



NEWS RELEASE

Released: 10/04/2006

Ref:0604/01/QUALM

BLACK COUNTRY SERVICE IS TOP QUALITY

Black Country Housing Group's Home Improvement Agencies have been accredited with top quality marks following rigorous assessments by Local Authorities.

In early January, Supporting People carried out a review in three of our agencies in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham. The formal accreditation was undertaken by Foundations, the National coordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies as appointed by ODPM. The inspection involved a critical analysis of our policies and procedures, reviewed against the six core objectives of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) and interviews with staff members, local authority partners and clients.

Our Walsall Care & Repair Service was awarded the Quality Mark status with seven A grades and nine B grades in October 2005. This means that all four of our Agencies now have the Quality Mark, making us one of the leading Home Improvement Agencies now operating in the UK.

Bob Gregory, Director of Community Services, commented, '*We are very proud of the achievement of our staff who have all worked exceptionally hard to obtain this award. The work of our agencies has consistently been of a high standard and this is evidenced with the award of the Quality Mark. We hope that this will be the foundation for us to provide an even wider range of housing related services to the communities that we serve.*'

The Quality Mark is valid for three years and should passport the agencies through the Supporting People review process.

Black Country Housing Group's Care & Repair Services provide support, advice and assistance to the elderly, vulnerable and disabled homeowners in Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, helping them to maintain an independent lifestyle and continue living in their own homes. Clients wishing to improve their properties or who require adaptations are assisted throughout the process, given help in identifying what work is required and whether they are eligible for grant aid. We arrange for contractors to carry out the work at a competitive price and ensure that quality standards are maintained.

Ends

Note to Editors:

The Black Country Care and Repair housing improvement agency was established in 1990, in partnership with Dudley and Sandwell Councils who fund the service provision together with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It also offers a service in Birmingham, in collaboration with Birmingham City Council. The basic concept is to provide customer-focused services to people living in their own homes who, because of changing circumstances, are not able to maintain and repair them as they would like. Case workers guide them through the complexities of grant and benefit claims while technical officers arrange for essential repairs and improvements to be carried out by reputable contractors. Services offered include: Houseproud and Handyperson Services, for repairs and improvements; Health through Warmth and Repairs on Prescription, for better insulation of homes; Grants, for help in obtaining grants from local councils; Visual Impairment Work, for those needing help in the home with visual aids; Aids and Adaptations, for clients who need homes adapted for added safety and independence; Maximising Income, for advice about claiming benefits.

Black Country Housing & Community Services Group Ltd. is a leading social housing provider in Birmingham and the Black Country providing quality homes for rent and shared ownership. We are delivering more services including, training, care, community development and business advice within a wider geographical area. Having achieved preferred partner status with Sandwell and Dudley, we continue to work with other local authorities and organisations on a range of projects and local initiatives.

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