

Press Release March 2008

NHC's Tenants Contents Scheme 'SIMPLE'-Y the best

The Northern Housing Consortium, through Consortium Procurement, has just re-launched its highly successful Tenants Contents Insurance scheme. Operating under the Consortiums "SIMPLE" brand, the scheme is already accessed by 40,000 tenants from 58 member organisations. Whilst the existing scheme had been in operation since 1998, the Consortium decided to expand the scope of the solution in order to further improve the offering to member organisations and their tenants.

Andrew Carlin, the Northern Housing Consortium's Commercial Director, explained, "Our Tenants Contents scheme has been extremely popular since its conception 10 years ago. Many social housing tenants have historically been excluded from obtaining home contents insurance cover, either because of their postcode area or because their properties don't meet the minimum security requirements set by the insurer.

"With the widespread flooding across the UK in 2007, the requirement to have home contents insurance has been highlighted. We re-tendered the scheme last year under the Public Procurement Regulations, and we're delighted that Marsh have been successful in being re-appointed as our brokers, with Royal & SunAlliance (R&SA) underwriting the scheme. Their level of cover for tenants and the administrative support that they offer to our Members is unrivalled, and we look forward to continuing to work with them."

The re-launch of the scheme is particularly timely given that the Financial Inclusion Taskforce's (FIT) sub group the Insurance Working Group (IWG) has been working towards recommendations and is due to submit its action plan in the next couple of months. R&SA's UK CEO not only currently sits on the FIT alongside other senior representatives from the finance industry, but heads up the IWG. The Government is working with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and the Taskforce to address key questions including:

- which types of insurance are most needed by financially excluded consumers
- the barriers, including cost, to excluded consumers taking these insurance products up, and
- how these barriers might be overcome, drawing on evidence on the success of initiatives such as insurance with rent, and consideration of new approaches such as risk-reduction projects.

R&SA has been working with the Government, both directly and through the FIT, to establish a strong focus on home contents insurance, as it offers huge benefits to the financially excluded in helping to protect them; keep them out of debt, and to manage their finances effectively.

Debbie Southall, R&SA's Social Housing Schemes Development Manager explained "Progress is being made on the voluntary provision and take up of Tenants Contents schemes but we need government to establish a stretching target to ensure that not only are home contents schemes made more available in a larger number of local authorities and housing associations, but are recommending that that housing providers take action to promote the take-up of these schemes amongst uninsured households. The Northern Housing Consortium's SIMPLE scheme is an excellent scheme, as demonstrated by the take-up levels it already enjoys with NHC's member organisations".

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Notes to editors

1. The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) is a non-political, not for profit, member based organisation, whose members between them manage almost 90% of social housing in the North. Consortium Procurement is the commercial services team of the Northern Housing Consortium, responsible for the development and delivery of business solutions to meet the needs of its membership. These solutions are OJEU-compliant collaborative framework agreements, let under the Public Procurement Directive, and accessible by any current or existing Consortium member organisation.
2. 'SIMPLE' is the brand name of the NHC's tenants contents insurance scheme.
3. The rules affecting procurement of contracts for works, services and supplies were brought together in one piece of consolidated legislation for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (which came into force on 31st January 2006) and one piece of consolidated legislation for Scotland, the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (which also came into force on 31st January 2006). These Regulations implement the European Commission's Consolidated Directive, adopted in March 2004, into UK law
4. Royal & SunAlliance is one of the world's leading multinational quoted insurance groups, with the capacity to write business in over 130 countries and with major operations in the UK, Scandinavia, Canada, Ireland, the Middle East and Latin America. Focusing on general insurance, it has around 23,000 employees and, in 2007, its net written premiums were £5.8bn. With an almost 300 year heritage Royal & SunAlliance is the oldest insurance company in the world still trading under its original name.
5. The ABI (Association of British Insurers) represents the collective interests of the UK's insurance industry. The Association speaks out on issues of common interest; helps to inform and participate in debates on public policy issues; and also acts as an advocate for high standards of customer service in the insurance industry.

