now 13 months sober and have been offered a property with Latch.

There are no words to describe how grateful I am to Latch. They treated me like a human being, never gave up on me and guided me to safety. I am still on the journey of recovery but I know I'm not alone.

INCOME

Rental income £435 127

**Support service
contract £126 651**

**Capital funding for
properties £577 000**

Latch's income increased to £1 286 157, an increase of 35% on the previous year.

Rental income increased due to:

- The increased number of properties
- Improved performance in void and arrears management

Thank you to all our funders, who helped us to continue and expand our work this year:

BIG Lottery	£20 031
DCLG Empty Homes	£595 821
Jimbo's Fund	£20 000
Nationwide	£28 100
Tudor Trust	£28 667
Community Led Support Fund	£24 397

EXPENDITURE

**Total expenditure
£670 770**

**Value of fixed assets
increased to £2 282 165**

**Fund balance increased
to £1 983 047**

Latch's expenditure increased to £670 770, an increase of 9% on the previous year.

The net income surplus for the year was £615 387. Of this, £570 902 was restricted funds, which includes capital funds spent on buying properties that are retained on the balance sheet as fixed assets.

As the figures demonstrate, Latch is in a strong position for the future. We have strong and sustainable income streams. Expenditure is under control and we have strong foundations to support our aspirations to increase our housing stock.

THE FUTURE

Latch is looking ahead and anticipating a challenging and changing external environment, with more demand for our housing and support services, rising land and property prices, uncertainty around commissioned services and more competition for fewer grants. We are developing a strategy that will enable us to continue providing our core services without reliance on external sources of funding.

To meet the demand for housing and increase rental income, Latch is busy planning another Empty Homes Programme starting in spring 2016. Through this programme we will purchase and refurbish 16 empty homes to enable us to house more homeless people. The programme will be financed through a mixture of grants and loans secured against our property assets.

We are hoping to find a suitable property to convert into several one bed flats to meet the demand for housing from single people, especially those under 25.

Through the Latch volunteer programme, long term unemployed people will have the opportunity to volunteer on the refurbishments and gain skills, qualifications, confidence and work experience, to enable them to move on to employment or formal training.

Latch's contract with Leeds City Council to provide supported housing ends in 2017, and we are working with the council and other provider organisations to develop a consortium that will provide this service on a citywide basis.

Latch is working with Resonance, a consultancy which specialises in housing and social investment. Resonance is helping us to get investment ready by identifying and analysing options for future development, improving our impact measurement and advising us about social investment. This will enable Latch to determine the best options to enable us to develop more housing and become financially self-sustaining.

THANK YOU!

A big thank you to all our supporters, funders, tenants, volunteers, partners, suppliers, staff and Management Committee members.

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ARC

Big Lottery

Blacks Solicitors

Canopy Housing Project

Christine McLean

Cllr Jane Dowson

Chevin Housing Association

Colin Masters, Master Alarms

Connect Housing Association

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Associates

Leeds Addiction Unit

Leeds City Council

Leeds Community Foundation

Leeds Empties

Leeds Housing Concern

Leeds Housing Options

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Simon Pickering, Leeds City Council
Steve Ellis, Tekspertise
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Trish Rogers, Business in the
Community
Wayne Noteman, Unity Housing
West Yorkshire Probation

Management Committee:

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