
DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY

SELF ASSESSMENT 2014

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VALUE FOR MONEY SELF ASSESSMENT 2014

1. Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to present to our stakeholders an assessment of Look Ahead's performance in achieving Value for Money (VFM) in 2013/14. The report demonstrates how Look Ahead has managed its resources economically, efficiently and effectively to provide quality services and homes, and shows how we are planning for and delivering on-going improvements in VFM.

2. What does VFM mean to Look Ahead Care and Support

Look Ahead exists to enable those with particular needs to live ordinary lives within the community. We aim to provide safe, high quality social care, support and housing services by designing and delivering personalised, co-produced services based on the principles of choice and recovery.

For Look Ahead, Value for Money (VFM) means making the best use of our property assets and other resources available to us to deliver the highest standard of services and achieve the best outcomes for our customers in London and the South East.

3. Look Ahead's strategic approach to delivering VFM

Achieving Value for Money is absolutely integral to the success of our business and is therefore central to our corporate strategy, our business plan and our financial and asset management strategies.

Look Ahead's business plan is underpinned by a comprehensive set of strategies and objectives that aim to deliver better value for money for our stakeholders.

These strategies have been approved by our Board and include:

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Corporate Strategy - | to enable those with particular needs to live ordinary lives within the community |
| Financial Strategy - | to deploy Look Ahead's financial strength, its asset base and income streams, to grow our services and support even greater numbers of people to achieve their goals and move forward with their lives |
| Asset Management Strategy - | to ensure that our existing properties support the growth and strength of the overall social care business |

These strategies inform our objectives and key priorities for the year which are focussed on the continuous improvement of service delivery to our customers whilst utilising our assets and resources in the most efficient and effective way.

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4. How Look Ahead ensures value for money

Look Ahead ensures that it achieves value for money through robust governance, controls and processes. The most important are as follows:

Look Ahead's robust approach to decision-making with regard to the use of resources to deliver our objectives

Look Ahead has a Risk Panel, consisting of at least three members of the Senior Management Team, which is central to strategic decision making. It considers and carefully assesses all new business proposals and bids for the delivery of care and support services as well as all investment proposals. There is a finite capacity within the central contingency budget to provide transitional funding for new services, and the amount if any, of such investment is assessed for each proposal in relation to the service's strategic importance to Look Ahead and the value, both economic and social, derived from the potential new service. In 2013/14 the panel convened on 50 occasions and assessed 40 new business opportunities and 10 investment proposals. A summary report of all Risk Panel decisions is presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Look Ahead's strategies for optimising the economic and social return on assets

Asset Management Strategy

Look Ahead's asset management strategy, approved by the Board in 2012, sets out the key strategic principles for ensuring that we maximise the future returns on our properties in delivering our social care business. These principles are as follows:

- We will ensure that our existing properties support the growth and strength of the overall social care business
- We will manage and maintain our properties effectively and efficiently to provide appropriate accommodation for our customers
- We will not generally acquire and develop new properties, other than in exceptional circumstances where there is strong business case to support this
- We will dispose of properties when they no longer support the social care business.

Look Ahead's Asset Management Steering Group meets every 6-7 weeks currently. It is chaired by the Head of Property Services and attended by members of the Senior Management Team including the Chief Executive and Finance Director. The aim of the group is to keep Look Ahead's property portfolio under active review and ensure that the business is implementing the strategic principles as set out in the asset management strategy.

The aim of the Asset Management Steering Group is to improve the yield i.e. the amount of social care contract income associated with our properties. We are currently working on medium term strategies in several boroughs where we have blocks of units currently housing individuals with very low or no support needs. Our aim over time will be to re-use these buildings to support higher needs customers via support contracts. Where we

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cannot do so, we will consider the disposal of properties and reinvestment of any net proceeds back into the business.

In those properties that we own where another provider is currently delivering the support contract we ensure that we optimise the financial arrangements relating to their occupancy of our property via a commercially tight housing management agreement. We ensure that our property asset is well maintained and its value protected. In the longer term we will work to bring those properties back into use for social care contracts delivered by Look Ahead.

We also aim to deliver a good quality housing management service so that we maximise the financial return on these assets, minimise voids and arrears and invest an appropriate amount in the reactive and planned maintenance of the building to ensure good living conditions for our customers. Where we are also delivering the support service we work assertively with customers to ensure that they respect and look after their accommodation. We also ensure that we meet our legal and regulatory requirements as a landlord and property owner in relation to health and safety.

Where the housing management service is delivered on our behalf by an agent we monitor the agent in order to ensure that we meet our legal and regulatory requirement and optimise our financial position.

In terms of environmental performance we aim to provide housing which has low running costs and good thermal insulation.

As regards developing new property, given the lack of any link between support funding and accommodation ownership the Board has decided that Look Ahead will not generally build or purchase new properties. The risks are too high, the cost of development too great and the returns to the organisation are unpredictable and often zero or negative in relation to the time and funds invested. We will consider leasing property if we can make it work financially and it enables us to bring in new revenue contracts.

Over the last five years we have carried out a limited programme of property disposals where buildings were no longer required for the purposes for which they had been provided. Our properties are only an asset to the business when they enable Look Ahead to deliver or retain social care and support contracts. Therefore where properties no longer achieve this goal and cannot be put to alternative use they will be sold and the proceeds invested.

Look Ahead's Asset Management Steering Group makes decisions about investment in or disposal of existing properties taking into account both landlord and property matters as well as the support service related considerations.

The risk panel (or the Board above set limits) also assesses long term property investment decisions which are all subject to a full investment appraisal including: internal rate of return, impact upon the cashflow, borrowing requirements and loan covenants.

Forward Investment Strategy

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Look Ahead has generated very substantial surplus cash reserves through the successful operation of our business over the last 30 years. This has created a very valuable investment asset for Look Ahead which provides significant financial strength and resilience and enables the business to continue to develop and grow. It is very important that we safeguard and preserve this asset, previously represented on the balance sheet by property assets, and ensure that we put it to best use to support and enhance our core business. Our investment strategy which was approved by the Board in November 2013 is therefore to:

- Protect and grow the £43.5 million funds invested with Rothschild
- Increase our equity allocation to deliver higher returns on investment
- Invest for the longer term so we are able to 'ride out the bumps' in the investment market
- Use annual investment income, net of investment charges to fund innovation and growth in our core business

This strategy will deliver returns, estimated at 2% above inflation; it guarantees additional income for service development and innovation and it strengthens our balance sheet.

Investment Policy Statement

Look Ahead's Investment Policy sets out the parameters within which our investment portfolio is to be managed by our investment managers, Rothschild. This includes our investment objectives as well as detailed guidelines and restrictions that Rothschild must observe. The performance of the investment portfolio is reviewed quarterly by the senior management team and formally by the Board at least twice a year with Rothschild in attendance annually.

Look Ahead's fundamental understanding of the costs and outcomes of delivering our social care and landlord services

Look Ahead's core business is the delivery of social care and support services. This represents circa seventy percent of our business and is entirely contract driven. The other essential part of our business is the provision of accommodation to some of the customers that receive our care and support services. This is funded through the collection of rent and services charges.

The funding and the costs of the two separate parts of our business are budgeted and recorded separately so that we can closely scrutinize and monitor the financial and operational performance of each business activity as a whole but also at different levels of accountability within those businesses.

All services for the delivery of care and support are budgeted at an individual contract level. Budgets are set based on the pricing and delivery models which were approved by the Risk Panel and selected by the relevant Commissioner as the benchmark usually via a competitive tendering process. Financial performance is monitored on a monthly basis

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against the approved budget and operational performance is monitored in line with the approved contract terms and Look Ahead's benchmark targets. Delivering to the budget and operational targets ensures the service achieves or exceeds the value for money targets set by Look Ahead's Risk Panel.

The costs for delivering the housing management, maintenance and service chargeable services to our 2,200 managed properties are captured at an individual property level and aggregated up to a company level. Again these are monitored on a monthly basis against trends and targets and reported at all levels of the organisation.

All centrally held costs, such as the central housing management, property services teams, finance and HR functions etc are apportioned between the two businesses at contract and property level using overhead apportionment methods that identify the key drivers of these costs.

Look Ahead's performance monitoring framework drives value for money

Look ahead has a fully integrated performance monitoring framework which cascades from the Board and Performance Review Committee level to SMT and down through the operational hierarchy to individual front line staff. A suite of high level key organisational performance indicators (KPIs) are reported to Board quarterly and stretch targets are set annually to drive performance improvements.

We monitor Look Ahead's VFM performance results across the three essential areas required to deliver VFM:

- Economy – maximising the level of resources available
- Efficiency – maximising how well we use our resources
- Effectiveness – maximising the outcomes we achieve with our resources

We also find it useful to categorise the performance results in respect of the two distinct but very different aspects of our business: our social care business and our landlord services business.

We monitor our performance results against targets. The targets are set to be challenging but achievable and aim to demonstrate continuous improvement in value for money. We also compare our results with previous years to demonstrate this improvement.

Benchmarking our social care services

Look Ahead, like other organisations who deliver supported housing and social care, operates in a very active and very competitive market where 70% of our £52m turnover is derived from contracts. The value for money that we offer is regularly benchmarked by our commissioners who re-tender or renegotiate contracts systematically and use procurement as a tool to drive up quality at the same time as reducing prices. We have delivered significant value for money to our commissioners in recent years and this has been evidenced in our success in retaining our existing services and winning new services.

Benchmarking our landlord services

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Look Ahead does not routinely participate in any benchmarking activity with regard to our Landlord services business. Look Ahead is very unusual in the social housing sector in that all of our property stock is utilised for supported housing provision. This means that the accommodation is provided to customers only for the duration of their requirement for support and is often for the short to medium term. This is very different to that of general needs housing provision where customers often have assured tenancies. For example, the turnover of lettings in Look Ahead in 2013/14 was 1,231 or 56% of stock. The average turnover of lettings for registered providers is much lower at 8%. The length of stay in accommodation and therefore the level of lettings impacts on the results of key performance metrics such as void levels and costs of maintenance. The type of customer groups and their different levels of care and support needs also impact on these performance metrics and others such as the level of arrears. It is not possible to find other supported housing providers that have a similar mix of customer groups and social care service provision to Look Ahead such that it would make a useful or meaningful comparison of performance.

5. Look Ahead's VFM performance for 2013/14

i. **Economy – how we increased the resources available to us**

The table below summarises the key results that show how we have increased the resources available to Look Ahead.

Economy - how we increased the resources available to us:		Target	2014	2013	2012
Social Care	Net new business growth	£3.0m	£1.7m	£2.7m	£3.7m
& Support	Annual care and support contract income	£34.5m	£34.5m	£31.8m	£29.3m
Services	Net investment income (target from 2014/15)	£200k	£46k	£137k	n/a
Overall	Surplus achieved	£1.7m	£2.4m	£11.4m	£18.9m
	Investment return (since inception)	9.21%	7.19%	n/a	n/a

Net new business growth

A key indicator of delivering value for money has been our success in winning new business where the winner is determined on a mix of price and quality. The delivery of new business growth is monitored via our KPIs and we have performed well compared to our net targets for the last four years by delivering exceptional levels of new business wins. In 2013/14 we secured contracts for 16 new services amounting to £4.2 million per annum, the majority of which were awarded to us after rigorous and very competitive tendering processes. Our overall net position after taking into account contract reductions and losses over the past 12 months shows net growth of £1.7 million per annum. This was below our target of £3 million and lower than previous year's levels however it reflects that a large amount of the tendering in the year was in response to bids for our existing services particularly in Tower Hamlets, our single largest area of operation.

Surpluses

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As well as new business growth we target a sustainable level of surplus, which is currently set at 3.5% of turnover. We exceeded this target in 2013/14. We include this indicator as we need to maintain financial sustainability and revenue surpluses. The level of surplus is set at a modest level to ensure that, after allowing for risk, as much of the income as possible is reinvested in the work of Look Ahead.

Return on our investment portfolio

Since inception on 5 January 2012 our investment portfolio has earned a return of 7.19%. We recently reviewed our investment policy and implemented a longer term investment strategy which aims to achieve a higher return of RPI +2% over 5 years (previously RPI +1%) with a medium risk profile.

Maximising the social and economic return on our property assets

In 2013/14 we made progress in line with our asset management strategy as follows:

- We celebrated the opening of Hopkinson House flats, 27 new self contained supported housing units on 2 floors of a 5 storey building for single adults with low to medium mental health support needs in Westminster. This redevelopment took less than two years and was entirely funded by Look Ahead at a cost of around £2.3 million. In order to enable the development to proceed we had purchased the freehold of the whole building which included our leasehold interest in the top two floors where we run a hostel. The development has improved the quality of people's living environments, as people have moved from shared hostel type units to their own self contained flats. This has allowed customers to exercise greater independence in their new homes, and supported them to develop increased independent living skills as they prepare to move on. The care contract associated with the scheme is £0.8 million per annum.
- We completed the redevelopment of a property in Tower Hamlets which has delivered 19 self contained units as well as communal and office space for a new service in Tower Hamlets. This was the redevelopment of an existing low contract value supported housing scheme. The new high value supported housing scheme brings additional contract funding of £0.4 million per annum. The overall social aim of the service is to support and prepare customers with severe and enduring mental health needs and a significant offending history for independent living and a move to independent accommodation. The service is thus generating a significant reduction to the public purse as customers have moved from significantly more expensive placements in health or social care services.
- We have also secured a further high care contract for a mental health service in Tower Hamlets, by redeveloping two of our existing properties in Commercial Road and Deancross Street. These were again previously used as low care supported housing. The properties will be redeveloped during 2014 to provide 17 self contained units as well as communal and office space. This will bring in additional contract funding of £0.4 million pa and will prepare our customers for independent

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living. Again new customers will move from much more expensive placements, thus creating further savings to health and social care budgets.

- We disposed of two small properties in Newham where the buildings were no longer required for the purposes for which they had originally been provided. The disposals generated a surplus of £0.2 million.

ii. Efficiency – how well we utilised our resources

The table below summarises the key results that show how well we have utilised the resources available to Look Ahead.

Efficiency - how well we utilised our resources:		Target	2014	2013	2012
Social Care & Support Services	Services with utilisation below 90%	9%	20%	12%	16%
	Services with staffing levels below 90%	10%	7%	8%	11%
	Customers actively involved in support plans	75%	74%	73%	n/a
	Contract income collection %	95%	95%	95%	94%
Landlord Services	Maintenance cost (reactive/voids) per unit	£773	£918	£892	£818
	Maintenance cost (planned) per unit	£452	£235	£317	£263
	Percentage of first time fixes	85%	83%	82%	86%
	Void %	5.0%	6.6%	4.8%	6.0%
	Net arrears of current tenants	6.0%	5.5%	5.1%	4.6%
	Bad debt %	4.0%	3.4%	3.6%	3.7%
Overall	Overheads as % of turnover	12.4%	13.2%	13.7%	15.7%

Service utilisation

Service utilisation has decreased this year with 20% of services below 90% utilisation. The majority of this is attributable to a positive increase in turnover of customers in our services as we successfully move them on to independent living. This has also had an impact on our void performance. In addition we have had a small number of services where there have been delays in referrals to some of our services by Commissioners. We are working closely with the Commissioners concerned to ensure any blockages in the referrals processes are addressed at the earliest opportunity as well as investigating the possibility of any alternative referral routes.

Staffing levels

Only 7% of our services had staffing levels that fell below 90%. This is better than our target of 10% and an improvement on the previous year.

Customers actively involved in their support plans

This has been consistently high all year and has slightly improved on previous year's performance.

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Contract income collection

We achieved a contract income collection rate of 95% which was on target and the same as the previous year's performance of 95%. This is a good result, given the increase in new care and support contracts with payment terms of monthly in arrears. This is usually non-negotiable.

Maintenance costs per unit – owned properties

The reactive maintenance costs for our own properties has increased by 2.9% to £918 per unit in the year and is higher than our target of £773 per unit. This is due to the higher turnover of property due to shorter stays of residents. High turnover is a demonstration of success of support offered, and is encouraged by Commissioners who receive greater value for money on their contract income if they can increase the number of referrals over the period of the contracts.

Rent losses

We have seen an improvement in the level of bad debts year on year and we have bettered our target which included an element of contingency to offset the impact of welfare reforms.

Overheads as a % of turnover

One of the most important indicators of efficiency for our business is the simple ratio between central overhead costs and turnover. Over the past five years we have seen our overheads reduce from 17.7% of turnover in 2008/09 to 13.2% of turnover in 2013/14. The reduction in overhead has been achieved by a rigorous programme of cutting costs and controlling increases to overheads, efficiency initiatives and achieving net new business growth. In 2013/14 we restructured our senior management team which freed up funds to enable us to invest in a Director of Care post as well as in our landlord services team. The latter should enable us to reduce further rent losses from voids and arrears and minimise any impact of welfare reforms. We also invested in an electronic supplier payment and expenses system which will ensure we pay our suppliers and employee expenses in a timely and efficient manner.

Procurement

In 2013/14 we concluded procurement exercises for gas, electricity and mobile devices. We regularly conduct procurement exercises for the largest areas of our expenditure to ensure that we are obtaining the best value for money available in the marketplace in terms of service and product quality as well as price. For example, the new contract for our mobile devices realised cost savings of £58,512 or 15.1% and provided additional services including on-line billing, improved reporting functionality and a dedicated account manager.

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iii. Effectiveness – what we achieved with our resources

The table below summarises the key results that show what we have achieved with the resources available to Look Ahead.

Effectiveness - what outcomes we achieved:		Target	2014	2013	2012
Social Care & Support Services	Customer satisfaction with choice and control over their support	85%	83%	85%	92%
	Customer opportunities to get involved	80%	80%	81%	n/a
	% of customers moved on	66%	63%	63%	66%
	% of customers assisted into employment, training or education	40%	37%	41%	43%
Landlord Services	Customer satisfaction with home environment and local area	80%	75%	76%	n/a
	Customer satisfaction with maintenance service	80%	75%	78%	87%
Overall	Customer satisfaction with overall services	90%	85%	95%	94%

Look Ahead's 'Learning from the Experts' staff training programme, developed and delivered by our customers, who use their experience of homelessness to help staff empathise with and relate to their clients' needs, was placed second in the prestigious Andy Ludlow Awards.

Customer satisfaction

Our commissioners endorse Look Ahead's quality of service by benchmarking and then selecting Look Ahead as their preferred provider. However an important indicator of whether we are actually achieving the required outcomes for our customers post contract award is the level of customer satisfaction.

In 2012 our Customer Services Committee agreed a set of customer expectations that they would expect our services to meet. This year we introduced a new customer satisfaction survey to allow us to report on these. 85% of customers were satisfied with the overall service we delivered and only 4% were dissatisfied. We have consistently achieved high levels of customer satisfaction across the individual customer expectations as highlighted in the table above. Although we fell short of our ambitious target of 90%, the new survey uses a more robust methodology than the previous survey and is based on twice as many returns.

In May 2013 we held our first reward and recognition event at the Science Museum to celebrate customers' involvement in working with us to improve services. The event was a great success and the idea came from the Customer Services Committee who proposed that we hold an annual event to celebrate customer involvement and recognise exceptional achievement.

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Customer outcomes

In 2013/14 2,792 moved on from our support with just under two thirds of these being in a planned way. This is 25% more customers than moved on from our services in 2012/13.

Over 1,000 customers who moved on from our services achieved a positive outcome in relation to employment, education and training. This is 75% of all those who had an identified support need and 37% of all customers who moved on.

Contribution to health, social care and public health outcomes

The following case study is just one example of many in which our supported housing services have achieved a positive contribution to health, social care and public health outcomes as well as significant savings to the public purse:

Andy aged 32, was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and bipolar affective disorder at the age of 18 and has a long history of acute in-patient admissions and safeguarding concerns owing to his particular vulnerabilities. Look Ahead's rehabilitation service has supported him to move to independent living within 18 months, which is less than half the time and less than half the weekly cost of the average traditional alternative. Approximately a year after moving to the rehabilitation service, Andy successfully applied to do a nursing diploma at City University. He also started voluntary work serving refreshments at Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental Health. After only 18 months at the scheme, Andy successfully moved nearby to his own permanent flat, where he has been supported by Look Ahead's floating mental health service. In the near future, as Andy becomes increasingly independent, the service plans to discharge him. It is estimated that this service has made an overall saving of £241,670 by supporting Andy to transition from in-patient service through to an independent flat in just 18 months. This service has the capacity to support 11 customers at any one time and is fully utilised.

6. Look Ahead's future plans for improving value for money

Continuing to deliver value for money to our customers and commissioners

Look Ahead's Business Plan 2014 was approved by the Board in March and clearly sets out Look Ahead's Corporate Strategy including our continued aim of improving value for money. This centres around:

- Continuing to deliver net contract growth by submitting bids for new services which offer the best value for money to our Commissioners. Our five year financial projections show our intention to achieve a net contract growth of £2 million per annum.

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- Implementing the Living Wage so that all of our employees receive a sufficient level of income to support themselves. We anticipate this will have a positive impact on staff recruitment and retention and thus enhance the quality of services provided to our customers.
- Investing in customer-led initiatives to improve our services and customer outcomes.
- Developing a new IT strategy that enables our social care and landlord businesses to improve customer outcomes and at the same time deliver efficiencies.
- Ongoing containment of overhead costs by delivering efficiencies. Our financial projections show year on year improvements in our overhead rates with an overall aim to achieve a rate of 10% of turnover by 2019 which is the widely accepted benchmark for care and support contracts.
- Reducing our carbon footprint by moving to a paperless office.

Improving the social and economic return on our property assets

There are several initiatives that we will be pressing forward in 2014/15 as part of our asset management strategy to increase the social and economic return of our property assets:

- We will continue to use our existing property portfolio as leverage to secure higher value social care services.
- We are working in partnership with Slough Borough Council to utilise our property stock in the borough currently providing low support accommodation, to provide accommodation based services for customers with significant learning disabilities or mental health support needs, who will be moving from more costly placements.
- We will invest in one of our hostel buildings in Slough, due to be decommissioned in May 2014, to convert the accommodation to a high support forensic service.
- In Tower Hamlets we are considering use of a 6 unit block of accommodation to provide a learning disability step down service which will enable customers to move on from our high support service at Mary Jones Court. This will free up valuable accommodation for customers requiring the support at Mary Jones Court.
- With our partners in Newham, we are considering proposals for using a recently decommissioned building, Ibis House, for high support mental health services. We will also continue to explore new business opportunities to utilise more units at the Flying Angel building.
- We are continuing to explore options to use our property stock in Ealing to deliver high value care services.
- We will be completing the sale of a care home in Surrey which was recently decommissioned. We will sell a small portfolio of properties in Elmbridge which no longer support our social care business.
- We will be retendering our reactive and void maintenance contracts and concierge services to achieve better value for money.

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Improving the social and economic return on our investment portfolio

The Board recently approved our forward investment strategy. The strategy has been amended and Rothschild, our investment managers, have been set an increased target to achieve an investment return of 2% above inflation (previously 1% above inflation). An annual investment income net of investment charges amounting to £0.2 million will be utilised to invest in innovation for our care and support services.

Improving our performance monitoring

In 2014 we are planning to roll out a new customer information management system which will enable us to monitor the positive outcomes of our customers in a more efficient and effective way which will deliver real improvements in our services and overall performance.

7. Conclusion

Look Ahead is a contract driven social business. Delivering value for money is absolutely central to our strategic business plan and to our business success. We continue to deliver value for money to our stakeholders, to our customers and our Commissioners. In order to deliver our vision successfully we must continue to deliver best value for money as compared to our competitors. This means combining competitive prices with the highest level of quality, and achieving the successful service outcomes that our commissioners require and our customers expect.