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Date: 1 October 2009

Dear Resident,

Re - Findings of the short notice inspection at Solon South West Housing Association

A team from the Audit Commission has recently inspected some of the housing services provided by your landlord. This letter tells you what we found.

We looked at how Solon South West Housing Association maintains tenants' homes and concentrated on the following three areas:

- responding to repairs reported by tenants ;
- the repair of empty homes before tenants move in; and
- the servicing of gas appliances.

We also asked the following questions:

- how easy it is for tenants to access these services;
- what tenants think of Solon South West Housing Association's customer care;
- how Solon South West Housing Association caters for different peoples' needs; and
- whether it provides value for your money.

Overall we found that the Association had a satisfactory approach to ensuring annual gas safety checks and repairing empty properties but had an unsatisfactory approach to day-to-day repairs and weaknesses in the way it responds to your needs. In particular we found the following:

1. Maintaining tenants' homes

Appointments cannot be made at the time repairs are reported, there are too many urgent and emergency repairs undertaken and information for tenants about repairs is not comprehensive. However, annual gas safety checks are done promptly and empty homes are relet quickly although costs of repairs to empty properties are high.

2. Being responsive to tenants

We found that tenants have not been involved in designing and monitoring services, the association and that the association has a poor understanding of tenant needs. Service standards are not in place in all areas so tenants know what to expect and the association's approach to improving value for money remains an area for improvement. .

To help your landlord improve its service to all residents, we have made the following recommendations:

- it should develop a better understanding of tenants needs and involve tenants in designing the services that they receive, including setting standards and developing information.;
- it should improve the way it manages day-to-day repairs and offer appointments when they are reported;
- it should take steps to improve its approach to delivering value for money.

The report will shortly be available on our website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing. You can also find further information about housing inspections there. Alternatively the association will be able to let you have a copy of the report.

3. Next steps

We have asked Solon South West Housing Association to work with its residents over the next few weeks to develop an action plan showing how it intends to implement our recommendations. Once we have their finished action plan we will consider the likelihood of Solon South West Housing Association improving the inspected services. We will then publish our final report. We hope to publish this by 3 December 2009.

The Association's regulator, the Tenant Services Authority will work with them to make sure that the recommendations in the inspection report are acted upon and improvements to your service are delivered.

I hope this letter has been of interest to you. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Anna Scattergood
Principal Inspector
Housing Inspectorate
Audit Commission

CC Tenant Services Authority regulator
Solon South West Housing Association board members

The Audit Commission uses a four point scale for judging the quality of services, as follows:

- Strengths considerably outweigh weaknesses;
- Strengths outweigh weaknesses;
- A balance of strengths and weaknesses; and
- Weaknesses outweigh strengths.