

Customer Care Charter

Your Home, Your Service:

Putting Customers First

We aim to provide a service of which we can be proud. A high quality and efficient housing service that is tailored to meet the needs of its customers. Our services will be provided on a fair and consistent basis.

This Charter sets out the standards that you can expect to receive from us. We recognise that we do not always get things right. If you feel that we are failing to keep the promises made here, please tell us. Your views and opinions are important to us.

Contents	Page
Housing Staff	2
Telephone Calls	2
Letters and Other Correspondence	3
When You Visit Our Offices	3
When We Visit Your Home	4
Your Rent	4
Tackling Nuisance and Anti-social Behaviour	4
Repairs and Maintenance	5
Sheltered Housing Services	5
Allocations and Lettings	6
Tenant Participation	6
If You Are Happy/Not Happy with the Services we have Provided	6
Reviewing This Charter	7
Contacting Us	8

Standards that every customer of Housing Services should be able to expect.

Housing Staff

Staff will:

- Be smart and easily identifiable, wearing a clear name badge and carrying formal identification.
- Listen to and respond fully to all enquiries.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all customers.
- Try to see things from customers' point of view, treating you with courtesy and respect.
- Give you accurate and up date information, using plain English and avoiding jargon.
- Resolve your enquiry, if possible at the first contact but be honest if this may take longer. Advise you of any action we are taking and when this will happen.
- Arrange specific convenient appointments with you (either in your home or in the office) if needed or if you request this.
- Encourage you to make comments and suggestions for improvements to our services.
- Understand that customers can be upset, but the Council will not accept abusive behaviour towards staff.
- Understand that some people face discrimination – we try to ensure it does not happen here.

Telephone calls

We will:

- Answer all incoming telephone calls within eight rings during our opening hours.
- Answer your call in a courteous manner. We will give you our name when answering the call.
- Try to deal with your enquiry at first contact. If it is necessary to pass your enquiry to another officer we will briefly explain your concerns, before passing your call on and will let you know the name of the person who we are referring you to.
- Put you through to the right person if we cannot help you with your enquiry, or arrange for some one to contact you within 48 hours.
- Call you back if you ask us to do this.

Letters and Other Correspondence

When you write to us we will:

- Respond as soon as possible. If a written response is needed, ensure a reply is posted to you within 2 weeks of receipt of your letter.
- Ensure you receive regular updates on the progress of your enquiry if we have been unable to prepare a full response within 2 weeks.

When we write to you we will:

- Ensure all our letters to you are in plain English, free from jargon and easily understood.
- Use your name, and properly address all mail.
- Ensure our correspondence is polite and helpful, taking care to explain any complicated or technical details and in an informal style, wherever possible.
- State clearly the name of the person dealing with your enquiry their contact telephone number and Email address.

We will also:

- Provide any of our documents in Braille, on tape, in large print and other ethnic languages upon request.
- Communicate with you by e-mail if you request this.

When You Visit Our Offices

You can call at our offices during normal office hours to discuss any matter related to our housing service. We will:

- Work with other departments to resolve the lack of available parking for visitors at the civic offices.
- Keep the reception area welcoming, clean and tidy with up to date information available in the leaflet rack & notice boards. Look at possible improvements to the whole reception area and office signage within 12 months.
- Greet you on arrival and see you within 10 minutes.
- Help you with any forms, and make sure you have somewhere to sit to fill these in.
- Refer you to specialist staff for help and guidance where necessary.
- Give you the option of holding any interview privately. It may be necessary to wait for an interview room to become available.

- Ensure those with special needs eg disabled, those with children, hard of hearing are accommodated within the planned reception improvements.

When We Visit Your Home

You may request a visit or we may need to call and see you. If an appointment is made it will be at a mutually convenient time. We will:

- Let you know straight away if we are unable to keep the appointment. If you are not able to keep the appointment we would appreciate you letting us know.
- Leave a contact card with our name and telephone number on it if you are out when we call.
- Arrive on time and respect your home.

Your Rent

Rent can be paid by:

- Standing order
- Direct debit
- Using your rent swipe card at any Post Office
- Telephoning the Council offices and using a credit or debit card
- Paying cash at the council offices.

We will send you a rent statement every 3 months, or within 24 hours if you request one, so that you can monitor your account.

If you are in arrears with your rent we will:

- Ensure the matter is dealt with as sensitively as possible.
- Advise you of our procedures for recovering rent arrears, including any legal action that may be taken.
- Contact you at every stage of our arrears action so you know what is happening and when.
- Advise you of the sources of advice and assistance for benefits and money advice.
- Make sure that any payment plans that we agree with you are reasonable and affordable.

Tackling Nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

We recognise that the quality of life of residents can be affected by the behaviour of those around them. We will:

- Respond to allegations of nuisance or harassment within a week, (24 hours, in emergencies)
- Expect tenants to co-operate in resolving their differences
- Take legal action when needed.

Repairs & Maintenance

Reporting Repairs:

Please give as much information as you can when reporting a repair:

- Your name, address and contact phone number
- The nature of your repair or defect
- Arrangements for access to carry out the work
- If the work has previously been reported
- The name of the contractor if any related work has been carried out recently

When we receive your repair request we will:

- Prioritise your repair according to our policy.
- Send you a letter informing you of the action that will be taken and provide you with a contact name and telephone number.
- Ensure you are kept informed of any actions taken.
- Send you a customer satisfaction questionnaire. Your responses will be used to monitor and improve the service.
- Ensure all contractors carry identification and show this to you.

Major Works

Consulting & informing tenants is an important part of the delivery of works programmes. We will:

- Work with residents groups to decide on strategic priorities
- Inform and update customers of any proposed works including dates, contractors and choices available.
- Invite residents to meet with Maintenance staff prior to the start of an improvement contract.
- Provide a named contact to tenants for both Maintenance staff and the contractor, for all contracts.
- Ensure all contractors carry identification and show this to you
- Ensure once the work is programmed the contractor gives at least 48 hours notice when access is required to their home.

Sheltered Housing Services

We will:

- Answer and respond to all alarm calls made to the service within in a target time of 30 seconds.
- Visit all sheltered housing tenants on a regular agreed basis.
- Provide a mobile emergency response service 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.
- Ensure all warden call/fire protection equipment is tested on a regular basis.
- Develop a range of service standards for Sheltered Housing within the next 12 months.

Allocations & Lettings

We will:

- Provide quality homes at affordable rents
- Let homes using an agreed priority system which will only be changed in consultation with tenants
- Let vacant properties quickly, usually within 4 weeks
- Work will be carried out to ensure properties are let to an agreed standard including:
 - full electrical installation inspection
 - gas installation test where needed.
 - rubbish removed from the property and garden
 - properties thoroughly cleaned.

Tenant Participation

We will:

- Provide support, advice and other resources to encourage and sustain tenant involvement.
- Develop different types and levels of involvement to give greater opportunity for all tenants to have their voice heard
- Listen and respond to tenants' ideas and suggestions so we can provide services that meet tenants' needs
- Work in partnership with the Tenants Advisory and Consultation Team (TACT) to enable tenants to play a central role in the decision-making process in Housing Services.
- Distribute a newsletter to all tenants twice yearly
- Hold 2 meetings a year with each of the 8 Area Tenant Groups

If You Are Happy With The Service We have Provided

It is always nice to be praised for a job well done, so please let us know when you have received a good service from us. We will ensure that your compliments are passed on to the person(s) you have praised.

If You Are Not Happy With Our Service

If we have failed to meet the standards in this charter, or any other aspect of our service to you, we need to know so that we can put things right. Our complaints procedure can be used if you are not satisfied with the response you receive.

When to Complain

You may have a complaint if you think we have:

- done something in the wrong way
- done something we should not have done
- or failed to do something we should have done

Examples of this could be us taking far too long to do something, failing to follow the right procedures or not treating you properly.

Before You Complain

Before you make a formal complaint we hope you will give us a chance to put things right. Often a minor service problem can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

How can I obtain further details of how to Complain?

A Guide on "How to complain about Council Services" is available from our main reception desk.

Reviewing this Charter

We are committed to making this a working document by:

- Reviewing it annually, including an evaluation by tenants
- Monitoring standards regularly by information gathering and use of mystery customers
- Including key elements in the department's regular performance review process.

Contacting Us

We are open from 8.45 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 8.45 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Fridays.

You will find us at: Civic Offices, Civic Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0AH.

A map giving directions to the Civic Offices is available on our web site at www.south-derbys.gov.uk.

The Council's e-mail address is civic.offices@south-derbys.gov.uk.

Each officer can be contacted by e-mail using their full name eg lynn.child@south-derbys.gov.uk

Main Telephone Numbers	
General Housing Enquiries	01283 595803
Repairs and Maintenance	01283 595809
▪ Fax	01283 595852
Lettings	01283 595953
Homelessness Advice	01283 595804
Estate Management Issues	01283 595824/ 595825/595805
Tenant Participation	01283 595823
Rent issues	01283 595807
Sheltered Housing Service	
Control Room	01283 221225
Warden Services	01283 595775
Emergencies outside normal office hours	01283 221225