

ANNUAL REPORT

2011 - 2012



*Where
people come first*



Chairman's Report

It would be silly to pretend that this is not a difficult and challenging time for all of us who are in the business of making affordable housing available for all who need it. The plain truth is that we would like to be able to develop new housing, for the many people in Merthyr in housing need, much faster than circumstances far beyond our control are likely to allow us to do for the next few years.

In spite of the difficulties, MTHA has not stood still during the past year. The development of the Old Town Hall is now well advanced and, I confidently predict, will make a huge difference to the feel and confidence of the Town Centre as a whole. We want to continue to contribute positively to the quality of life of the people who live and work here using our skills in partnership with the local authority, the health service and the voluntary services. We are always looking for ideas of how best to do this and rely heavily on the advice of our own tenants in particular.

It has been a privilege to be Chair of a vibrant and effective Board of Management during the past year. I am proud of the work MTHA has done but that has not led to complacency. Board meetings are always challenging and hold the Directorate strongly to account. The range of talents we have amongst the Board members have enabled us to do that effectively.

Having said all that, I know that the Board will support me completely in saying that the principle reason that MTHA is such an exceptional outfit is the exceptional quality of our staff. The decisive and supportive leadership, the quality of the services provided by our maintenance team, the endless care of those working in housing management and with tenants and the wider community and, not least, the efficiency and attention to important detail given by our "back office" staff, all contribute to an integrated service. They are not perfect but they are always open to ideas about becoming better. To all the staff in MTHA I would just like to say a heartfelt "thank you".

Keith Fletcher

Keith Fletcher
Chairman

For a copy of our annual monitoring report to the Welsh Language Board, please see our website.

Our Mission is

- to provide the people of Merthyr Tydfil with an excellent housing service at an affordable price
- to work in partnership and to reinvest surpluses back into our community
 - to give people opportunities to grow
 - to provide better housing and
 - to improve the built environment

RNIB
Cymru

yn cefnogi pobl ddall ac
â golwg rhannol
supporting blind and
partially sighted people



Chief Executive's Report

Looking back over the last 12 months we, once again, have a lot to celebrate and acknowledge - a strong and diverse Board and staff team who are genuinely committed to putting the citizen at the heart of what we do. This doesn't mean we always get it right – we don't, but we acknowledge that and learn from it.

In an environment where everyone is expected to be doing more for less and when standards and expectations are increasing the pressure is on. We are often working with some of the most marginalised members of our communities and it is important not only to be reviewing what we have achieved but looking forward to what lies ahead. If we thought times were tough over the last 12 months – the future is really going to test us!

We have laid good foundations though – we continue to develop, albeit, modestly. In the last year our development programme was a pilot initiative across the borough where we worked in partnership with the local authority and other housing associations to bring empty properties back into management. This is an area of work we need to continue to explore and develop.

Our financial inclusion work is supporting tenants to understand and prepare for the welfare reform changes ahead which are likely to have a significant and potentially

detrimental impact on our tenants. Our involvement in and promotion of the Credit Union and Moneyline Cymru offer safe alternatives to door step lenders who social housing tenants often turn to in times of crisis. Our Food Coop and support for Merthyr Cynon Foodbank provide access to affordable fresh and tinned products at a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult for many people to make the weekly household budget balance.

The work of our Housing, Maintenance and Community Development Teams to deliver an outstanding service should not go unmentioned – as an organisation we are all working towards the objective of being able to clearly demonstrate how the involvement of our tenants really does influence our service delivery and the outcomes for tenants.

The Association's deep sense of and commitment to the communities it works in extends far beyond housing – our work in regeneration is highly visible through projects like the Old Town Hall and Flocks the Jewellers. Our work in supporting and sustaining safe and cohesive communities may be less visible to many but is a role we value and will continue to support partnerships focusing on Community Cohesion, Equality & Diversity, the Migrant Workers Forum, the Anti Social Behaviour Working Group and the Global Village Festival.

It is through and as a result of the strong partnerships we have formed that we are able to celebrate the achievements of the last 12 months and know that with the support of our staff, board and partners we will face and tackle the challenges of the next 12 months head on and with the objective of doing the best we can for our Tenants and stakeholders.

Karen Dugate

Karen Dugate
Chief Executive



How we have improved our homes

We aim to provide a range of affordable housing options and services that reflect the need and preferences of our current and future tenants.

- 47 kitchens have been designed and installed to Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) including units, electrical installations and vinyl flooring to the value of £179,000
- 43 homes have benefitted from new external front or rear door sets that were manufactured in accordance with Secure by Design standards as well as improving energy efficiency of the homes. The value of the works amounted to £33,000
- Installation of new boilers and upgraded heating systems and their controls have been undertaken in 124 properties. The new boilers are high energy efficiency boilers (SEDBUK A rated) which will improve energy efficiency of the homes. This work amounted to the value of £331,500
- 30 properties have benefitted from new uPVC double glazed windows to the value of £48,500. These higher energy efficiency windows will help reduce energy bills of residents living in these homes
- 17 properties have had their bathrooms upgraded including new bathroom suites, shower outlets, handrails, wall tiling and new vinyl flooring as required by WHQS. This work amounted to the value of £44,500
- Refurbishment works have been undertaken in 3 properties to the value of £29,500 in order to bring them up to current letting standards
- 17 whole house ventilation systems have been installed to a value of £8,300. This work will help reduce the risk of mould growth as associated with condensation
- 195 properties have been externally redecorated to the value of £124,650
- 103 properties have become vacant during the period requiring works to the value of £201,000 to bring the properties up to current letting standards
- We have provided over bath shower facilities complete with wall tiling, handrails, curtain rails and bath mats in 63 properties to the value of £41,700
- 2 properties have benefitted from new roof coverings
- New fencing has been provided at Taibach Cottages
- Staff worked with residents to improve standards of groundwork to the communal areas of our schemes
- 5 representatives from the Tenant Service Standards Group have undertaken joint inspections with staff to consider the level of service being given and areas for improvements

- The Association has undertaken responsive repairs following requests from residents to the value of £410,000

Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs)

- The Association has made 57 referrals, 47 of which were successful
- The value of these works amounted to £123,500. The type of adaptations completed as part of the works include; the provision of level access showers, stair lifts, access ramps, improved access through doorways and around buildings

Gas Servicing

- 1088 gas services have been undertaken throughout the year which equates to 99.9% of the Associations relevant stock – only 1 Tenant refused access on several requests
- 726 services were completed on the first arranged visit
- 197 services were completed on the second arranged visit
- 165 properties required 3 or more arranged appointments before access was given to undertake the gas service

Periodic Electrical Inspections

- 219 periodic electrical inspections have been completed during the period



Working with our tenants

- We have actively worked with tenants and staff to identify unmet support needs within the community
- This has undoubtedly improved our tenant's quality of life and has enabled them to have a positive outlook for the future. We have worked in partnership with the Lord Buckland Trust to secure much needed household items, such as carpets and white goods
- In addition to this we have improved living conditions for tenants by advising of cost effective solutions to prevent debt, promoting benefit maximisation and improving health

Lettings

During 2011/12 we carried out a total of 103 lettings through the choice based letting scheme to applicants from the groups below:-

- Directly from our waiting list
- Nominations from the Local Authority
- Supported housing nominations from our Partners via MAASH, ADREF, Barnardos, Llamau and Gofal

In addition we have provided other housing options:-

- **ExtraLet** properties – we manage properties from owner occupiers to house homeless applicants registered with the Local Authority

- **RentB4UBuy** (Merthyr Living) - Allows first time buyers who are financially stable to get onto the proper ladder whilst saving for their deposit to purchase their home
- **Private Lettings** – where we act as an agent for owner occupiers

Downsizing Incentive

- An incentive is available to residents who are prepared to move to smaller properties. This allows us to move families into more suitable accommodation. In addition such moves can help to prevent financial hardship as a result of the proposed welfare benefit changes

Supporting and sustaining tenancies

In the past 12 months we have carried out 348 annual property inspections which have identified various issues:-

- Tenants who would benefit from support and/or adaptations
- Repairs needed to properties that have not been reported to us
- Tenants who may want to get involved with our activities and projects
- Tenants who may benefit from downsizing due to the pending welfare benefit changes

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 147 complaints were received, mainly due to noise nuisance and pet nuisance
- The Association obtained an ASBO against one tenant who was subsequently evicted
- Effective partnership working with the Police has resulted in action being taken against tenants for illegal drug use – which in some cases has resulted in eviction
- In some cases ASB issues have been caused by tenants where, following our initial enquiries, we have identified that they have support needs. In such cases, extensive multi agency working has helped to resolve the nuisance problems



How we have worked with our tenants

- The Tenant Assessment Team has, in the past year, recruited and trained volunteers to help Merthyr Housing and our partner housing associations assess our services. During the past year we have had our sheltered housing scheme assessed as well as carrying out assessments on 2 other schemes. The group is looking to assess more of the services provided in the upcoming year with the possibility of training new volunteers
- The community food co-op has gone from strength to strength. Staff have volunteered at the food co-op with members of all departments giving a helping hand. The real strength of the food co-op is the fantastic volunteers who are there every week to pack and bag the different food orders. The highlight of the year was the Christmas hampers which took almost a full day to pack and resulted in many families being able to purchase all their Christmas day celebratory food for just £15 without the need to face the crowds on the high street!
- We provided a disco and entertainment with balloons for the integrated children's centre in Pentrebach and provided support and marketing for Age Concern Morgannwg's healthy wealthy and wise event
- Staff have been active in community investment days where a staff member takes a day/half day off from their normal role to assist in community activities that benefit not only our tenants but also the wider community
- We have been offering some of our tenants the opportunity to have their utility bills assessed by a staff member who will contact the utility company to ensure that they are on the best tariff and also to ensure that current monthly bills are sufficient to cover the annual cost of the gas and electric. Some residents were awarded extra funds to cover the cost of gas and electricity through government schemes
- Staff helped tenants to carry out a water usage test. After going through the straight forward process all residents who transferred to a water meter saved fairly substantial amounts on their water payments with most saving around 50% depending on their circumstances
- We supported tenant groups to attract over £9000 in grant funding. This money was raised to fund a range of activities and purchases including a football kit, outdoor pursuits and leisure activities for the youth group, gentle exercise classes for more mature residents to a range of cultural and heritage activities and trips spanning the full age range of our tenants

What else have we done?

- Community consultations - Coffee mornings, hotdog afternoons and pasta and participation nights have taken place to enable tenants to feedback on services and learn about what the Association has to offer in an informal manner
- Planting in various locations not only improves the look of the area but also lets the tenants take ownership if they are involved in the planting and after care of the area
- Food parcels for those local people the Association knows are in the most need working with Kings Church of Newport
- Referring interested tenants to partner agencies for volunteering opportunities to improve their chances of employability
- Referring tenants to education providers with subjects varying from first aid and food hygiene to social work training and construction skills
- Engaging tenants to be a part of the planning process of community cohesion events
- Promoting diversity and equality through taking part in Global Village
- Facilitating and supporting numerous tenant and resident groups



Working with our young people

It has been a very busy year for the Youth Inclusion Project. This year it has:-

- Engaged with 177 young people, 93 of whom were new members
- Organised a Multi Sports and Healthy Living Project that was funded by the British Heart Foundation. The project looked at using sport to encourage young people to live a more active lifestyle and to show them the importance of eating healthily. The project provided the group with the knowledge, understanding and skills that are needed to lead and sustain a healthy lifestyle. The project finished in November 2011 and it engaged with 71 young people, 47 of whom were new members
- In partnership with the Dowlais Forum and South Wales Police, we have been running football sessions. The project helps to develop the confidence of the young people, helping to enhance their team playing and communication skills, developing their fitness and enhancing the quality of their leisure time. The group of young males that attend are 'off the street' at a key time when ASB involving young people is being committed. We average 18 young people on a weekly basis
- The 'Game On' programme works mainly with young people at grass roots level and aims to encourage them not only to take part in football but also motivate them

to change their lives for the better and increase their commitment and involvement in the communities in which they live

The programmes objectives are to:-

- Increase confidence
 - Increase participation in football
 - Engage with disadvantaged young people
 - Direct young people from anti-social behaviour
 - Increase community cohesion through time banking
 - Encourage healthy lifestyle
 - Heighten education and personal goals
- We have entered two sides into the league and the young people involved get to interact with others from the Cynon, Taf, Rhondda and Merthyr Valleys. Since November we have participated in six league tournaments and will complete the league in late May. In addition to this, they will participate in a Cup tournament to be held at the University of Glamorgan Playing Fields in June
 - MITIE - a Strategic Outsourcing and Energy Services Company bought a full kit, two sets of goalie gloves and six balls for the group to train with. It has given the side an identity, a sense of belonging and ownership within their community

- The Multi Sports project has been nominated by the Sports Council Wales for a good practice award
- One of our young people - Jessica Fleming was asked by the Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil to make a presentation to the council about the Old Town Hall. Jessica worked exceptionally hard last year to produce a short film that summed up the history of the OTH and the aspirations to restore the building to its former glory
- In December 2011 MTHA worked in partnership with the **Night Out Project** to get a group of young people to plan a performance night. Those involved took charge of marketing, ticket sales, sponsorship, catering and compering of the evening
- In March 2012 we began a creative writing project, code named, Imagination Station that looked at developing the literacy skills of the group. The end product will see them producing a magazine. Already we have seen a significant improvement and confidence in the reading and writing of the young people who have been participating



Working with our young people

- We had a very successful summer residential to Wise Mans Bridge. We took 18 young people away for five days and the group gained essential knowledge and skills in healthy cooking. There were opportunities to try body boarding at Manobier beach and to explore the rock pools of Wise Mans Bridge beach. There were trips to Oakwood and Folly Farm to make the experience even more memorable. The group is now in the process of fund raising for the 2012 summer residential
- Navigation Residents group obtained a grant for their young residents to experience team building and cultural activities. The activities included a trip to the New Theatre to watch Robinson Crusoe, a trip to the Millennium Stadium to watch Wales train in their preparation for the Grand Slam title, half a day horse riding and grooming, caving at Dolygaer and white water rafting at Cardiff Bay. The activities significantly enhanced the communication skills of the group having to talk to one another when they were in the dinghy or in the cave to ensure they worked together as a team. It also developed leadership qualities of those taking part, showing how important it is to rally behind friends and group members when doing something challenging. It also showed that with a bit of logic and confidence in themselves, they can achieve anything



The Old Town Hall

The Association takes its responsibilities to community development very seriously indeed. One such example of this out-reach work is the procurement of Merthyr's Old Town Hall as an addition to its commercial portfolio.

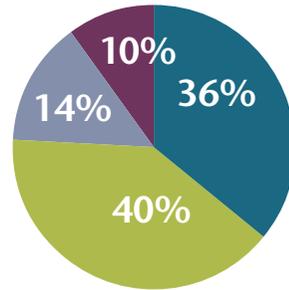
This magnificent late Victorian building is steeped in national history and is destined to roll out a new chapter in its evolution as a pivotal community asset. Work is already underway to turn this noble civic building into a groundbreaking creative arts and cultural centre that will go some way to transforming perceptions about Merthyr Tydfil and, in the process, provide its residents with rare and much needed facilities and opportunities to unlock their creative potential.

The refurbished building is set to open in the autumn of next year and this building personifies MTHA's commitment to its burgeoning community development programme.

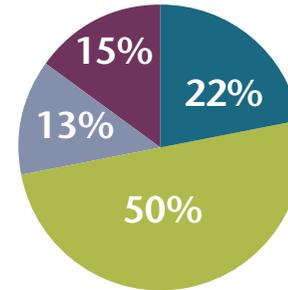


Key Data

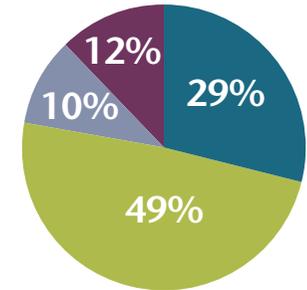
Source of Lettings



Actual 2011 - 12

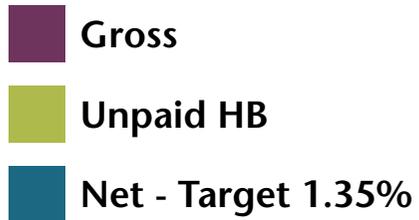


Target 2011 - 12

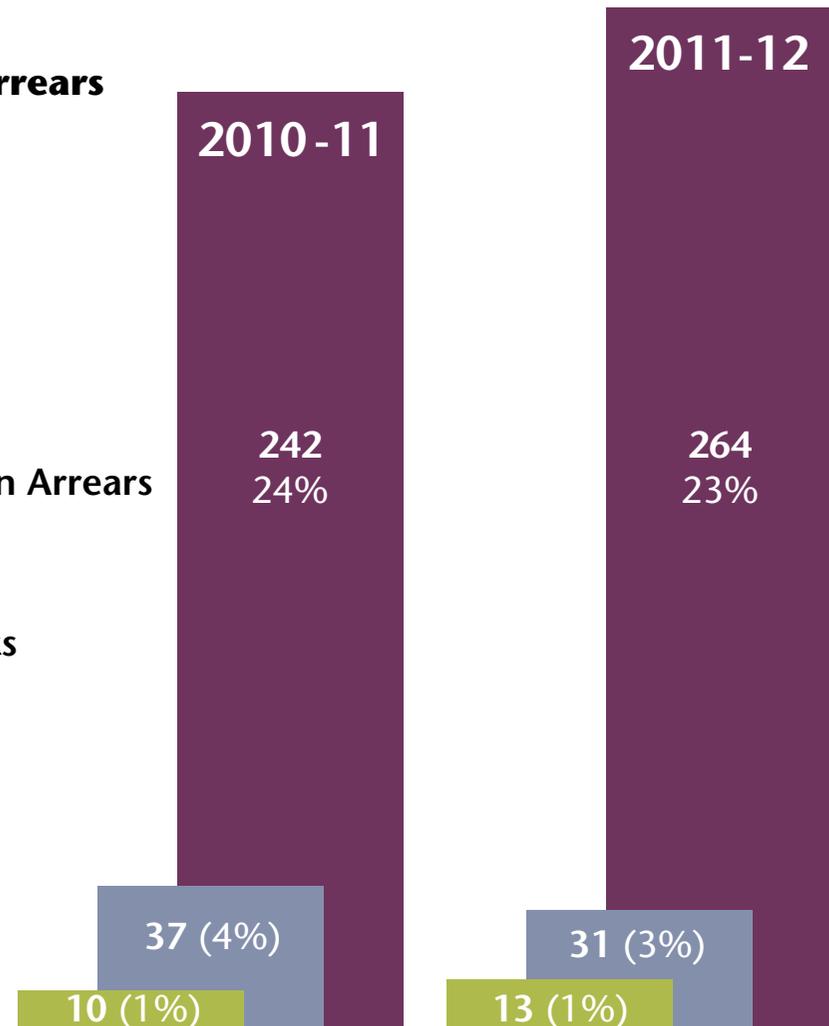


Actual 2010 - 11

Rent Arrears



Tenants in Arrears



Key Data

Re-let Performance

	2011/12		2010/11	
Rent Loss from empty properties	£57,390	1.36%	£64,289	1.56%
Av.Time to re-let (new)	23.8 days	-	-	-

Rent Levels

	2011/12	2010/11
1b2p Flat	£57.21	£54.18
2b4p House	£71.02	£67.25
3b5p House	£74.65	£70.67

Housing Management Costs

	2011/12	Target	2010/11
Costs per property	£427	£429	£441

Maintenance Responsiveness

	Actual 2011/12	Target 2011/12	Actual 2010/11
Emergency	1hr 37mins	<1 day	1hr 45mins
Urgent	1.87 days	<7 days	1.81 days
Routine	12.75 days	<30 days	20.84 days

Housing Stock by Type	2011/12	2010/11
Bedsit	22	22
1 Bed	296	296
2 Bed	444	444
3 Bed	301	301
4 Bed	15	15
Disabled	26	26
Total	1,104	1,104
Supported Housing Units	23	23
Grand Total	1,127	1,127

Supported Housing 2011/12

The Association works in partnership with 6 voluntary organisations and the Local Authority to provide specialist housing and support services to vulnerable individuals.

The types of schemes vary from floating support to shared housing.

Barnardos	Floating Support	6	Young People
Adref	Direct Access Hostel	10	Homeless
Gofal	Floating Support	6	Mental Health
Gofal	Shared House	4	Mental Health
BAWSO	Womens Floating Support	3	Women Seeking Refuge
Llamau	Supported Housing	7	Young Care Leavers

Independent Auditors' Statement

Independent auditors' statement to the members of Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association

We have examined the summary financial statement which comprises the Summary Balance Sheet and Summary Income and Expenditure Account.

This statement is made solely to the Association's members, as a body in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Association's members those matters we are required to state to them in such a statement and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Association and the Association's members as a body, for our work, for this statement, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective Responsibilities of the Board and Auditors

The Board are responsible for preparing the summarised annual report in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full annual financial statements and the Report of the Board of Management. We also read the other information contained in the summarised annual report and consider

the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statement.

Basis of Opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 'The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board. Our report on the Association's full annual financial statements describes the basis of our opinion on those financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual financial statements and the Report of the Board of Management.

PKF (UK) LLP

Statutory auditors

Cardiff, UK

26th June 2012

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2012

Balance Sheet

	2012	2011
	£'000	Restated £'000
Housing Properties	59,421	59,036
Social Housing Grant	(39,669)	(39,582)
Other Fixed Assets	2,699	1,632
Tangible Fixed Assets	22,451	21,086
Current Assets	2,863	2,420
Current Liabilities	(1,362)	(1,695)
Net Current Assets	1,501	725
Creditors due after more than 1 Year	(19,634)	(18,044)
Net Assets	4,318	3,767
Represented by:		
Designated Reserves	509	462
Share Capital and Revenue Reserves	3,809	3,305
	4,318	3,767

Income and Expenditure Account

	2012	2011
	£'000	Restated £'000
Turnover	4,584	4,687
Operating Costs	(3,419)	(3,671)
Operating Surplus	1,165	1,016
Deficit on Replacement of Housing Components	(161)	(153)
Property Sales	5	-
Interest Receivable	43	-
Interest Payable	(502)	(434)
Surplus for Year	550	429

This information is derived from the statutory financial statements of the Association.

The financial statements are available on request from the Association's registered office.

Corporate Governance Shareholders

The housing association was set up in 1977 by a small group of committed people who became the first shareholders. Shareholders are important to us and it is they who share our objectives and form the pool of people from whom the majority of the Board are elected. We therefore welcome applications from any individual or organisation that share our objectives and are willing to promote our work.

Board of Management

	<i>Years served</i>	<i>Attendance %</i>
Mr John Dawes <i>Retired Director of Housing Services - Rhondda HA</i>	15	92%
Ian Bell BSc (Hons), PGDip Housing, CIOH <i>Director of Housing NHT</i>	7	100%
Geoff Davies ACIB <i>Retired Banker</i>	7	75%
Anne Roberts RCN, UKCC, BAC, BA, RHV <i>Senior Health Visitor</i>	6	75%
Paul Evans <i>Retirement Home Director</i>	6	67%
Dr Alun Batley <i>Company Director</i>	4	83%

	<i>Years served</i>	<i>Attendance %</i>
Eirwen Morgan <i>Retired Shopkeeper</i> <i>Tenant Board Member</i> Special leave of absence granted	4	36%
Keith Fletcher (Elected Chair at 2011 AGM) <i>Business Consultant</i>	3	67%
Helen Williams <i>HR Manager</i>	1	100%
Stuart Brisbane <i>Construction Consultant</i>	1	67%
Huw Baker <i>Accountant</i>	1	33%
Timothy Worel <i>Tenant Board Member</i>	1	83%
Courtney Roberts <i>Tenant Board Member</i>	1	100%
Neville Carpenter <i>Tenant Board Member</i>	1	67%
<i>Executive Officers:</i>		
Karen Dugate BA (Hons), PGDip HM, CIOH <i>Chief Executive</i>		
Karen Courts FCCA, MA <i>Director of Corporate Services</i>		
Gail Scerri <i>Director of Housing, Property and Community Services</i>		