



**South
Derbyshire**
District Council

South Derbyshire District Council

‘Through high quality services, delivered in partnership with customers, the provision of well maintained affordable homes that meet the requirements and aspirations of the people of South Derbyshire’

Housing Services Service Plan 2008-2009

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1. Introduction

This service plan brings together our priorities for improvement in relation to Housing Services, as identified in the [Council's Corporate Plan](#) 2008/11 and Community Strategy.

Our vision is to “make South Derbyshire a healthier, more prosperous and safer place to live by offering value for money services”.

In 2008/9 our key priority outcomes are:-

- Promote independent living through the utilisation of Telecare technologies and Extra Care
- Develop further homelessness prevention services and the reoccurrence of homelessness in families
- Deliver our local 'Respect' action plan
- Deliver the programme for ensuring that all Council homes are decent ahead of the Government's 2010 deadline
- Deliver Extra Care Housing project
- Deliver 'move-on' protocol for people in temporary supported accommodation
- Introduce customer choice into social housing allocations via Choice Based Lettings
- Deliver detailed Housing Needs Assessment for whole District

Head of Service – Bob Ledger
Head of Housing

2. Scope and Aims of the Service

2.1 Service Area

General

a. Key Service Areas

We are the main housing provider in the district with stock totalling 3099 properties. We deliver services such as responsive repairs, planned improvements, homelessness advice and prevention, rent accounting, rent arrears, addressing anti-social behaviour, the sheltered housing warden provision, CareLine services, the administration of the right to buy scheme, mutual exchanges and transfers. In all of these we aim to involve our tenants through participation. The Housing Division also manages the long-term residency gypsy –site at Church Broughton, the management of the Civic offices and the depot as well as undertaking maintenance to all the Council's public buildings

b. Customer Relationships

Our relationship with our customers is different from other departments within the Council as a result of the direct landlord role and other support functions. Through issues such as the allocation of property, the assessment of homelessness applications, the resolution of neighbour complaints, the operation of customer support plans by sheltered housing wardens etc we are involved in the detail of people's lives.

This different level of relationship is both the reason why customer care is vital in our role but also the reason that we will not always be able to deliver on people's expectations. We see our customers more often and their opinion of us is usually based over a number of interactions with us. According to our last survey figures, in 2006/7, our customer satisfaction rating is very high at 89%* (*audit commission adjusted figure is even higher at 96%). This represents clear top quartile performance (81% or above) and is the 5th highest satisfaction rating nationwide amongst Councils and ALMOs.

Housing Operations

a. Allocations and Homelessness

We have a statutory responsibility to manage and regularly review the waiting list, which currently stands at 1564 applicants. We work with partners to provide advice and prevent homelessness. In 2007-08 we received 173 homeless 'formal' presentations ('presentation' is the legal terminology and places statutory responsibilities on the Council to investigate each presentation thoroughly before reaching a decision which needs to be formally notified).

We accommodate many applicants throughout the year in our own stock, which is brought to a 'fit to let' standard before being offered to prospective new tenants. We also assist customers in finding accommodation through the private sector, RSLs and the Home Swapper scheme.

b. Income and Tenancy Management

We have a team of 5 Housing Officers who monitor and review the collection of rent payments from our customers to ensure that we meet our targets for rent collection. Their work is varied covering rent collection, tenancy enforcement and anti-social behaviour as well as offering support and resolving issues which impact on people's lives.

c. Sheltered Housing

This service continues to provide housing and support to elderly residents through the Community Warden scheme, CareLine 24 Hour call centre and Lifeline Services. We have committed to invest £1.1m to deliver the Sheltered Housing Vision to improve services. This has been recognised and rewarded with the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies accreditation.

We are also assisting private sector residents remain in their own homes by promoting and running a Telecare service in South Derbyshire. This allows residents to receive a range of sensors and alarms, linked to our CareLine service, to provide a safe and secure solution to living independently.

Responsive and Planned Maintenance

We carried out 7,027 responsive repairs last financial year; 1022 as emergencies, within 24 hours, 1202 as urgent within 3 days and 4762 routine repairs within 20 days. 99% of repairs are now appointed and performance against targets is high with 96% of urgent repairs and 92% of routine repairs completed on time.

Within our planned maintenance service we are committed and on track for all our properties to meet the Decent Homes Standard by the government deadline of 2010.

Overall satisfaction in repairs and maintenance, as assessed through satisfaction surveys is exceptionally high at 97%.

Tenant Participation

We are keen to involve all our tenants in decision-making. Over the past year staff, members and the South Derbyshire Tenants' Forum have been working hard to increase and promote tenant participation throughout Housing Services. A number of events have been held, and will continue to be held, where tenant interaction has been key to the shaping of the way services are run.

Our annual Open Day for tenants has been a huge success. In 2007 over 200 people from all over the district attended to see Housing Services showcasing the different services it can offer. The Homelessness Challenge Day in March was attended by over 30 tenants & residents taking part in a number of workshops. Feedback received led to a joint officer/resident working group being established which is delivering real meaningful changes in the way we approach this element of service delivery

Strategic Housing

The Service also has a strategic Housing role as encompassed in legislation and must make assessment of overall housing needs in the district as well as the percentage of new housing that should be affordable for rent. Such a role inevitably ties closely to planners and the Core strategic group, which incorporates 5 elected members of Council, and undertakes a monitoring role on the progress of these matters.

We work closely with Registered Social Landlords and developers as well local Planners to ensure that appropriate new affordable housing is built to meet identified needs as well as ensuring that existing developments and supported housing schemes continue to meet current and future needs.

Performance and Business Support

The service is supported by its Performance and Business unit which provides administration to functions such as rent accounting, former tenant arrears, rechargeable repairs as well as running our own IT service.

The unit also coordinates and leads on service improvement and performance monitoring by researching best practice, analysing and reporting performance data and driving through change to reach top quartile performance and improve the service received by our customers.

2.2 Key Aims

Housing Services has long established aims, which are:

- Listening to and putting customers first
- Valuing staff commitment
- Constant performance improvement

3. Key Achievements 2007/8

Safer and Healthier Communities

- RoSPA Gold Award for our commitment to protecting the health, safety and well-being of our staff and tenants
- New Homelessness and Prevention strategy focusing on prevention rather than crisis management
- Our Telecare service has taken 108 referrals since April 2007 and is the clear leader in promotion of the service in Derbyshire. The next best district has taken only 58 referrals with the least being only 28.
- Review, consultation and relaunch of anti-social behaviour policy

You at the centre

- Service challenge days held to allow opportunities for involvement in service delivery and decision making

Higher Quality Services

- Consistent top quartile performance
- Charter Mark Standard for Customer Service Excellence
- Achieved level 3 of TSA accreditation for Telecare services
- CareLine hardware upgrade
- Adoption of HomeSwapper scheme
- Improvements to the way we prioritised repairs requests to reduce the number of repairs designated as emergency so that our customers received a fairer service
- Repairs Diagnostic Tool introduced to assist staff in adding repairs requests

Prosperity for All

- Funding secured for Extra Care housing project
- Guidance produced for developers on affordable housing requirements

Rural South Derbyshire

- Funding secured for 9 new affordable homes in Coton in the Elms
- 3 year programme to assess housing needs in rural parishes completed

4. Priorities for Action 2008/9

Safer and Healthier Communities

- Develop further homelessness prevention services
- Promote independent living through the utilisation of Telecare and Extra Care.
- Deliver local 'Respect' Action through estate inspections and subsequent improvement projects
- Launch Homelessness Steering group with partners
- Implement additional BME and Gypsy/Travellers support process
- Pilot Supported Lodging scheme
- Maintain RoSPA award standard for health and safety
- Deliver on recommendations of Shelter quality audit of homelessness service
- Implement referrals to National Probation Service for vulnerable tenants requiring decorating following major works
- Seek committee approval for physical improvements to Smallthorn Place

You at the centre

- Explore opportunities for expansion of TP framework to involve RSL tenants and communities

Higher Quality Services

- Establish detailed action plan for improvement of all 53 garage sites
- Complete phase 2 of physical sheltered housing standards
- Restructure Private sector Lifeline/Telecare provision
- Introduce mobile IT technology to make efficiencies in repairs service
- Introduce repairs diagnostic tool for customers
- Achieve ISO9001 accreditation
- Establish new Leaseholder policy and promote better communication with leaseholders within Council stock
- Introduce a menu of services for local RSLs to utilise

Prosperity for All

- Deliver improvements to Council housing stock to meet Decent Homes standard by 2010
- Finalise development programme for Extra Care housing project for South Derbyshire
- Establish 'Move-On' protocol for people in temporary supported accommodation in partnership
- Introduce Choice Based Lettings system in conjunction with RSLs
- Present full district wide report on Housing Needs assessment
- Establish formal process between developers and the Council on the delivery of affordable housing at agreed targets
- Complete new Housing Strategy

Rural South Derbyshire

- Develop and adopt a Rural Housing Strategy in conjunction with partners to identify potential development land

5. People and Resources

5.1 Workforce Planning

- The current structure for the service is attached at **Appendix A**.
- **Workforce priorities for 2008/9 are:**
 - Restructure of team responsible for Lifeline and Telecare provision to public and private sector stock
 - Evaluate training requests from Personal Development Reviews and implement in conjunction with HR
 - Introduce central department contact point for training requests and introduce clearer recording of course attendance
 - Establish training package for introduction of CBL and roll out to relevant staff
 - Schedule refresher Diversity training to all Housing staff
 - Schedule refresher Customer Care training to all Housing Staff
 - Continue with apprenticeship scheme at DLO

5.2 Financial Resources

The budget for 2008/9 is attached at **Appendix B**.

The following is a summary to achieve our key priorities:-

Revenue

Purpose	Budget (£)
Housing Revenue Account HRA	9,908,122
Responsive Repairs (including voids and minor adaptations)	1,847,417
Planned Maintenance	1,303,112
CBL	122,483
Homelessness	123,050
Housing Strategy	162,406

Capital

Purpose	Budget (£)
Improvements to meet Decent Homes Standard	2,139,500
Strategic Housing Market Assessment	25,500

5.3 Assets

We own 3099 properties across the district of varying types and designs, plus a number of land parcels, shops, garages and a hostel. The value of these assets amounts to:

Type	Budget (£)
<i>Land</i>	<i>409,500</i>
<i>Communal Areas</i>	<i>972,500</i>
<i>Shops, garages and hostel</i>	<i>1,202,250</i>
<i>Stock (Existing use value/Social Housing)</i>	<i>128,953,750</i>
Total	131,538,000

The above valuations have been carried out by the District Valuer for accounting purposes.

Draft

6. Service Performance

6.1 The service's key actions and performance measures are contained in the Performance Management Action Plan Template attached in **Appendix C**

6.2 The comparison of our BVPI performance against other District Local Authorities is attached in **Appendix D**

6.3 The service's comparative financial data (as at 31st March 2007) is attached in **Appendix E**

6.4 Key Strengths (what we do well)

- Provision of high performing services providing excellent customer service
- Celebrating our achievements and building positive reputations and relationships with partners
- Verification of our performance by external accreditation
- Providing a cost effective value for money service
- Effective financial management leading to £0.5m savings and an under spend for 2007/08
- Effective track record of partnership work to develop services
- Responsive to customer needs following challenges to the way we deliver our services
- Experienced staff with extensive knowledge of the services they provide

6.5 Areas for Improvement

- Meeting targets for rent collection and arrears cases for current tenants
- Reduction of former tenant arrears and increase of collection rates
- Reduction of re-let times for void properties and implementation of a review of void procedures

7. Managing Risks

There have been no significant risks identified for 2008/9. However we have highlighted several priority areas where work will be undertaken where future risk can be reduced. These are:

- Addressing lack of affordable housing for rent
- Implementation of asbestos policy

Further details can be found at **Appendix F**. (*Risk Register*)

8. Efficiencies

8.1 Business Improvement

The Housing Service has committed to review the cost base of the Housing Revenue Account during 2008/09 to determine cash releasing value for money gains.

During the early part of 2008 The DLO introduced a partnership with Buildbase to stock and supply materials for the work we carry out to our properties. The aim of this scheme is to generate greater efficiencies in terms of delivery and collection times and overall costs.

8.2 Service Review – Business Improvement

Directorate	Service Area	Service	Review	Comments
Community Services	Housing Services	Housing Operations	2011/12	Service last reviewed in Committee report of late 2006 and implemented early 2007. Previous reviews in 2003 and 2004.
		Repairs & Improvement	2011/12	
		Performance & Business Management	2011/12	

8.3 Partnerships

A partnership is an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work together, with shared risk, to achieve mutually beneficial outcome(s) that will improve the quality of life for residents.

Significant Partnerships

- P3 are a charitable organisation who provide homelessness support and advice services. They have 15 support workers in the local area. P3 assist us in

temporarily housing and supporting the statutory homeless in a variety of supported accommodation, including the Council's homeless hostel, which they manage on our behalf. Our aim is to provide support services for those in need and assist those that are statutory homeless to return to permanent accommodation

- Derbyshire Housing Aid provides housing advice and homeless support services. With this in mind we have recently set up a Service Level Agreement and provided funding in an effort to broaden the range of advice and support services on offer to local people within South Derbyshire
- The development of the proposed Extra Care Village in Swadlincote has allowed us to partner with the County Council, Health and local Housing Associations. Our joint aim is to provide a centralised location for services aimed at vulnerable residents, providing additional care facilities that allow residents to live independently
- We have chosen to work in partnership with East Midlands Housing Association to provide rural housing. Following the forthcoming report on rural housing needs this is due to become a significant partnership in delivering affordable homes in the rural parishes.
- We have formed a new partnership with Derby City Council and 20 other RSLs in order to deliver the Choice Based Lettings scheme in South Derbyshire. This partnership will deliver a significant change in the way we allocate our properties and will provide greater choice and transparency to our customers

Other Partnerships (not defined as significant)

- A Good Practice Group was established in partnership with Derby Homes and Trent & Dove Housing. The group allows us to share best practice and learn from each organisation's experiences. The group was the catalyst for us achieving the RoSPA gold award
- We have formed close working relationships in partnering with our Major Works contractors, Harvey & Clark, Powerminster and Robert Prettie. These relationships have allowed us to provide a more responsive and better quality service to our customers
- We are members of the Community Safety partnership which aims to reduce crime and disorder in South Derbyshire. We particularly contribute to work on domestic violence and anti-social behaviour.
- The Supporting People Initiative, in partnership with Derbyshire County Council, delivers £1.3m of housing related support services in South Derbyshire

8.4 Procurement

There are no current or future plans to market test any of our services.

In 2006/07 we benchmarked the DLO independently and the findings were that tendering was not cost effective.

An internal benchmarking review also proved that Cleaning Services was not cost effective in tendering.

9. Consultation

9.1 We are due to consult in the following areas in 2008/09:

- Choice Based Lettings – Consultation is taking place in May 2008 to outline our proposals for the new scheme. Our aim is to receive feedback on the proposed new allocations policy and suggestions for the best locations to place the weekly property adverts to maximise engagement with the scheme.
- STATUS tenants' satisfaction survey. This is a survey of all general needs tenants to monitor satisfaction with the housing services they receive. This will give us valuable information on how our services are received to allow us to make improvements to any potential weak areas and recognise where we are achieving good practice
- Satisfaction with how we carry out Responsive Repairs and Capital Programmes is sought following work to each property. This consultation allows to monitor how well we are delivering our repairs services and identifies any potential areas of delivery that require improvement

9.2 The following consultation will need to be undertaken in future years

- Consultation with the residents of Stenson Fields on the Derby fringe is required to ascertain housing need across all resident groups
- Challenge the Housing Needs Survey regarding BME group findings

10. Cross Cutting Issues

Community Safety

This service will aim to comply with [Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act](#) by taking into account community safety dimensions in all of its work. All policies, strategies, plans and budgets will need to be considered from the standpoint of their potential contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder.

Equalities and Fairness

We will ensure that

- Our services are accessible to all parts of the community;
- Our people management practices are based on merit and have regard to the diverse needs of our employees; and

- We contribute to the Council's [Corporate Equality and Fairness scheme](#) and comply with relevant legislation.

Health and Safety

We will encourage a positive [health and safety](#) culture where:

- Employees are aware of the Council and service area safety policies;
- Health and safety training needs are routinely assessed and training is delivered and evaluated;
- Risk assessments are undertaken/reviewed as appropriate.

Environmental Policy

This service will aim to deliver continuous environmental improvement through compliance with relevant legislation, pollution prevention, and the delivery of services in accordance with the [Council's Eco-management and Audit Scheme](#).

We will help employees to reduce, reuse or recycle office materials, manage energy and water efficiently, reduce transport impacts and adopt environmental purchasing criteria.

Customer Focus

As a 'customer first' organisation we:

- Listen to and learn from what our customers tell us;
- Provide a range of ways in which customers can contact us;
- Apply consistent, corporate customer service standards; and
- Measure customer satisfaction and benchmark our performance.

Our Values

Housing Services has long established aims, which are:

- Listening to and putting customers first
- Valuing staff commitment
- Constant performance improvement

These are supplemented by the following corporate principles which guide our actions and govern our relationships with local people and partners. We will:

- Make decisions openly and with integrity
- Involve the community in choices about services and priorities
- Be open and responsive to change
- Challenge the way we provide services to ensure they are value for money
- Treat people fairly in everything we do
- Value employees and the essential role they play in service delivery
- Pursue excellence in all that we do.

We aim to continually develop and improve the customer service given to our internal and external customers. In doing this we will use our resources effectively and work with our partners in providing seamless service delivery.

Investors in People

We will:

- Ensure a wide-spread understanding of the Council's core values, key aims and priorities and relevant performance measures, and encourage participation in their development
- Encourage continuous learning, using staff appraisals, associated meetings and team briefings as opportunities to identify needs and to plan learning and development
- Recruit, manage and develop people on merit and having regard to their individual needs
- Maintain a high level of management competence, including coaching, giving clear and constructive feedback and encouraging supportive teams
- Encourage a learning organisation where information is shared freely and widely
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of our people management activities on the service area and the wider organisation.

Data Quality

This service needs [good quality data](#) to conduct its business efficiently and effectively. This applies in all areas of activity, including the delivery of services, service management, performance management, financial management, corporate governance, internal and external accountability and communication. To achieve this we will ensure that data is accurate, reliable, complete, relevant and timely.

11. Monitoring and Review

This plan will be monitored quarterly as part of the performance management framework and should be reviewed on a regular basis through the year by the service.