

Centrepont Annual Report for Tenants 2011



Contents

1. What is an annual report for?
2. How we produced this report
3. How we are doing and how we will improve
4. Conclusion



1. What is an annual report for?

It is for you, our tenants, to understand how Centrepont is doing based on feedback from young people. Centrepont is a registered charity and a housing association. We produce the annual report for you every year and it will tell you:

- How we are doing (measured against six key standards)
- What you think about us
- How we will improve

This is our second report to tenants and we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to it. We would also like to know what else you want to see in it in the future.



2. How we produced this report

This year, the report focuses on how we have been doing since we published our first report in October 2010.

We carry out a survey with all young people in Centrepoint every two years. This gives us enough time to resolve any issues before the next survey. 2011 is not a survey year so we have not included the same statistics as last year. We will complete another full survey next year, meaning we will be able to compare 2012 with 2010.

The feedback in this report has mainly come from the first Centrepoint Parliament, which was set up in June 2010. The Parliament is made up of young people who live in Centrepoint services and stand for election each year to represent the views of young people across Centrepoint. One of its purposes is to make sure young people have the opportunity to change their services by meeting with senior managers. Their feedback is based on their experiences of working with you, chairing tenant meetings, attending Speak Out events and general feedback you give to them.

Generally, the Parliament told us that we have the right priorities, but we need to be more realistic on some issues and we shouldn't assume that all services are the same. They asked for the next parliament to have more time to discuss the report with young people from the start of their term. We agree and will make sure we collect information throughout the year, giving us more information in non-survey years.

From the Parliament's feedback, we continue to learn what is important to you. We will use this to improve our understanding of what we should focus on next year.

Finally, we showed the report to our Board and senior staff to make sure they are aware of the priorities and agree with the priorities of the report.

3. How we are doing and how we will improve

Standard one: Your involvement and empowerment

Areas we focussed on:

1. The service we offer and how we answer your complaints
2. Your involvement and empowerment
3. Understanding and responding to your needs

We said we would improve by:

- Improving our response to complaints
- Ensuring all staff help the Centrepont Parliament to take ownership of resident/house meetings
- Increasing the range of activities provided locally at your services



Recent achievements

Since our last report, we have:

- Re-launched our complaints policy, including a new leaflet and email address, ensuring it is clearer and easier to make a complaint
- Started to design a complaints training workshop, which all staff will attend over the next two years
- Trained Parliament members to take ownership of tenant meetings and meet with staff to discuss the issues that young people raised at the meetings
- Organised the official opening of the Centrepoint Parliament at the House of Commons, increasing awareness and helping them represent the views of young people who have experienced homelessness
- Worked with Centrepoint Parliament members to oppose cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance, including meeting MPs. This resulted in an extra £15m being allocated to vulnerable young people in need of financial support
- Helped young people from the Parliament meet Tim Loughton, Minister for Children and Families to hear their views about the biggest issues facing young people today

“I think it was a positive opportunity for young people from all around the country to make a difference. I’m looking forward to being a part of this group representing homeless young people.”

Kiran (Parliament member)

- Centrepoint Parliament members ran two Speak Out events to give you an opportunity to talk to senior managers about issues you had with your service. We have now produced a traffic light system to monitor the progress of the areas that were raised at Speak Out and to keep you informed on our progress.
- Young people have been trained as youth educators to raise awareness of the risks and realities of homelessness. So far, they have worked with 691 students in secondary schools.

“I enjoy going to the schools, I would get up at any time of the day to do this.”

Aaron (Youth Educator)

- The Parliament met with the Board of Trustees to agree how they would work together in future and make sure young people are involved in decisions which affect them
- Young people trained 155 Centrepoint staff and were involved in the recruitment of new staff

“I have been a trainer for eight years and you’ve taught me a thing or two!”

Centrepoint staff member

- 282 young people have either led or attended activities which have been organised by young people

What Centrepoint Parliament said

- Complaints boxes are visible in most services but you would like us to promote how complaints can be made more
- All staff should be trained on how to handle complaints and they have given feedback on what the workshop should include
- Some events are very good but young people need to be more involved in planning the activities so that more young people want to attend.
- Sometimes not enough notice is given for events or activities
- Staff need to support Parliament members more to take ownership of the resident/house meetings and make sure they are led by young people.

We will improve more by:

- Promoting the new complaints policy and email address
- Training all services staff to handle complaints well and monitor complaints response times
- Planning and promoting events, workshops and activities with young people to ensure they are successful
- Giving more notice when events are taking place
- Supporting Parliament members in their roles and the decisions they make

Standard two: Accommodation

Areas we focussed on:

1. Quality of accommodation
2. Repairs and maintenance

We said we would improve by:

- Continuing to improve the quality and speed of maintenance and repairs
- Enhancing facilities using feedback from the Centrepoint Parliament



Recent achievements

- Our properties continue to meet the standards set out by the Decent Homes Standard (a government standard), however we want to make them even better so we wrote a Property Plan

- The plan lists all of our services and what needs to be done at each property. It will take some time (and money) to make all of the improvements, and in some cases we have to agree changes with the landlord, but we are committed to doing this
- Senior managers attended Speak Out events to hear about the improvements required. A programme of building improvements and maintenance work will start this year with the aim of making your accommodation better
- We completed two major refurbishment projects to existing services at Berwick Street and Haberdashers House
- We regularly carry out Health and Safety checks, e.g. gas and fire risk assessments. Our maintenance service staff will take part in these checks so the necessary work can be carried out more quickly.

What Centrepoint Parliament said

- Some repairs are better and quicker in some services but this is not the case in every service. Some repairs are still taking too long to complete
- The Parliament invited senior managers to attend the Speak Out events to provide young people with direct feedback about facilities and maintenance, however they would like more managers to attend the Centrepoint Parliament meetings, so that feedback can be more regular and include examples. This can be fed back to the maintenance team
- The Parliament also felt that more time should be given to consider this important area to help them get meaningful feedback from young people and maybe to make this more interactive and online.

We will improve more by:

- Making consistent improvements to the quality and speed of maintenance and repairs in **ALL** Centrepoint services
- Ensuring managers attend Parliament meetings throughout the year to give members enough time to go back to tenant meetings and get meaningful feedback
- Making sure that you know exactly what you can expect under the Decent Homes standard
- Monitoring our maintenance performance closely, along with the performance of our partners, to ensure high standards are maintained
- Ensuring that our frontline staff are trained in basic maintenance so we can make fast, accurate analysis of what is needed to complete the repair both to your satisfaction

- Working closely with Peabody Housing to bring about improvements to the communal areas
- Submitting funding bids to refurbish Greek St and the communal areas at Ealing
- Completing the new building we have started in Sunderland. This is an 18 bed service with learning facilities and will be open by January 2012
- Completing the Redbridge Welcome Centre, a 12 bed service (we will manage the accommodation only). There will be a homeless drop in centre on site.

Standard three: Tenancy

Areas we focussed on:

1. How we allocate rooms
2. Rent
3. Length of stay

We said we would improve by:

- Reviewing each stay so they are the right type for the service
- Reducing the time rooms are empty in between tenants moving in and out.

Recent service achievements

- We have focused on helping you with any unpaid rent as a top priority
- We have reviewed how we deal with referrals and act if we think that any particular group is being under represented
- We met our target for reducing the time that rooms are empty
- We insist that all our frontline staff have ongoing arrears training.



What Centrepoint Parliament said

- Young people in general feel that there are not enough: move on options; housing support and development; or floating support services.
- The Parliament does encourage young people to explore and experience private renting more (we will use Homemaker projects to help you do this)
- The Parliament emphasised the need for us to manage tenancies more closely as they think some young people are not staying in their accommodation enough, meaning another young person could make better use of it.

We will improve more by:

- Managing tenancies closely to ensure that any abandoned rooms are monitored
- Helping Parliament members to run workshops, which will make sure you have the information you need before leaving Centrepoint
- Using our Homemaker projects to help you find appropriate privately rented accommodation
- Recruiting an in-house solicitor to help staff support young people with arrears issues.

Standard four: Neighbourhood and community

Areas we focussed on:

1. Neighbourhood management
2. Co-operation with the local area
3. Anti-social behaviour

We said we would improve by:

- Reviewing our harassment and anti-social behaviour policies to make sure they are up to the latest standards
- Holding at least one open day a year in each service to build relationships with neighbours.



Recent service achievements

- We have reviewed our harassment and anti-social behaviour policies and we consulted young people on these
- We introduced a 'zero tolerance' approach which means that Centrepoint will not accept any form of harassment or anti-social behaviour. We will do everything we can to prevent this and protect you, including eviction if necessary. You agreed with this
- We worked closely with Camden Local Authority to tackle anti-social behaviour.

What Centrepoint Parliament said

- The Parliament was not aware that the policies had been reviewed or that young people were consulted. This shows that we need to improve communication and think of better ways to ensure that **ALL** young people know what is happening in Centrepoint
- Members also don't think open days were happening at all services.

We will improve more by:

- Setting up a communications group to consider all the different things we need to tell young people and how best to do it. We will ask young people to be part of this group and help us to run 'communication meetings' locally
- We will ensure that we hold an open day in each of our services this year and will make sure that they are well publicised both to young people and the wider community.

Standard five: Value for money

We said we would improve by:

- Continuing to review what we do to make sure your stay is cost-effective, while allowing us to provide you with an excellent service.

Recent service updates

- The current government cuts have meant that Centrepoint has lost some services since our last report
- This is a challenge but we are committed to retaining as many of our services possible and will continue to: negotiate all of our contract values; bid to manage new services; and build some new services ourselves
- We have reviewed our cleaning contract in services that don't have 24 hour cover and this helped to reduce costs and get more regular cleaning shifts
- We reviewed our mobile phone contract to get better deals for staff who need mobile phones
- We now manage maintenance ourselves, which has helped us to take control of the quality, whilst saving money
- Our property plan has helped us to plan maintenance work more effectively, and in the long term, this is going to save a lot of money
- In our larger services we installed 'smart meters' to read electricity/gas usage, achieving more accurate readings.

What Centrepoint Parliament said

- Cuts in staff have made it more difficult to access the bursary fund
- Football activities have also been reduced due to the cuts

We will improve more by:

- Making sure that the bursary fund is well managed and accessible
- Continuing to make savings either through our teams or the things we purchase to run our services
- Restructuring our services to make sure we manage the costs to run them as efficiently as we can

Standard six: Our governance and financial security

Areas we focussed on:

1. How we are governed
2. Our financial security

Governance facts

- We are governed by a Board of Directors who are all volunteers and come from diverse backgrounds and have vast experience and expertise
- The Board sets the overall goals we want to achieve
- The Board regularly reviews our progress, including input from the Centrepoint Parliament
- The Board also regularly considers what might go wrong and how best to ensure that we are able to keep helping you if it does



Seyi Obakin, Centrepoint Chief Executive

- Seyi Obakin is our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and is responsible for implementing plans to achieve our goals
- Visit our new website for more information on our board and management teams: www.centrepoin.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are

Financial security facts

- We make thorough financial plans to make sure we can continue to offer you our services
- The last year has been tough as there have been many cuts made by the government which have affected Centrepoin
- We had to close some of our services, however we are also working hard to open some new services, for example Parsifal Road in Camden
- To make sure we are financially secure, we have set aside some money in case of emergencies, known as 'reserves', and we continue to manage this well
- Our financial plans and are reviewed and approved by the Finance and Audit Committee and our Board.

4. Conclusion

Overall, we are still doing well, however there have been some challenges in 2010-11. Our focus has been on making sure we keep as many of our services as possible, whilst trying to open new ones. We continue to meet the aims set against most of the standards.

The Centrepont Parliament will give you the opportunity to influence change across Centrepont and help us improve in 2012.

We want to work with you to keep improving.

