



Civic Centre,  
Crook,  
County Durham.  
DL15 9ES  
Tel: 01388 765555 Fax: 01388 766660  
Minicom: 01388 761515 e-mail: i.phillips@wearvalley.gov.uk

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Iain Phillips      Chief Executive

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9<sup>th</sup> May 2006

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **WEDNESDAY, 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2006 at 6.00 P.M.**

### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006 and the Special Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006 as true records – copies previously circulated.
3. To consider the draft report commissioned from the Northern Housing Consortium regarding the Customer Profile.
4. To consider progress made to date regarding the development of Service Standards for Dale & Valley Homes.
5. To consider progress made to date regarding the development of Service Leaflets for Dale & Valley Homes.
6. To consider the introduction of a new Lettable Standard.
7. To consider the inclusion of estate profile information in packs given to housing applicants.
8. To consider the revised system of customer satisfaction surveys in response to Audit Commission inspection recommendations.
9. To consider the investigation of methods of validating quality control of the gas servicing procedures.
10. To consider the summary of work done to date to address the areas in need of attention as highlighted in the Indicative ALMO inspection report.
11. To consider the Annual Efficiency Statement for the Housing Department 2005/06 and 2006/07.
12. To consider the Respect Standard for Housing Management and its implications for services provided by Wear Valley District Council.

13.To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances so specified, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully



**Chief Executive**

Members of this Committee: Councillors Bailey, Mrs Burn, Mrs Douthwaite, Ferguson, Gale, Harrison, Mrs Jones\*, Kay, McKellar, Murphy\*, Mrs. Pinkney, Mrs Seabury, J. Shuttleworth, Sinclair, Stonehouse, Strongman and Mrs Todd

\*ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Gale

Deputy Chair: Councillor Sinclair

TO: All other Members of the Council for information  
Management Team



**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services  
**CUSTOMER PROFILE**

**purpose of the report**

To seek Committee approval of the draft report commissioned from Northern Housing Consortium at Annex 1 which profiles our customers.

**background**

1. In 2005 the Housing Inspectors recommended that we strengthen service user and resident focus by profiling resident needs and expectations to inform service design. Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) were subsequently commissioned to carry out this work on our behalf.

**customer profile report**

2. NHC employed a range of methods in developing their report. These included focus groups, examining our data, interviews with other housing providers, interviews with customers who had recently terminated tenancies, interviews with housing applicants, examining the 2002 Housing Requirements Study and customer satisfaction surveys. This research allowed NHC to draw a number of conclusions about the needs and aspirations of current and future customers, profile our existing customers and make an assessment of future demand for council accommodation. In addition focus group work was undertaken to establish qualitative information on aspirations and expectations. Part of the work also sought to investigate why some households chose to rent from alternative social providers rather than the Council.

**proposal**

3. The report is now used to develop a Marketing Strategy and in accordance with our Service Plan (3.1) to agree a housing strategy to meet the needs of diverse communities and (3.2) develop longer term plans for the management/improvement of the service. This will also contribute to meeting the Housing Inspectors recommendations 1 and 3.
4. The report will also be used alongside the Equalities and Diversity and Access and Customer Care Strategies in setting strategic priorities for access and customer care.

**outcome for customers**

- 5. Customers will benefit from a service that has been better informed and designed around needs and aspirations. They will also benefit from a service that achieves a minimum 2 star rating in inspection.

**financial implications**

- 6. There are no direct financial implications of the report. However a Marketing Strategy has already been budgeted for.

**legal implications**

- 7. There are no legal implications to the report.

**it implications**

- 8. There are no IT implications to the report.

**equalities and diversity implications**

- 9. The report gives us more information about our customers and so will help address equalities and diversity issues by improving service design and helping to improve access. This report highlights disability and age implications.

**human resource implications**

- 10. There are no human resource implications to the report.

**consultation**

- 11. A report will be presented to Customer Panel and Senior Housing Management Team for their consideration.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. Committee approves the use of the Northern Consortium Report in future service design and improvement.
- 2. A further report is presented to Housing Committee following the consultation exercise.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b> Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	<b>Author of the report</b> Joanne Dunn Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager Ext 203
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**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Interim Management Director  
**DALE & VALLEY HOMES SERVICE STANDARDS**

**purpose of the report**

To advise Committee of the progress to date with the development of Service Standards for Dale & Valley Homes.

**background**

- 1 On 11 January 2006, a report was submitted to Housing Services Committee, regarding the need to further develop the Service Standards in line with the recommendations arising from the Indicative Inspection in September 2005.
- 2 The recommendations stated that standards should be publicised for:
  - responsive repairs
  - adaptations
  - lettings, and
  - income management
- 3 In addition, the Inspector's commented that:
  - Managers have not put internal systems in place to monitor performance of the Service Standards
  - The Lettable standard is basic and should be promoted within the ALMO's Service Standards
  - Service Standards should be included in supporting service leaflets

**activities to date**

- 3 The Service Standards were redeveloped in July 2005. With the exception of the adaptations service, the other services were referenced but each should be better defined.
- 4 Examples of Service Standards from a number of 3 star authorities, including Ashfield Homes Ltd, Carrick Housing Ltd, City West Homes, Derby Homes, Hounslow Homes and Sheffield Homes were researched for comparison.
- 5 This research highlighted a number of new standards that could be introduced. The new set of standards at Annex 2 are as follows:-

- Using our reception areas
- Making appointments and interviewing you
- Writing to you and speaking with you
- Doing work on your home - responsive repairs (updated)
- Improvement / modernisation works (new)
- Anti social behaviour and how it affects you (updated)
- Racial harassment (new)
- Hate crime (new)
- Domestic violence (new)
- Empty properties (new – contains Lettable Standard)
- Estate inspections (new)
- Homelessness and your rights
- Housing services and vulnerable customers - Homeline (updated)
- The housing register (new)
- Adaptations (new)
- Money and debt advice (new)
- Rent collection (new)
- Former tenant arrears (new)
- Tenancy Support (new)
- Community Involvement (new)
- Equalities Statement (new)
- What to do if you are not happy

- 6 Homelessness, Homeline and Adaptations are all services that will remain with the Council. The standards in these cases offer only a brief description of each service and direct customers to contact the Council for further information.
- 7 The Homelessness and Homeline services have literature on their services, and their standards and targets will be made available on the Council's website. These targets will not be included in the monitoring of Dale and Valley Homes' Service Standards.
- 8 The Council's Regeneration Department provides the Adaptations service. New standards are being developed and are expected to be available by the end of March 2006. Again, these will not be included in the monitoring of Dale and Valley Homes' Service Standards.
- 9 The new Standards will also be referenced in the new Tenants Compact and the new Residents Handbook. These publications are currently being developed.

### **monitoring**

- 10 A program of mystery shopping currently monitors the customer care standard of 'using our reception areas'. The Community Involvement Team also has a database of customers to participate in Focus Groups.
- 11 Customers were invited to select a set of 15 targets that will be monitored quarterly by Dale & Valley Homes' staff. This is in line with the practice of

Ashfield Homes Ltd and Derby Homes. Performance will be publicised in offices, on the ALMO website and in the Tenant Newsletter.

- 12 The targets chosen by customers were as follows:
- We will ensure that all appointments are kept.
  - We will respond to all letters and requests for information within 5 working days.
  - We will carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours.
  - We will arrange an appointment with you for non-emergency repairs where we need access to your home. We will keep at least 95% of these appointments.
  - Give you 7 days notice before starting work on your home.
  - If you report to us you are suffering from anti-social behaviour, we will interview you within 5 working days.
  - We will treat any complaint of racial harassment as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
  - We will treat any complaint of a hate crime as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
  - We will treat any complaint of domestic violence as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
  - We will send you a Customer Satisfaction questionnaire within 10 weeks of you moving into your new home.
  - We will inspect all estates on a monthly basis.
  - We will write to confirm how many points you have been awarded, within 5 days of registering a registration form.
  - We will reduce current rent arrears to £(to be confirmed).
  - We will collect (to be confirmed)% of all rent due.
  - We will reduce former tenant arrears to £(to be confirmed).
- 13 On an annual basis, a report and Action Plan will be produced by Dale & Valley Homes, drawing together:
- Performance against targets
  - Feedback from mystery shopping and focus groups
  - Feedback from other sources e.g. surveys from Visions.

### **consultation**

- 14 Service managers have been involved in the development of the standards and a list of measurable targets.
- 15 The standards were taken to the Customer Panel on 7 March 2006.
- 16 The Dale & Valley Homes Board approved the standards on 14 March 2006.
- 17 The Plain Language Commission are currently examining the standards for use of 'Plain English'.

### **financial implications**

- 18 The new Service Standards booklet will be printed by Moor Graphics, at an approximate cost of £1600 for 6000 copies.

### **legal implications**

- 19 There are no legal implications.

### **human resources implications**

- 20 Service managers will monitor the chosen targets. The Performance and Training Manager will collate the information into a quarterly/annual report.

### **it implications**

- 21 It is proposed that performance against the standards will be reported on the ALMO website on a quarterly basis.
- 22 The Service Standards booklet will be available on the ALMO website.

### **timescales**

- 23 The new standards will be taken to the Customer Panel on 7 March 2006.
- 24 The project is on course for delivering on the Inspector's recommendation deadline of May 2006

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee notes the progress made with developing the Service Standards.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Interim Managing Director  
Ext 281

**Author of the report**

Alex Smith  
Service Development Officer  
Ext 461

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WEAR  
VALLEY  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Interim Managing Director  
**DALE & VALLEY HOMES SERVICE LEAFLETS**

**purpose of the report**

To advise Committee of the progress to date with the development of Service Leaflets for Dale & Valley Homes.

**background**

- 1 Following the Indicative Inspection in September 2005, the Inspectors commented that Service Standards should be included in supporting service leaflets.
- 2 It was agreed by Senior Managers that the content of Dale & Valley Homes' Service Standards and website would be used as a reference for developing the Service Leaflets to ensure consistency of information.
- 3 The leaflet design, based on the Dale & Valley Logo, was approved by the Dale & Valley Homes Board on 14 March 2006.

**activities to date**

- 4 A number of top-performing ALMO's have been researched to examine the format of their Service Leaflets.
- 5 A draft structure for the content of Service Leaflets was established based on this research. The structure is as follows:
  - Cover sheet
  - Equalities Statement including alternative format information
  - Introduction – Details of how and what the service does
  - What Service Standards can you expect?
  - Monitoring our Service Standards
  - What to do if you are not happy
  - Comments and suggestions
  - Service Contacts
  - Back page - Contact us – Neighbourhood Office Addresses, contacts, opening times

6 A range of Service Leaflets have been drafted (Annex 3), listed below:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Community Involvement
- Complaints
- Customer Access and Customer Care
- Domestic Violence
- Empty Properties
- Equalities and Diversity
- Estate Inspections
- Former Tenant Arrears
- Hate Crime
- Improvement / Modernisation Works
- Money and Debt Advice
- Tenancy Support
- Racial Harassment
- Rent Collection
- Repairs
- The Housing Register
- Value for Money

#### **consultation**

7 Service managers have been involved in the development of the leaflets.

8 The leaflets will be checked by the Plain Language Commission for use of 'Plain English'.

#### **financial implications**

9 There will be a cost for printing the new Service Leaflets and quotes are being sought.

#### **legal implications**

10 There are no legal implications.

#### **human resources implications**

11 The design of the Service Leaflets will be co-ordinated with Wear Valley District Council's Desk Top Publishing Service within the Management Support Unit.

#### **it implications**

12 The Service Leaflets will be available on Dale & Valley Homes' website, [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

### **equalities and diversity implications**

- 13 The leaflets satisfy equalities and diversity implications as they will be available on request, in different languages and formats.

### **timescales**

- 14 The project is on course for meeting the Inspector's deadline of May 2006.

### **RECOMMENDED**

1. Committee notes the progress made with developing the Service Leaflets.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Interim Managing Director  
Ext 281

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**Author of the report**

Alex Smith  
Service Development Officer  
Ext 461

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HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2006

Report of the Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager  
**LETTABLE STANDARD**

**purpose of the report**

To seek approval to introduce a new Lettable Standard.

**background**

- 1 The current lettable standard was introduced in 2001.
- 2 During their inspection the Housing Inspectors identified the Lettable Standard as a weakness and recommended we could **Strengthen service user and resident focus by:**  
***“providing a comprehensive lettable standard”***
- 3 The Service Plan sets a target of May 2006 to introduce a new standard.
- 4 A Void Working group has been set up consisting of:  
  
Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager  
Property Services Manager  
Housing Officer  
Three members of the Customer Panel.
- 5 This group has reviewed the current procedure as well as the Lettable Standard taking into account good practice, focus group feedback and results from the Vision Management Surveys.
- 6 Working practices have changed since the introduction of the Void Procedure. This has meant that the lettable standard publicised does not reflect the level of work carried out to void properties.
- 7 The void procedure has not yet been finalised but the group have agreed the Lettable Standard to fit in with the timescale of May 2006.

**proposal**

- 8 The Lettable Standard attached at Annex 4 comprehensively describes the work we will carry out to empty properties.
- 9 It states we will carry out a Decent Homes assessment and feed this information into future capital programmes.

- 10 Customers will be given a copy of the Lettable Standard when they view a property and will be asked to sign to say they agree we have met the standard set out.
- 11 Neighbourhood Managers will ensure the standard is being met as part of their monitoring of the allocation process.

#### **outcomes for customers**

- 12 Customers will be able to see the standard to which a property has been prepared, thus improving customer satisfaction and confidence.

#### **financial implications**

- 13 There are no financial implications as the new Lettable Standard more accurately describes the level of work already carried out to void properties.
- 14 KHS, who currently carry out void cleaning, have agreed to clean the front and rear doors, clean all downstairs windows and to put a sticker on sanitary fittings to show they have been hygienically cleaned, free of charge.

#### **legal implications**

- 15 The Lettable Standard reflects the required statutory health and safety checks.

#### **it implications**

- 16 There are no IT implications.

#### **consultation**

- 17 The Customer Panel have been represented on the Working Group as have other customers. The Lettable Standard will now be the subject of presentations to the Customer Panel and to Residents Associations, and a staff training will be undertaken.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee agrees the revised Lettable Standard.
- 2 Committee agrees that the attached Lettable Standard is introduced following consultation with the Customer Panel, Resident Groups and staff.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
Michael Laing	Joanne Dunn
Director of Housing Services	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager
Ext 281	Ext 203

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## HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2006

### Report of Neighbourhood Managers **INFORMATION FOR HOUSING APPLICANTS**

#### **purpose of the report**

To seek Committee's approval for the inclusion of estate profile information in packs given to housing applicants.

#### **background**

- 1 The Audit Commission Indicative Inspection made the following recommendation:

#### **R1 – Stengthen service user and resident focus by:**

- ♦ **providing more detailed information to applications on the waiting list to enable prospects of an offer to be assessed.**

- 2 This recommendation has been factored into the (Housing Services Department) Service Plan (1.2).
- 3 Housing Officers have produced estate profiles, in a common format, for their respective management areas and these provide detailed information regarding estates and areas including offer prospects.

#### **proposal**

- 4 That the estate information profiles be packaged in a brochure type format, and included within application packs for new applicants.
- 5 That the estate profile documents be produced and introduced following approval by DMT, Dale and Valley Homes Board, Housing Committee and a Plain English check being carried out.
- 6 That the information contained in these booklets be updated annually.

#### **financial Implications**

- 7 It is expected that improved information to prospective applicants will help them make decisions based on likely timescale for rehousing and will lead to target

hardening in some (lower demand) areas. This will lead to improved waiting lists and thus impact on relet times. This in turn will improve performance and impact on void property rent loss and increased income.

- 8 The cost of the production of the estate profile information documents will be met from the HRA marketing budget.

### **equalities implications**

- 9 The impact of estate profiling will be considered when monitoring housing applications and those made by applicants from ethnic minority groups (CRE Code of Practice).

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That Committee approves the use of the estate profile information documents in the A5 booklet format outlined, and that these be included in the housing application pack.

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**Officers responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director of Housing  
Ext 281

**Authors of the report**

Ian Hornsby  
Neighbourhood Manager  
Ext 289

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## HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2006

Report of the Director of Housing Services

### REVISED SYSTEM OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

#### **purpose of the report**

To receive committee approval for a revised system of customer satisfaction surveys in response to Audit Commission inspection recommendations.

#### **background**

1 The indicative inspection last year highlighted a number of weaknesses in the department. Recommendation R2 highlighted a failure to use feedback from customer complaints and satisfaction surveys to identify service weaknesses. Although customer survey data was being collected, it was not being sufficiently analysed, and the range of surveys was poorly co-ordinated.

2 At present numerous surveys are being carried out across the service. These are,

- **a quarterly customer satisfaction survey.**

This is overseen by the Tenant Participation Team and is used to monitor customer satisfaction against our customer care service standards. The questions tend to be fairly basic yes/no, or multiple-choice style, and return rates have been somewhat low.

- **a 3 yearly best value status survey.**

This is a major piece of work which is normally commissioned to be carried out by external contractors. It generates a great deal of information regarding the tenant's profile. It is also used to establish overall tenant satisfaction with the service, and satisfaction with the opportunities for participation. ( BVPI 74 and 75 ).

- **tenancy enforcement customer satisfaction survey**

A satisfaction survey form is sent to each customer who has been through the tenancy enforcement procedure. The survey is a very simple yes/no style, and again, return rates have been very low.



- **street wardens service**

The Street Warden Manager carries out a satisfaction survey every 6 months. Opinions are sought from a range of residents in areas where the Street Wardens operate. Answers are of the 'strongly agree/strongly disagree' variety. The survey is carried out in collaboration with the MSU.

- **the responsive repairs service**

The Visions Management System (VMS) is used to measure customer satisfaction with the repair service. The sample covers about 15-20% of customers who have had repairs completed and is carried out on a monthly basis. This has been in place since September 2001.

- **repair satisfaction cards**

We also measure customer satisfaction with repairs by handing out satisfaction cards to the customers when repairs are completed. It should be pointed out that the inspectors regarded this as duplication in light of the fact that we were also using the VMS system at the same time.

- **services to new tenants**

The VMS is also used to measure customer satisfaction of new tenants with the service they have received up to and beyond the start of their new tenancy.

- **capital works schemes**

Again, the VMS is employed to measure general customer satisfaction with the various capital works schemes, including new doors and windows, kitchens and bathrooms and central heating installations.

### **latest developments**

- 3 The department has recently acquired the latest version of the VMS system. Functionality has been expanded and the reporting facilities are more comprehensive. The upgraded system allows us to extend the number of surveys we can carry out and to devise the questions ourselves.
- 4 In line with the inspectors recommendations we have also begun to look in more detail at the results of the VMS surveys and to examine the message we are receiving from customers by way of the comments they make on the questionnaires.
- 5 VMS improvement groups have been established to review the results from the services on repairs and new tenancies.

## **conclusion**

- 6 The inspectors felt that although customer satisfaction data is collected, it was not being sufficiently analysed to drive service improvement. At the same time, the surveys that were carried out were not sufficiently co-ordinated.
- 7 It is proposed that the new VMS system becomes the principle software for carrying out customer satisfaction surveys. It is currently used for responsive repairs,( to be carried out every two months), new tenancies (to be carried out every two months) and the capital programme by scheme.
- 8 It is proposed that the customer satisfaction survey currently carried out by the tenancy involvement team also be incorporated into the VMS system and renamed 'Customer Access and Customer care survey', in recognition of the associated KLOE. This should be carried out quarterly. A new survey also needs to be developed regarding estate management, to be carried out quarterly. A questionnaire will also be produced to survey opinion of the tenancy enforcement service.
- 9 In accordance with the recommendation of the inspectors, it is essential that, where it is found necessary, groups be established to examine customer satisfaction in more detail. Areas of service weakness must be identified and plans developed to overcome these, and drive service improvement.

## **financial implications**

- 10 The upgraded VMS system has been procured at no cost for the software. However, the licence fee has increased from £1000 to £2000 per annum. This has been budgeted for the new financial year, and provision will need to be made thereafter.

## **legal implications**

- 11 There are no legal implications to this report.

## **human resource implications**

- 12 By their nature, customer satisfaction surveys are administratively labour intensive. However, it is not envisaged that any extra resource will be needed to achieve the recommendations.

## **it implications**

- 13 The upgraded VMS software has been acquired and installed. No further I.T. implications are foreseen at present.

### **equalities and diversity implications**

14 There are no equality or diversity implications in the report.

### **crime and disorder implications**

15 There are no crime and disorder implications in the report.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That a regime of customer surveys be established as per this report.
- 2 That officer groups be set up as required to analyse results and develop action plans for improvement.
- 3 That the current scheme of Repair Satisfaction Cards handed out by the workforce be stopped. This may not sit well with customers, but the inspectors have pointed out that this represents duplication.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the Report</b>
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Michael Laing Director of Housing Services Ext 281	Brian Abbott Performance and Training Manager Ext 294
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**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services  
**EXTERNAL VALIDATION OF GAS SERVICING**

**purpose of the report**

To investigate methods of validating quality control of the gas servicing procedures carried out by Wear Valley District Council.

**background**

- 1 Following the Indicative Inspection in September 2006, the Housing Inspectors recommended that Wear Valley District Council introduce a system of external validation of the gas servicing carried out by Wear Valley District Council.

**current position**

- 2 The gas servicing function of Wear Valley District Council is carried out by an in-house workforce/management team.
- 3 Quality control of the work carried out is the responsibility of the Property Services Manager (Gas Safety).
- 4 A target of 10% post inspection of all gas work is carried out monthly.
- 5 Engineers are also monitored during services to ensure adherence to procedures.
- 6 The function of the gas servicing team is also inspected/verified by CORGI to ensure compliance and continued registration of the authority allowing it to carry gas work.

**options**

- 7 In order to comply with the requirement to externally validate the quality control of the gas servicing procedure, the following options have been considered:-
  - Cross council inspection with another local authority to validate each other's work.
  - Engage the services of a private company to carry out the validation of gas servicing at Wear Valley District Council.

## **timescale**

- 8 The requirement is to implement or have plans agreed before the Housing Inspectors return in October 2006.

## **financial implications**

- 9 The cross council proposal will not have any financial implications other than officer/engineer time. Initial consultation with my opposite number at Derwentside District Council has been very favourable. However, a formal approach between Heads of Service would be needed.
- 10 Two private companies have been approached to ascertain costs for this work. These are British Gas and Morgan Lambert Associates.
- 11 British Gas have still to supply details at this time.
- 12 Morgan Lambert have forwarded proposals and costs. The approximate cost of 10% audit would be in the region of £23,000. There is no budget for this expenditure.

## **it implications**

- 13 There are no IT implications.

## **proposal**

- 15 It is proposed that, subject to agreement with Derwentside District Council, cross-authority validation of the gas service be undertaken and that a private company not be engaged to validate the gas servicing procedures due to the prohibitive cost and lack of budget provision.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee authorises the Director of Housing Services to approach Derwentside District Council to undertake cross council validation of the gas service.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
Michael Laing  
Director of Housing Services  
Ext 281

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**Author of the report**  
Phil Cummings  
Property Services Manager (Gas Safety)  
Ext 354

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**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Service Development Manager  
**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

**purpose of the report**

To provide Committee with a summary of the work done to date to address the areas in need of attention highlighted in the Indicative ALMO inspection report.

The performance management framework detailed below is intended to give an overview of how it all fits together.

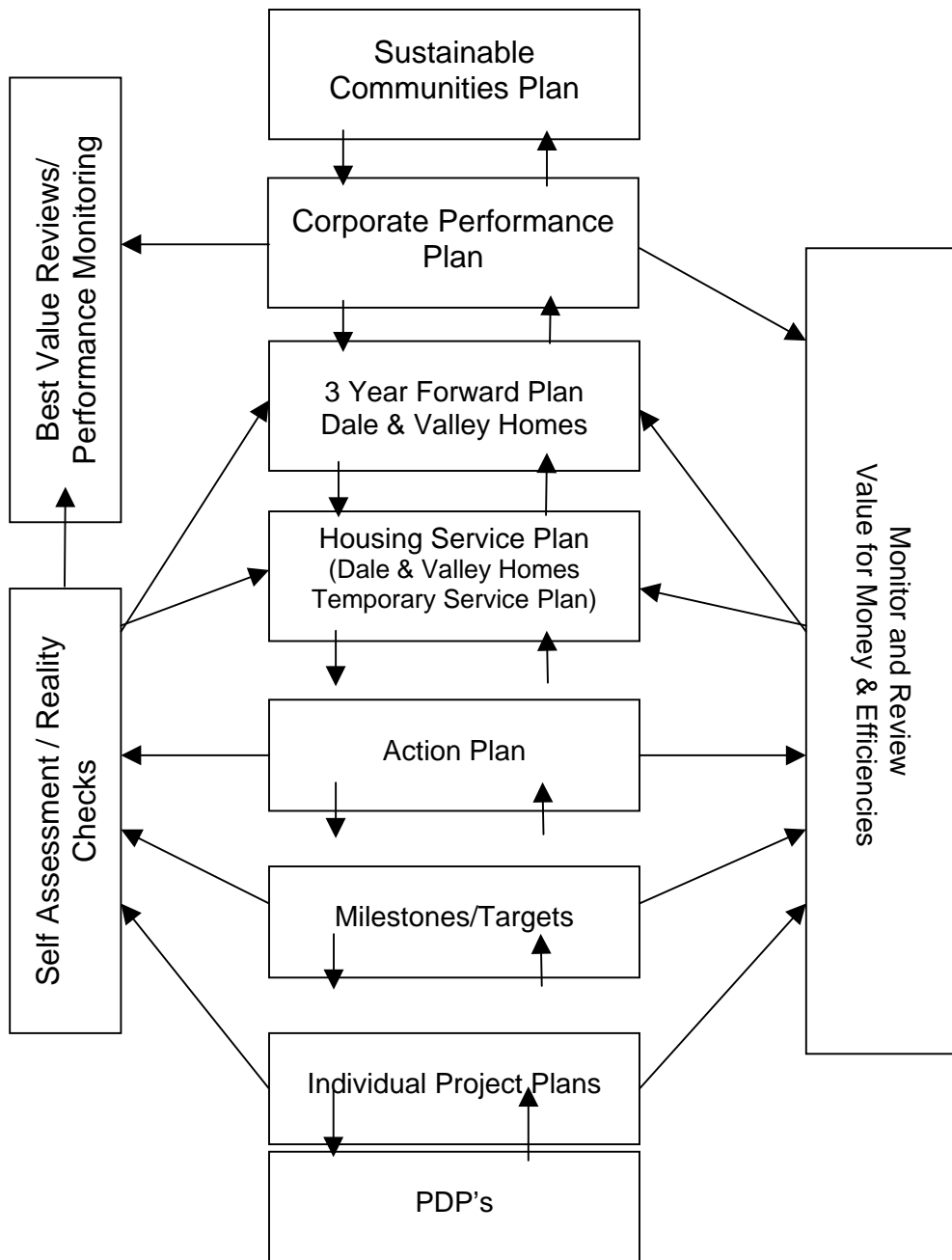
**background**

- 1 In response to the indicative ALMO inspection, a number of initiatives have been developed and agreed by Management Team and Senior Housing Management Team (now the temporary Dale & Valley Homes Management Team).
- 2 Forward planning, improved performance management, efficiency and value for money were key areas that needed to be addressed. (Recommendation R2 and R3 Indicative Inspection, paragraphs 245, 247,248, 250, 252 and 266)

**how it all fits together**

**performance management framework**

- 3 The framework shown on the following page will fit alongside Wear Valley District Council's Planning Hierarchy found in the Corporate Performance Plan and Council Performance Management Framework Document.
- 4 It has been developed through new performance reporting procedures that have been agreed over the previous three months. Brief details of which are provided in the following pages.
- 5 This framework is only intended to give an overview of how plans and documents fit together in the Housing Services Department and Dale and Valley Homes. It will assist all members of staff to understand what and how everything they do fits into the big picture (the golden thread).



**what have we done to date?  
sustainable communities plan**

- 6 Housing Services and Dale and Valley Homes are contributing to the Sustainable Communities Plan through our actions in the service plan. We will ensure Housing is fully represented and incorporated into the final document by taking part in the preparation of the Sustainable Communities Plan.

### **corporate performance plan**

- 7 The Service Development Manager is working closely with the Management Support Unit to ensure the new Corporate Performance Plan accurately reflects the Housing Services Department and Dale & Valley Homes contribution to Wear Valley District Council's vision. Achieving a 2\* inspection and delivering the Decent Homes Standard will be two key areas. In addition, there will be a number of cross department responsibilities that have yet to be agreed.

### **three year forward plan (forward planning)**

- 8 A three-year forward plan is being developed and an initial draft will be complete in May 2006. This chart will help the whole service forward plan workload and projects, as this is the first time it has been undertaken there is likely to be many changes. It will give a summary of what is happening when, and will be placed in prominent positions around the department. In addition all Service Heads will have individual copies. As a Department, we need to be more forward thinking and focussed on the future. The Indicative inspection highlighted forward planning as an area of weakness. (Recommendation R2, R3 Indicative Inspection, and paragraphs 245, 248 and 250)

### **service plan and action plan**

- 9 The Housing Services Department Service Plan has been approved and this will act as the interim Dale & Valley Homes Service Plan. Although the Department and Dale & Valley Homes have a number of strategy documents that must be referred to this will be the main document to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.
- 10 An action plan is attached to the service plan and this will be monitored on a monthly basis within the department. It is acknowledged that the action plan is currently short to medium term however, a full review will be undertaken in 6 months to address this matter.
- 11 A risk register has also been included in the service plan which will be reviewed fully in 6 months, amendments will also be made on an 'as and when' basis.

### **milestones and targets**

- 12 A number of milestones and targets have been agreed in order to ensure delivery of the actions in the service plan. These are monitored on a monthly basis. Responsible Officers and timeframes have been set to provide ownership and ensure that work is kept on track.

### **individual project plans**

- 13 Project plans are being developed for milestones and actions in the Service Plan. Initially, these will be a basic excel spreadsheet or similar. A proforma is being



developed to assist in the preparation of individual project plans. Detailed project plans including budget and additional information will be developed at a later date.

- 14 A limited amount of work has been undertaken on this so far. However, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 the Chartered Institute of Housing provided a training session for 12 members of staff.

### **pdp's**

- 15 PDP's are being undertaken using the action plan from the service plan to align training needs and development to assist in the delivery of these actions. The PDP forms are being reviewed to improve the overall process and assist in clarifying the individual's input into the delivery of actions. However the new forms will not be available until June 06.

### **performance monitoring and review performance indicators**

- 16 A review of performance indicators currently collected and reported to DMT has been completed. The list of PI's to DMT has been amended to reflect the findings in the inspection report (recommendation R2, and paragraphs 235 to 244 and 255). These are now more customer outcome and value for money focussed.
- 17 After consultation the Customer Panel has provided the department with a specific list of indicators taken from our new service standards.
- 18 Each Service Head has also reviewed all the performance information they currently collect; why it is collected and the value it adds to the delivery of the service.

### **performance monitoring/management**

- 19 Performance monitoring arrangements have been fundamentally revised to address a number of areas highlighted in the inspectors' report. They will help focus on delivering an efficient, value for money service.
- 20 All performance information is now available for staff, with access to the share drive on the Council's computer network.

### **consultation**

- 21 A review of all consultation undertaken within the department is on going. The upgraded 'Visions' performance systems has provided an opportunity to uniform the surveys sent out to customers and enlarge the focus of areas that can be covered and analysed. It will enable improved and effective communication with customers. This will address an area of weakness highlighted in the inspectors' report. (recommendation R1, and paragraphs

- 22 Working groups have been established and will meet at regular intervals to discuss the findings of consultation activities and develop action plans to deal with any problems or actions to improve the service.
- 23 The Mystery Shopping Scheme is being expanded and offered to all Residents Associations. Three additional 'shoppers' have been recruited to date.

### **efficiency savings**

- 24 A draft reporting/recording excel spreadsheet has been developed for the centralised collection of efficiency savings. However, it is still in the early stages and its impact has yet to be assessed. More time must be dedicated to this area and a higher priority given. This continues to be an area of weakness and options to increase staff understanding needs to be investigated.

### **human resource implications**

- 24 There are no human resource implications.

### **legal implications**

- 25 There are no legal implications.

### **community safety implications**

- 26 There are no crime and disorder implications.

### **equalities implications**

- 27 There are no equalities implications.

### **financial implications**

- 28 There is a financial implication, loss of £26 million funding, if we do not receive 2\* in the next inspection. The benefit gained through the new performance management regime will help focus on value for money for customers and efficiency savings for the service.

### **conclusion**

- 29 This performance management framework and information provided will help clarify the 'golden thread'. It will assist in the delivery of service improvements that will make a real difference to our customers.
- 30 Overall understanding of Value for Money and efficiency savings is still weak and more effort needs to be made to embed these considerations in everything the department does.

- 31 Understanding the links from an individual level to the corporate perspective; achieving 'buy in' from all staff and delivering performance actions will help consolidate all areas of the breakthrough model.

*Leadership* – The Management Team are clear that their jobs is about leading and supporting the organisation to improve.

*Learning* – Everyone sees how necessary learning is for developing and improving.

*Priorities* – People have confidence that priorities will be followed through and everyone copes with changing demands.

*Managing change* – Everyone sees change – and managing it – as the norm.

*Performance framework* – The performance management system is just the way the management team runs the organisation.

*Helping people perform* – People across the organisation are clear about what managers expect of them, they feel that managers deal fairly and transparently with under-performance and clearly reward behaviour that helps the organisation.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee approves revisions to the performance management framework as detailed in the report.

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<b>Officer responsible for the report</b>	<b>Author of the report</b>
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Michael Laing

Director of Housing Services

Ext 281

Christine Walton

Service Development Manager

Ext 345

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## HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2006

Report of the Director of Housing Services

### **ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT – HOUSING DEPARTMENT 2005/06 AND 2006/07**

#### **purpose**

To inform Committee as to the identified cashable and non cashable efficiency gains for 2005/06 and to agree the forward looking statement for 2006/07.

#### **background**

- 1 As members may be aware, the authority has been set an annual efficiency target of 2.5% savings as part of the “Gershon” review of public services. Overall some £918,000 worth of efficiency gains must be realised over the period 2005/06 to 2007/08 by the Council.
- 2 Corporately, this Council will submit its Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) that illustrates actual savings made and those that are proposed for the forthcoming year. These statements include both corporate and departmental savings. These savings are classified as being either cashable or non-cashable. Cashable efficiencies release cash to be diverted to other services or keep down council tax increases whereas non-cashable efficiency gains occur when productivity increases.
- 3 In the recent inspection of the Housing Service by the Audit Commission, it was recommended that the Housing Services Department prepares and agrees its own efficiency statement.
- 4 This report highlights the savings identified by the Housing Services Department during the year 2005/06 and also those targeted savings for 2006/07. These are included in Annex 5.

#### **proposals**

- 5 The ‘backward’ looking statement highlights the efficiency savings during 2005/06. The statement shows savings of £553,408.00 that have been re-invested towards priority areas. Members should be aware that both cashable and non-cashable savings are identified on the statement.

- 6 The 'forward' looking statement has been established on the basis of continual improvements as identified using the Housing Department's long term performance targets. It is recommended that this efficiency target is monitored on a regular basis and members receive reports regarding progress.

### **financial implications**

- 7 Efficiency gains identified in both the backward and forward looking statements are, generally reinvested into service improvements and towards key priorities. Efficiencies in the delivery of the capital programme have resulted in more works being undertaken than would have been if traditional tendering processes were followed.
- 8 Improvements on performance on voids and repairs service show increasing customer satisfaction and enable resources to be better controlled and monitored. Rental income has resulted in the authority collecting some £150,000 more than the previous year after taking into account changes in stock numbers.

### **conclusion**

- 9 Members will identify that the AES for 2005/06 highlights major savings as a result of improved performance and major contractual negotiations. The 2006/07 forward looking statement has identified a lower level of efficiency as performance levels head towards top quartile. However, officers are acutely aware of the need to ensure value for money is delivered in all service areas.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee notes the progress made during 2005/06 on achieving efficiency gains.
- 2 Committee agrees to the forward looking statement for 2006/07 and receives progress reports as required.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director of Housing Services  
Ext 281

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**Author of the report**

David Milburn  
Head of Business Support  
Ext 379

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**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**17 MAY 2006**

Report of the Director of Housing Services  
**THE RESPECT STANDARD FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

**purpose of the report**

To inform committee of The Respect Standard for Housing Management and its implications for services provided by Wear Valley District Council.

**background**

- 1 On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2006 the Government published the Respect Action Plan, a wide-ranging programme which aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and build a culture of respect.
- 2 Following this in April 2006 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published a Consultation Paper for The Respect Standard for Housing Management, which sought to highlight examples of best practice in the sector and provide a clear benchmark for other organisations to strive for.
- 3 The Respect Standard for Housing Management seeks to promote “Assertive Housing Management” from social housing providers who will be expected to show strong local leadership in allowing communities to set standards (Neighbourhood Charters) and to align service provision to meet those challenges. Delivery will be assessed by inspection.

**other necessary information**

- 4 Strong housing management can make a real difference to the quality of lives of residents. Over eight million people live in social housing and many more live in neighbourhoods where social landlords are heavily involved in neighbourhood management.
- 5 The Respect Action Plan found that 18% of households rent from a social landlord and that these households are more likely to be affected by anti-social behaviour (ASB). Approximately 1 in 3 households renting from a social landlords consider their area has high levels of ASB compared to 1 in 20 households living in predominantly owner-occupied estates.

- 6 The Consultation Paper argues that residents are more likely to respect their neighbours and abide by the conditions of their tenancy where they are being provided with effective housing management and other community safety services that are tailored to their needs and which they have had an opportunity to shape.

### **scope of the standard**

- 7 In developing the Respect Standard for Housing Management the government is providing a clear outline of the core components of an effective response to tackling anti-social behaviour and delivering respect, to encapsulate what works to help ensure that the practices of the best become the norm rather than the exception.
- 8 The Respect Standard for Housing Management requires that the services provided, both alone and in partnership with other agencies properly address the following core components:
- Accountability, leadership and commitment;
  - Empowering residents;
  - Delivering preventative approaches and rewarding pro-social behaviour;
  - Ensuring people are clear about how to report ASB and are encouraged and supported to do so;
  - Building procedures around the needs of the customer and providing support for victims & witnesses;
  - Delivery of early interventions to nip problems in the bud;
  - Taking swift enforcement action to protect communities as quickly as possible;
  - Publicising action to reassure communities and encourage their engagement;
  - Working to enforce breaches to ensure that communities are clear that persistent anti-social behaviour will carry penalties; and
  - Delivery or facilitation of support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour.
- 9 Information on the ‘building blocks’ which contribute to delivery of each of the core components is provided at Annex 6 to this report.
- 10 Some of the activities inevitably overlap given the synergies between the core components. The range of activities under each core component are not intended to be exhaustive and in some instances landlords may be carrying out activities which do not precisely match with those activities listed but which are aimed at achieving similar outcomes.
- 11 Under some of the core components the Government have also included options for delivery. It is recognised that these activities may not be relevant to all local contexts but signatory landlords should be able to demonstrate that they have actively considered whether they are appropriate.

- 12 The Consultation Paper makes clear that signatories to the Respect Standard for Housing Management should be able to demonstrate that they carry out all or many of these activities.

### **signing-up to the standard**

- 13 After the consultation period and publication of a final Standard the Government intends to instigate a campaign to encourage landlords to sign up to the Respect Standard for Housing Management. In doing this landlords will need to consider the level, quality and scope of the services they provide and whether these meet the benchmark set by the Standard. This should be done in close consultation with residents.
- 14 Where landlords are confident this is the case they will need to make a public statement to residents and their local communities that they commit to delivering a level of service in line with the Standard.
- 15 It is proposed that the easiest way of registration would be through completion of a simple form submitted electronically through a web-site. Following confirmation of receipt landlords may brand themselves as signatories to the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

### **monitoring the standard**

- 16 The Government will monitor landlord's delivery against their commitments through the Housing Inspection Programme. The Housing Inspectorate is part of the Audit Commission and carries out service inspections using published key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) and descriptors that inform their judgements.
- 17 The current set of KLOEs include coverage of tenancy and estate management, including ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour, caretaking of common areas and neighbourhood renewal. The Audit Commission will review coverage of anti-social behaviour within the KLOEs so that they fully reflect best practice including the demands of the Respect Standard. Subject to the Audit Commission's consultation process for amending KLOEs it is expected that these will be introduced in October 2006 and will inform the scope of housing inspections from early 2007 onwards.
- 18 This will mean that delivery against the Respect Standard will be broadly commensurate with the level of service required to gain a 'good' rating against the anti-social behaviour section of the Estate Management KLOE. Housing inspections currently examine both the quality of landlords' statements of ASB Policies / Procedures and delivery against them.
- 19 The Respect Action Plan also includes proposals that the ODPM should work with the Audit Commission in introducing 'Respect Diagnostics' - short, focused assessments which would act to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance against the Respect Standard for Housing Management. These



mini-inspections would focus on ensuring that the views and needs of residents are at the heart of service delivery to tackle anti-social behaviour and build stronger communities.

### **financial implication**

- 20 At this stage there are no financial implications for the authority of the Respect Standard for Housing Management although the Respect Action Plan clearly states that as the measures included are rolled out additional revenue streams will be made available to deliver front line services.

### **legal implications**

- 21 At this stage there are no legal implications in the adoption of the core components included in the Consultation Paper for the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

### **human resource implications**

- 22 At this stage there are no human resource implications stemming from the measures in the Consultation Paper for the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

### **it implications**

- 23 At this stage there are no IT implications stemming from the measures included in the Consultation Paper for the Respect Standard for Housing Management.

### **equalities and diversity implications**

- 24 The Respect Action Plan specifically seeks to engage hard-to-reach groups in the community to encourage positive behaviour and to tackle unacceptable and anti-social behaviour. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and other minority communities may be at increased risk of anti-social behaviour and may also lack the confidence to report incidents thus compounding the problem

- 25 It is anticipated that the Respect Standard for Housing Management and the measures that will be introduced from it will strengthen the Authorities engagement with hard-to-reach groups within the district and provide a platform from which to better deliver services.

### **crime and disorder implications**

- 26 There are considerable implications for the Authority's delivery of services to tackle crime and disorder which are outlined in the body of the report.

## conclusion

- 27 The Respect Action Plan is central to the Government's drive to promote pro-social behaviour and the Respect Standard for Housing Management forms a key strand to this cross-governmental strategy.
- 28 The Consultation Paper acknowledges that housing organisations will often be the first to identify problems of ASB in neighbourhoods and that some housing managers have led the way in tackling ASB and engaging communities.
- 29 The Respect Standard for Housing Management calls for “Assertive Housing Management” to deal with deep-rooted issues of ASB and community cohesion. There is a strong emphasis on support as well as enforcement which will require a co-ordinated response across the authority and in partnership with other agencies.
- 30 The Standard aims to provide recognition for those who are already delivering excellent services while providing a clear benchmark to aim towards for landlords who are striving to improve. This improvement will be monitored by the Housing Inspectorate as part of existing inspection regimes or as a stand-alone “Respect Diagnostic” that will focus specifically on our effectiveness in delivering the respect agenda in a housing context.
- 31 The high standards of the Respect Standard for Housing Management and the commitment required by landlords who aspire to it are clearly encapsulated in the following statement from the consultation paper:

*In signing the Respect Standard you are making a visible commitment to your tenants, residents and other interested parties. You are committing to doing all you reasonably can to provide excellent services to tackle anti-social behaviour and deliver respect through your housing management role and broader involvement in neighbourhood management. Those services should be outcome focused and shaped in accordance with the priorities of the local communities you serve.*

## RECOMMENDED

- 1 That Committee notes the report and it’s implications for service delivery.
- 2 That Committee instructs the Director of Housing to provide a response to the questions asked by the Consultation Paper attached to this report as an Annex 7.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director of Housing Services  
**Ext. 281**

**Author of the report**

Chris Walton  
Principal Tenancy Enforcement  
Manager **Ext. 508**

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## The Respect Standard for Housing Management

The following section provides further information on the “building blocks” which contribute to delivery of each of the 10 core components.

### COMMITMENT 1

Accountability, leadership, and commitment

*Building blocks:*

- Demonstrable commitment from the top of the organisation to delivering a service tailored to meet the diverse needs of the community.
- Adopt innovative solutions and deliver value for money.
- Continually review performance to inform improvements through full engagement of service users & partners.
- Plans in place to deliver continual improvement defined by measurable performance targets.
- Working with partner agencies (for example the Police, other landlords including the private rented sector, social services and schools) as part of a strategic approach to community safety.
- Active and effective participation on local partnerships, including Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships where feasible.
- Active engagement with neighbourhood/area level management structures.
- Fostering of strong working relationships with partners at both strategic and operational levels employing protocols with clear delivery targets.
- Making the appropriate links between strategy on ASB & Respect and other strategies, including Homelessness, Gypsy & Travellers, Community Cohesion and Diversity.
- Commitment to robust policies on zero tolerance towards abuse of staff in delivering their functions.

## **COMMITMENT 2**

### Empowering residents

#### *Building blocks:*

- Effectively involving residents, including young people, in setting local priorities and taking decisions about issues which affect them.
- Engaging residents in agreeing standards of conduct (for example through Good Neighbour Agreements or wider neighbourhood charters/area based service standards tenant participation compacts and/ or resident involvement statements.
- Engaging with broader community/neighbourhood management arrangements.
- Involving tenants and residents in establishing service standards and challenging performance indicators linked to them.
- Actively seeking the views of service users in reviewing performance and evaluating service standards on a regular basis including satisfaction surveys.
- Running 'community led audits' of ASB hotspots and environmental problems (for example estate walks to identify graffiti and fly tipping).
- Delivering regular, meaningful and accessible feedback sessions on issues of local concern – involving partner agencies where appropriate.
- Making it easy for tenants & residents to contact you with complaints or concerns.
- Actively promoting information on how to report problems and your policies and procedures for addressing anti-social behaviour.
- Actively consulting residents and other interested parties in regular reviews of your Policies and Procedures for tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Tailoring services to take account of diversity so that no one is unduly excluded through surmountable barriers to involvement, information and advice or prevented from reporting problems.

#### *Options for delivery:*

- Involving residents in developing and rolling out good neighbour agreements.
- Using 'Community Conferencing' approaches to resolving local issues that generate tensions within a neighbourhood.

- Rewarding responsibility by providing incentives for those who respect their neighbourhoods and community. This could include enhanced services/reward schemes for residents who adhere to their tenancy agreements.

### **COMMITMENT 3**

Delivering preventative approaches and rewarding pro-social behaviour

*Building Blocks:*

- Working proactively with residents through engagement policies to foster respect for neighbourhoods and the community.
- Regularly reviewing allocations and lettings policies to ensure issues of Respect and anti-social behaviour are fully reflected- for example sensitive lettings to avoid potentially problematic situations and identifying vulnerable individuals who may require intensive tenancy support.
- Ensuring tenancy agreements and leases meet Office of Fair Trading (OFT) guidelines and contain clear prohibitions on anti-social conduct – linked where appropriate with Good Neighbour Agreements.
- Running user-friendly sign-up meetings for new residents to include a clear explanation of your policies on anti-social behaviour, how problems will be addressed, what you expect of the resident and what they can expect of you in return.
- Undertaking full assessments of any potential problems that may require tenancy support when entering into new tenancy agreements and delivering appropriate support.
- Use all the available evidence to identify ASB hotspots and areas where incidents appear to be emerging and deploying tailored strategies to address these problems.
- Providing with partner agencies in providing a visible presence in hotspots (for example-housing teams/CSO/Police/Wardens patrols).
- Designing out anti-social behaviour through environmental improvements- (for example speed bumps, security lightning, CCTV systems, alley -gating).
- Working independently or with partner agencies to engage young people in constructive and purposeful activities (for example, volunteering/ community clean ups, sports and the arts).
- Emphasis on rewards for positive behaviour (for example sponsoring activities for young people who successfully address their behaviour).

- Seeking to explore funding from Supporting People to support families who are the perpetrators of anti social behaviour and to support them through the changes they will need to make to change their lifestyle.

*Options for delivery:*

- Working closely with warden schemes including sponsoring schemes where appropriate.
- Adopting introductory or starter tenancy schemes for new residents.

## **COMMITMENT 4**

Ensuring people are clear about how to report anti-social behaviour and are encouraged and supported to do so

*Building Blocks:*

- Making it easy to report complaints or seek support by offering a variety of means of doing so (for example out of hours hotline, e-mail, reporting centres in public buildings).
- Making sure all staff know what action they are meant to take when they receive a complaint.
- Running sign-up meetings for new residents to include a clear explanation of your policies on anti-social behaviour, how problems will be addressed, what you expect of the tenant and what they can expect of you in return.
- Making sure reporting is open to all (for example using jargon free plain English) and pays regard to diversity (i.e. translation of material, sensitivity in reporting mechanisms for hate crime).
- Proactive work to create a climate where people feel confident in coming forward and where necessary to take the first steps to make that happen (for example evidence gathering, CCTV, professional witnesses).
- Pooling evidence from partner agencies.

## **COMMITMENT 5**

Building procedures around the needs of the customer and providing support for victims & witnesses

*Building Blocks:*

- Ensuring the first point of contact is helpful, courteous and sensitive to the stress reporting incidents of ASB often involves.
- Providing and delivering to challenging deadlines for each key stage of the process. On occasions where this cannot be met clear explanations should be given as soon as possible.
- Providing complainants with regular updates of progress of their case from the point of complaint to resolution and beyond, including the outcomes of court hearings.
- Minimise burdens on complainants in collecting evidence (for example- short focused use of diary sheets rather than prolonged use with no clear outcome).
- Prompt deployment of reassurance measures where appropriate including regular patrols, visits, provision of personal alarms and CCTV systems.
- Carrying full assessments of the needs of the support needs of individuals who report ASB or agree to provide evidence/act as witnesses.
- Systematically supporting victims either directly or in conjunction with specialist care and support agencies.
- Focus on 'target hardening'- (for example fireproof letterboxes and wide angle spy holes) liaising with Crime Prevention services as necessary.
- Where attendance at court is required full explanations of the procedures and pre-visits to court should be offered in advance and support offered throughout including escort to court and mentoring.
- Liaison with court services to minimise the stresses of a hearing (for example secure holding areas).
- Developing witness support services and networks.

## **COMMITMENT 6**

Delivery of early interventions to nip problems in the bud

*Building Blocks:*

- Carrying out timely investigation of all complaints and agree appropriate action with the complainant and other agencies.
- Establishing clear expectations through tenancy agreements.

- Providing intensive tenancy support and making referrals to external sources of support where required.
- Deploying robust screening processes to determine whether mediation is appropriate at the earliest possible opportunity. Where it is – making appropriate referrals.
- Providing clear warnings backed up by evidence of past action.
- Using Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (and Parenting Contracts if available) as early intervention tools linked to provision of support where appropriate.
- Working with partners to deliver a ‘whole household’ response to early warning signs.

## **COMMITMENT 7**

Taking swift enforcement action to protect communities as quickly as possible

### *Building Blocks:*

- Ensuring all staff are fully aware of the range of tools available and can identify how each will be used either alone or in combination in the context of broader Policies and Procedures.
- Ensuring staff are provided with training on how the tools operate and what each demands in terms of evidence gathering & consultation with other agencies.
- Policies & Procedures should state clearly how each tool will be used- this should include use of introductory/starter tenancies, ABCs, ASBOs / Injunctions (ASBIs) / Parenting Contracts and Orders Demotion / Right to Buy measures and possession action.
- Having clear procedures in place to minimise the use of eviction, where possible, through use of other tools to tackle ASB in situ.
- Keep abreast of emerging case studies/best practice on use of tools and seek to reflect this through regular reviews of Policies & Procedures.
- Joint tasking of enforcement/evidence gathering from multi agency staff.
- Ensuring robust case management procedures are in place which enable fast tracking of legal action where required (for example systems which facilitate pursuing interim injunctions at short notice).



- Develop strong working relationships and strategic links with sources of support (for example legal advice and partner agencies such as the Police).
- Be proactive in gathering evidence of anti-social conduct from a wide variety of sources.
- Commitment to visibly upholding standards of behaviour in public space and challenging those who do not wherever possible.
- Developing strong working relationships with the Courts (for example through Court User Groups or Court ASB Co-ordinators where available).
- Monitor use and outcomes of tools to feed into broader reviews of performance.

## **COMMITMENT 8**

Publicising action to reassure communities and encourage their engagement

### *Building Blocks:*

- Providing tenants and residents with regular and high quality updates of actions you and partner organisations have undertaken to tackle ASB and how they might be involved in delivering solutions.
- Working with partner agencies and the local media to promote action/successes in tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Where appropriate publicise use of tools so that the community is reassured and is aware of any terms so they can help report suspected breaches.
- Communicating with residents through methods they understand and trust.

## **COMMITMENT 9**

Working to enforce breaches to ensure that communities are clear that persistent anti-social behaviour will carry penalties

### *Building Blocks:*

- Ensuring robust case management procedures are in place which enable fast tracking of legal action where required (For example systems which facilitate pursuing interim injunctions at short notice).
- Demonstrate strong working relationships and strategic links with sources of support (for example legal advice and partner agencies such as the Police).

- Demonstrate strong working relationships with the Courts (for example through Court User Groups or Court ASB Co-ordinators where available).
- Where appropriate publicise use of tools so that the community is reassured and is aware of any terms so they can help report suspected breaches.
- Have robust procedures in place to seek enforcement of breaches through the police and courts as quickly as possible.

## **COMMITMENT 10**

Delivery or facilitation of support to tackle the causes of anti-social behaviour

### *Building Blocks:*

- Ensure all staff are fully aware of the range of support provision available and able to identify how each approach should be used as a core component of case management.
- Ensure all staff have a clear understanding of how support provision should be linked with triggers, for example early intervention measures or use of enforcement action such as demotion.
- Policies & Procedures should state clearly how support provision will be provided or accessed and the triggers/ process by which support needs will be identified.
- A clear focus on delivering support and challenge solutions (i.e. linking support with enforcement at an early stage) rather than crisis-based interventions where problems have escalated.
- Making it clear that sanctions may be considered where offers of support are refused.
- Delivery of intensive tenancy support for residents identified as vulnerable or at high risk of anti-social conduct.
- Following clear policies and procedures on dealing with vulnerable residents (for example mental health issues and drug & alcohol problems).
- Following assessment (involving multi-agency case conferencing where appropriate) deployment of 'Floating Support' designed to work with residents in stopping ASB and where possible, maintaining a tenancy.
- Where available and appropriate referral to residential intensive rehabilitation programmes for residents with complex support needs.

- Seeking to explore funding from Supporting People to support families who are the perpetrators of anti social behaviour and to support them through the change they will need to make to change to their lifestyle.

## **The Respect Standard for Housing Management**

The Consultation Document requests responses to the following questions no later than June 21 2006.

### **Questions**

1. Does the Standard as drafted properly reflect the core components of delivering effective services in tackling anti-social behaviour and delivering respect?
2. Is the Standard as drafted suitable for adoption by all social landlords (i.e. tailorable to a diverse range of contexts?). For example is it likely to be applicable to smaller landlords?
3. Does the level of detail provided in the draft Standard provide landlords and residents with enough information on what is required in meeting it?
4. Do you have any other comments about the proposal, including any practical implications you think it might have? For example, how can we best ensure we minimise any additional bureaucracy?

## Section 1 – Introduction and Background Information

In order to ensure that Wear Valley council are responding to their tenants in an effective way, they need to have a better understanding of their current tenant base. This includes their needs, aspirations and make-up; there is also the requirement to identify possible future tenants, and what these households may require from their landlord. To enhance and improve current services Wear Valley DC must have a complete understanding of the customer needs and priorities of their tenants.

In addition, the council also wish to understand what current tenants expect in terms of service provision, and what future tenants are likely to require in terms of accommodation and level of service. This project will also address why particular residents do not wish to become council customers and prefer other social landlords.

The Housing Inspection have produced a series of 'Key Lines of Enquiries' (KLOEs), providing the consistent criteria for assessing and measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services. One of these enquiries is 'Access and Customer Care', and within this KLOE, access to services is highlighted as a main element that needs to be covered by housing providers.

Access to services needs to be straightforward via a number of different methods, and fair to all customers, particularly vulnerable groups who may experience some difficulty in accessing these services. Wear Valley needs to understand fully their customer base, which should enable them to plan more effectively for the development of future services.

This document will draw together information from a range of sources and documents to highlight the main characteristics and needs of their current tenants.

### Background to Wear Valley

Wear Valley is located in the South West of County Durham, in the North East of England. It covers 50,507 hectares, which consists of both rural and urban settlements. Based on the country's population projections, there were approximately 61,287 people living within Wear Valley in 2000, 29,703 of which were male and 31,584 were female; this can be compared to the official 2001 Census figures, which are slightly higher at a population of 61,339 and a total of 26,491 households.

From this Census data it can be seen that almost one-fifth of residents are aged under 16, and 8.4% are aged 75 or over. There are 27.4% of all residents aged between 25 and 44, with a further 26.2% aged between 45 and 64. The percentage of elderly households has been increasing within the last ten years, although this seems to have levelled out, more recently. This needs to be accounted for within the services offered to customers. Those aged between 45 and 64 has experienced the greatest increase,

with an approximate increase of 3% of this group making-up the population, within the last ten years.

Official statistics highlight a slight increase in those claiming working family tax credit, although the increase can be seen within single person households, and in particular those over 30 years old. Other households have experienced a decrease in the number of claimants. The number of income support claimants has significantly decreased within the last six years, with an approximate 40% decrease within this period. The greatest decrease can be seen from those aged over 50, and in particular households that contain a member over 60. Given the large influence that these households have on district-wide figures this is likely to have significant impact on income levels of the residents. Notwithstanding this the number of households with a disabled member claiming Income Support has increased over this period; with long-term illness and disability also increasing throughout the district. Those receiving Job-seekers allowance has also experienced a decline, with only 38.4% of the level of claimants within 1998 receiving this benefit in 2004; this covers all age groups.

#### *Economic factors*

Due to the decline of many traditional industries throughout the county, such as coal mining and heavy industry, there has been a shift in employment. There have been an increasing number of households moving into the district, although many of these households are working outside the district and are commuting to their place of employment. Figures from the Annual Business Inquiry (2003) reveal that main employment sectors across Wear Valley are made up as follows; public administration, education and health (28.9%), distribution, hotels and restaurants (24.1%) and manufacturing (17.2%). Other sectors include construction (9.0%), banking, finance and insurance (8.5%), transport and communications (4.0%), agriculture and fishing (1.5%) and other services (6.2%).

## Section 2 – Profile of Wear Valley’s Council Housing residents

### Council Housing in Wear Valley

HIP (housing investment programme) data for 2005 indicates a total of 4,877 local authority properties across Wear Valley, representing 16.8% of properties. Table 2.1 (below) highlights the proportion of local authority owned properties in previous years compared to regional averages.

**Table 2.1 Local Authority Owned Properties 2000 - 2005**

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Wear Valley</b>	Number of LA dwellings	5,963	5,847	5,614	5,446	5,172	4,877
	Percentage of overall stock	21.0%	20.6%	19.7%	19.0%	17.9%	16.8%
<b>North East</b>	Number of LA dwellings	276,288	223,241	226,593	207,311	189,745	169,761
	Percentage of overall stock	24.6%	20.7%	20.0%	18.2%	16.6%	14.8%

Source HIP data 2000-2005

The above table indicates that regionally between 2000 and 2005 the proportion of local authority properties has decreased, falling rapidly over this period; although a high percentage of this decline can be attributed to stock transfers throughout the North East. Analysis of figures for Wear Valley reveals a similar trend, with the number of local authority dwellings decreasing by 18.2%. This is likely to be due to the increase in the proportion of stock lost through ‘Right to Buy’ with few demolitions. Therefore the figures show that Wear Valley now has a larger proportion of council owned properties than the regional average. Notwithstanding this, Wear Valley in general has less social-rented stock than the regional average, 21.6% compared to 24.9%.

In terms of location the vast majority of council stock is located across the wards of Bishop Auckland Town, Coundon, Coundon Grange and Crook North. In 2003 Over two-fifths (40.7%) of council owned stock failed to meet decency standards, this is a slight decrease from 42.0% in 2002; the council have started to make progress on this through their stock options exercise with their tenants and have recently opted for an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) under the name of Dale & Valley Homes.

## **Council Housing Residents**

As outlined above HIP 2005 data indicates that 4,877 households across Wear Valley are currently within council rented accommodation, representing 16.8% of households. This compares to 14.8% of households across the North East and 9.9% of households across England and Wales.

Survey data from the 2002 Housing Requirements Study conducted by the Northern Housing Consortium provides a detailed profile of households living within council stock. Survey data reveals that 47.1% of these households contain an elderly member. One-fifth (20.4%) contain children, 16.4% contain a single member (under pensionable age), 8.7% are two adult households (under pensionable age) and 3.9% are larger adult only households (under pensionable age). The remaining 3.5% were classed as other households. Households residing in council accommodation are generally smaller than the rest of the districts population, mainly made up of one (47.4%) or two (32.3%) person households. Households containing four or more members only made up 9.0% of those residing within council accommodation, this can be compared to 15.5% of those throughout the whole district, and in particular those within the owner-occupied sector.

In total 16.3% of households contain a member aged under 16 and 38.3% contain a member aged over 60. Furthermore 12.8% contain a member aged between 16-29. 19.1% of residents are aged between 30-49 and 13.4% are aged between 50-59. In terms of economic activity 18.6% of those living in council accommodation are in full or part time employment (including self employment). 14.4% are unemployed, with 7.8% seeking employment. 33.5% of households are wholly retired from work, 5.3% are at home/unpaid household duties and 3.2% are full or part time students. In addition 24.9% of households contain a permanently sick or disabled person.

The survey identified a total of 14,553 residents suffering from some form of illness. 3,757 of the residents were found within the council rented sector and main illnesses associated with these residents included; mobility problems, asthma and arthritis.

The level of elderly households and those with a long-term illness or disability living within council accommodation is likely to have a significant impact on the services required by these households in the future. Aids and adaptations may be required, or additional support services may be needed in their homes.

According to survey data households in council accommodation have a relatively low income with 22.9% receiving less than £343 per month and 41.6% receiving between £343 and £645.99, well below the regional average. Only 8.7% received more than £1,080 per month. In terms of ethnicity 99.8% of council housing residents are White, 0.1% are Asian British/Asian other and 0.1% class themselves as other. In terms of



satisfaction 63.3% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a whole, 18.9% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 17.8% are dissatisfied.

51.3% of households are satisfied with the state of repair of their property whilst 26.9% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In addition 21.8% of households are dissatisfied with the state of repair of their accommodation, with 4.7% of these households very dissatisfied. Just over one-third (36.0%) of households have resided in their home for less than five years. 18.0% have resided in their homes for between five and ten years and the remaining 46.0% have remained in their homes for over ten years, of which 24.5% have resided in their property for over twenty years.

#### *Satisfaction of current council housing residents*

Analysis of Wear Valley council's most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey (published in February 2004) may reveal a number of key areas where services may need to be improved. Overall 72% of tenants indicated that they were satisfied with the service provided by Wear Valley council whilst 14% expressed dissatisfaction. Highest levels of satisfaction were found for satisfaction with accommodation and the neighbourhood, however litter in the street was seen as a problem for nearly one-third of tenants. Lower levels of satisfaction were found for tenants perception of the general condition of the property with only 70% stating satisfaction and 13% felt that their property was in a poor condition. In terms of repairs, three-quarters of households were satisfied with the way repairs and maintenance are dealt with and this was found to be considered as the most important service provided by the council. Tenants were particularly satisfied with the overall quality of repairs completed.

In terms of contact and communication with Wear Valley Council Housing Department almost 70% of those calling felt that it was easy getting hold of the right person, 80% felt that the staff were helpful however 17% of tenants found staff to be unhelpful and 21% of tenants were dissatisfied with the final outcome after contacting the council, whilst 70% were satisfied. Almost 70% of tenants felt that they were kept well informed of things that may affect them as a tenant however 21.5% of tenants felt that no account was taken of their views when the council was making decisions. This suggests that the council may wish to look into the way that incoming queries are dealt with and try to make tenants feel more involved in the decision making process. It was interesting to note that three-quarters of tenants had not heard of tenant participation compacts and these may need to be more widely promoted.

#### *Differences between tenant base and general population*

There are a number of key differences that exist between tenants of Wear Valley council and the population of the district as a whole. Survey figures indicate that council housing tends to contain a greater proportion of elderly households with 47.1% of households in council accommodation

containing an elderly member compared to 36.0% in the general population. This difference is inevitably reflected in the age profile of the district with 27.4% of all residents aged over 60 in the general population compared to 38.3% of those in council accommodation. Residents in council housing are also significantly less likely to be economically active, with less than one-fifth (only 18.6%) in full or part time employment (including self employment) compared to almost half (49.4%) of residents within the population as a whole. Not surprisingly there are a greater proportion of retired members in council accommodation, along with a significantly higher proportion of people who are permanently sick or disabled (24.9% compared to 10.2%).

Following on from previous trends, council housing residents have a significantly lower income than the general population. Only 4.2% of the general population receive less than £343 per month compared to 22.9% of council tenants. In addition 58.6% of the general population receive over £1,080 per month compared to only 8.7% of council tenants. Again this can be attributed to a number of issues, and a higher level of benefit receipt can be identified as one of these.

On measures of satisfaction council housing tenants are generally less satisfied than the general population. Only 63.3% of council tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood compared to 74.0% of the general population. This trend is also apparent in residents' levels of satisfaction with the state of repair of their property (51.3% of council tenants satisfied compared to 76.9%). Highlighting that to increase satisfaction levels with council tenants Wear Valley needs to go beyond just decent homes, and improvements to communities and neighbourhood services are also required.

The council may wish to take measures to address some of the inequalities that exist between council housing residents and the general population. Better marketing of properties such as through a choice based lettings system in the future may encourage a better mix of households into the tenure thus reducing some of these disparities.

### **Needs and Aspirations of Council rented tenants**

Within the previous Housing Requirements Study a number of needs and aspirations were investigated. This section assesses these aspirations and tries to identify reasons for households moving away from council rented accommodation and tries to identify factors that may help retain these tenants.

#### *Reasons for moving*

Households were asked if they were planning to move in the next year and of all households in council rented accommodation, 8.7% (445 households) were planning to move. Main reasons for planning to move included wanting to move closer to family/friends to give or receive support, wanting to move to a larger home and fear of crime. Other

reasons included to set up an independent home, to move to a smaller home, to move to a better neighbourhood and fear of harassment. A number of other factors can be assessed to determine households reasons for moving, namely comparisons can be made between households current housing and what they aspire to.

It can be seen that of those council tenants who are wanting to move 22.1% are dissatisfied with the state of repair of their property whilst 27.3% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In addition to this 25.6% of these households feel that their property is in a poor state of repair and the vast majority of these households are unable to carry out the repairs they need. Main reasons for this were not being able to afford the repairs, being physically unable to manage the repairs and believing the repairs are the responsibility of their landlord. This may be an important factor in why households want to move to another council property or leave the council sector all together.

Households who are planning to move are generally satisfied with their neighbourhood, with 63.1% expressing satisfaction. However 9.6% of households are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their accommodation and 27.4% are dissatisfied with their neighbourhood, of which 13.7% are very dissatisfied. It is surprising to see that 36.9% of households wishing to move had resided in their properties for over 20 years, this may be explained by the high proportion of elderly households residing in Wear Valley council properties (37.0% of all council tenants). In particular elderly households made up half of all council households who stated they need adaptations to their home and that they were likely to move in the next year. This suggests that the homes of elderly council residents are not meeting their needs and main adaptations specified included; grab/handrails both inside and out, adaptations to their bathroom such as a redesigned/relocated bathroom or a level access shower, improved outside access such as a ramp and close car parking spaces. Of those households requiring adaptations 83.0% stated that they could not afford the adaptations and a further 17.0% did not know. If some of these adaptations were made to these properties the level of elderly households looking for alternative accommodation is likely to reduce.

### *Household aspirations*

This section considers the aspirations of those households planning to move and identifies what properties they would like to move into. Of the 445 households planning to move 59% would consider renting another property from the council, 45.6% would consider another housing association, 34.6% would consider private renting, 26.8% shared ownership and 8.7% owner occupation (N.B. households could specify more than one option). The majority of these households were likely to remain within Wear Valley, highlighting that it was not life-changing reasons cited for movement; and therefore if the council could provide suitable accommodation for tenants within decent communities then they are likely to remain within their accommodation. Property size preferences included two and three bedroom properties and most households would

like to increase the size their property. In terms of location households were most likely to specify Bishop Auckland as their preferred area.

#### *Households that would like to move but are unable*

The household survey revealed that 978 households (19.2% of those recorded as living in council accommodation) would like to move but felt that they were unable to do so. This was most likely to be due to affordability and a lack of appropriate accommodation in terms of location and difficulty in finding properties with suitable adaptations. These households were likely to have low incomes with 70% earning less than £646 per month and only 14.7% containing a full time worker. The main reason for these households wishing to move was to improve the living situation of a disabled person, again suggesting that council properties are not meeting the needs of elderly or vulnerable tenants.

#### *Housing needs factors*

Across the district a total of 7,206 households were identified as being in need as per ODPM guidelines. Of these households 2,483 rented from the council, and council renters made up a large proportion of those households who were previously homeless or with insecure tenancies. Also a large proportion of those previously living within temporary accommodation were found to be currently within the council rented sector. In addition council tenants represented half of households found to have a mobility impairment or other special need living in an unsuitable dwelling; therefore requiring either special aids and adaptations or alternative accommodation, bungalows or ground floor flats. In addition half of those needing to move due to harassment or threats of harassment resided within council accommodation and 30.6% of council tenants were found to be living in unaffordable accommodation. Those within unaffordable accommodation were mainly due to incorrect benefits being claimed, therefore education and information on benefit receipt is required with some tenants.

Consideration of P1E forms submitted by Wear Valley council reveals that between 2004/05 124 households were accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need. The breakdown of these households by priority need category is displayed in Table 2.2 (overleaf).

**Table 2.2 Households accepted unintentionally homeless and in priority need by needs category**

<b>Needs Category</b>	<b>Number of households</b>
Applicant homeless because of emergency	0
Contains dependent children	58
Pregnant woman with no other dependents	14
Applicant aged 16/17 years old	12
Applicant formerly in care aged 18 to 20 years old	1
<b>Applicant or a member of their household is vulnerable as a result of:</b>	
Old age	7
Physical disability	3
Mental illness or disability	6
<b>Other special reason:</b>	
Drug dependency	1
Alcohol dependency	2
Former asylum seeker	0
Other	1
<b>Applicant is vulnerable as a result of:</b>	
Having been in "Care"	0
Having served in HM forces	0
Having been in custody/in remand	1
Having fled their home because of violence / threats of violence	18
Of which domestic violence	18
<b>Total number of acceptances</b>	<b>124</b>

P1E returns 2004/05

Main reasons for becoming homeless included; parent no longer being able or willing to accommodate the household (22) or other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to support them (25). Worryingly violence was a major reason for households with violent breakdown of relationship involving partner (27 households) particularly prevalent and other forms of violence (6 households). 19 households were homeless because of the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, 10 were homeless for other reasons related to the loss of rented or tied accommodation other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

Immediate outcomes for these households included; 7 households being "homeless at home" (remaining temporarily in existing or alternative accommodation). 81 households accepted a "Part 6" offer, or an offer of an assured tenancy other than a "Part 6" offer. For the remaining 36

households the authority regarded its duty ended for example the applicant may have made their own arrangements, refused a suitable offer of accommodation or made no further contact with the LA.

Wear Valley has developed a joint homelessness protocol with Teesdale district council and is a member of Homelessness Action Partnership.

### **Demand for Social Rented Accommodation**

This section considers the current demand for social rented accommodation by drawing upon a number of secondary data sources such as Core Lettings data and HIP data. Previous to 2004/05 Core data was only collected for Housing Associations however data is now available for local authority stock, table 2.3 (below) highlights the changes within this data since 2000/01.

**Table 2.3 Number of lettings**

	<b>2000/01</b>	<b>2001/02</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>
Housing Association general lettings	189	276	213	150	165
Housing Association supported housing lettings	10	7	23	17	14
Local Authority	---	---	---	---	127
Local Authority supported housing lettings	---	---	---	---	---

**Core Lettings data 2004/05**

Analysis of Housing Association general lettings reveals that the number of general needs properties let has fluctuated over previous years, reducing from a high of 276 in 2001/02. The number of supported housing lettings made by Housing Associations remained relatively stable. At present there is not enough data available to establish trends in local authority lettings however over time it will be possible to build a better picture of those entering the sector. Notwithstanding this data for 2004/05 reveals some interesting characteristics of those households in the council sector.

As demonstrated in table 2.3, 127 local authority properties were let in 2004/05. Table 2.4 (Below) highlights the household composition for these lets.

**Table 2.4 Household composition of those taking a Local Authority tenancy**

<b>Household Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Single older person (aged 60 or over)	20	15.7
Older couple (at least one aged 60 or over)	9	7.1
Single adult aged (16 to 59)	49	38.6
2 adults (both aged 16 to 59) no children	16	12.6
One adult with at least one child < 16	17	13.4
Two (or+) & At least one child	8	6.3
Other	8	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Core Lettings data 2004/05**

Information on the economic status of the head of the household reveals that 15.0% are in full or part time employment. 17.3% are unemployed and/or seeking employment, 24.4% are retired, 19.7% are not seeking work and 15.0% are long term sick or disabled. Half of these households have an income of under £99 per week, 31.0% have an income of between £100 and £199 per week. The remaining 19.0% of households have an income of £200 or over per week.

Of those households taking a council tenancy 61.4% will qualify for housing benefit. Similar to previous trends identified in the household requirements study 18.9% of households moved as their property was unsuitable due to ill health/disability. 18.1% moved as they wanted to enter independent accommodation and 11.0% moved as their property was unsuitable due to overcrowding. Other reasons included to move closer to friends/family/school, problems with neighbours or being asked to leave by family/friends.

Core Information, which uses the BVPI calculation for BV212, on the number of days Local Authority properties were vacant is displayed in table 2.5 overleaf.

**Table 2.5 Number of days vacant (BV212 PI Calculation)**

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0 to 6 days	15	12.1
7 to 13 days	18	14.5
14 to 27 days	35	28.2
28 to 62 days	28	22.6
63 to 132 days	24	19.4
133 to 202 days	1	0.8
203 to 272 days	3	2.4
273 days or more	0	0.0

**Core Lettings data 2004/05**

Table 2.5 (above) reveals that there are very few properties left vacant for longer than 132 days (approximately 4 months); the largest proportion of households remained vacant for between 14 to 27 days (28.2%). A further 22.6% remained vacant for between 28 to 62 days and 19.4% remained vacant for 63 to 132 days. The comparative figures for Housing Associations in the area are 17.9%, 33.3% and 12.3% indicating that Housing Association properties remain vacant for longer. This is also evident when comparing the average for how long it takes to re-let properties. On average it takes 41 days to re-let a Local Authority property whilst it takes 71 to re-let a Housing Association property.

HIP (housing investment programme) data indicates that the number of Local Authority properties has been in decline. Falling from 6,572 in 1995 to 4,877 in 2005, representing a 25.8% decrease. Data also indicates that whilst the level of unfit properties in the social rented sector has remained stable, levels within the private sector have increased, standing at 1,655 in 2005. In terms of demand for council properties HIP data indicates that there are currently 376 which is a reduction from previous years. In addition to this the number of difficult to let RSL properties has also been decreasing standing at 25 in 2005 (42 in 2003). In terms of low demand properties, the level of low demand council and RSL properties has also been decreasing within this period, from 3,739 and 473 respectively in 2001 to 465 and 180 respectively in 2005.

Trends in HIP data show that generally the level of vacant properties has been reducing in both the council and RSL sectors. The level of vacant council properties was highest in 2001 at 445, this has now reduced to 299 in 2005. Figures indicate that the number of households on the housing register has fluctuated over recent years as table 2.6 (overleaf) demonstrates.



**Table 2.6 Number of households on housing waiting list/housing register 2000-2005**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Number on HR</b>	2248	1270	2237	2482	1475	2703

Source: HIP data 2000-2005

As table 2.6 demonstrates the number of households on the housing register has fluctuated over recent years reaching a peak in 2003 and then reducing significantly by 2004, whilst peaking again in 2005. This could be for a number of reasons and does not necessarily indicate a decrease in demand. In terms of lettings, only 597 dwellings were let in 2005 and as table 2.7 (below) demonstrates this is slight increase from 2004 but a general reduction in the longer term.

**Table 2.7 Total number of dwellings let 2000-2005**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Number of dwellings let</b>	838	804	756	631	518	597

Source: HIP data 2000-2005

Although waiting list data and information on the number of dwellings let suggests a reduction in demand for council accommodation however as discussed earlier it is important to note that the overall number of council properties has been reducing, along with a reduction in difficult to let and low demand properties. Therefore this data could indicate better management of the waiting list applicants, and more effective letting of low demand and vacant stock.

### **Changes over time**

Future demand for council accommodation can be assessed by considering future demographic projections. Past population change shows a slight decrease in the District's population from the 1991 to 2001 Census, a 2.7% decrease over ten years. Throughout the North East there has been a 2.8% decrease in the population within the last ten years. There is estimated to be a further 2% decrease within the region up to the year 2010, and this trend is set to continue within Wear Valley, with the population decreasing by 3.3% up to 2010.

There has been a change in household types, with an increase in the proportion of cohabiting couples and one-person households throughout the whole country. This is also evident within the North East. Within the region, there has been a decrease in the size of households; this is mainly

due to the increase in the number of single person households. Table 2.8 (below) highlights North East household populations over the next twenty years, by different household types.

**Table 2.8 North East Household Projections**

Household Type	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
<b>Married couples</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>482</b>	<b>455</b>
<b>Cohabiting couples</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Lone Parent</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Other multi- person</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>One person</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>443</b>
<b>All Households</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>1,048</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>1,135</b>	<b>1,167</b>
<b>Average household size</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>2.32</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>2.12</b>

Source: Region in Figures North East (ONS)

In addition to an estimated loss of 2% in total population between 2000 and 2010 within the North East region, there are dramatic differences between the predicted changes of each age group. Table 2.9 (below) highlights the predicted changes in age groups within the North East up until 2021. The greatest fall in the population can be seen between those within the age group 25 to 44, with a predicted decline from 29% to 24.4% within the same period. There is a predicted decline for young residents, with under 16s representing only 17.5% of the population in 2021, compared to 20.6% in 1991. The greatest increase can be highlighted within the age group 45 to pensionable age, an increase of 5.1%. These predicted changes have serious implications for housing provision in the region, sub-region, and the District of Wear Valley, with the issue of supported housing, and additional floating support, possibly needing to be investigated in the future, due to the increasing number of elderly households.

**Table 2.9 Percentage changes of residents in particular age groups between 1991 and 2021**

Age Group	North East (%) 2002	% change over 1991-2021
<b>0 -15</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>-3.1</b>
<b>16 - 24</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>-2.0</b>
<b>25 - 44</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>-4.6</b>
<b>45 - pensionable</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>+5.1</b>
<b>65 and over</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>+4.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-3.0</b>

Source: Region in Figures – North East Summer 2004, ONS

Given the age profile of current tenants of council housing it is expected that demand for accommodation will increase in future years based on the above population projections. In addition figures from the Office National Statistics indicate that life expectancy of both males and females is increasing across Wear Valley. For example males born in 1999-2000 are expected to live to 73.4 years whilst males born in 2001-2003 are expected to live to 74.2 years. This trend is the same for females with females born between 1999-2001 expected to live 79.1 years whilst those born between 2001-2003 are expected to live to 79.5 years old. Again this will have a significantly impact on housing and support services offered to tenants within Wear Valley.

### **Special Needs Groups**

Wear Valley is a member of the Durham Counties partnership with its community alarms monitoring undertaken by Sedgefield DC. There is a joint county five year SP strategy although Wear Valley has not developed specific strategies for its area regarding particular client groups, including mental health, learning difficulties, substance abuse etc as they don't have the resources to cover these areas themselves.

Whilst not actively engaged in joint assessment and service provision arrangements with social care or health services in the district, they are developing links with RSLs in the area to provide sheltered/adapted accommodation. Some joint working with social services has been undertaken in the use of falls detectors.

Wear Valley has set up a Home Improvement Agency which is based in Bishop Auckland which looks after the physical adaptation needs of private tenants and owner occupiers and other support schemes for these tenures.

The council does not have mechanisms in place from social care or health services to systematically evaluate the housing related support and adaptation needs of the wider population and only has detailed figures of the schemes it provides under the supporting people funding and the referrals from Social Services for physical adaptations to their own stock.

### **Section 3 – Qualitative Results**

In order to gain some insight into those households who are looking for alternative council accommodation and those who are currently not Wear Valley customers but would like to be, focus group work was undertaken to gain some qualitative information of aspirations and expectations.

#### *Current Customers*

The waiting list group included gaining information on why the attendees wished to become a customer of Wear Valley, where they were coming from and what their aspirations are for the services that are provided. The group include a range of different households who were living in different circumstances. They all had strong ideas and aspirations and reasons for moving. The answers were varied from where households were currently living and why they wanted to move into council stock, although there were some comparatives to why certain areas were more favourable than others and what they expected from the service.

Some households have local connections and want to stay close to family and friends, others would like to move into a rural area, access to facilities such as transport the hospital, dentists and doctors were also important for some households. For some households access to good schools was important when choosing a location. Some households are reluctant to try other or unfamiliar areas due to perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour in other areas of the district. It was felt that there were particularly high concentrations of poor tenants living in some areas. Features like gardens and access to parking for residents were felt to be important however these were not a priority if the resident was in desperate need of accommodation.

The waiting list is felt to be longer than it used to be. Residents feel like they are not making any progress on the list and they are rarely informed of their progress on the list. Even when they phone or ask front line staff they find it very hard to get any information. They sometimes feel like just another number. It is felt that they constantly have to chase the council up to receive any information on properties becoming available or even for information on the number of points they have. Some residents feel that staff are unsympathetic to their situation and sometimes feel like the council is a faceless organisation because so many people deal with them.

It is felt that a lot of queue jumping takes place on the waiting list. Some residents felt that some people are declaring themselves ill and getting doctors notes simply to move further up the list. It is sometimes felt that staff do not want to listen and it felt that the only people who get answers are those that shout and scream whilst the decent people get overlooked and ignored. Issues were raised around allocation policies and it was again felt that normal people get overlooked whilst priority cases get put to the top of the list. Old procedures were mentioned where parish councils used to allocate the housing. It was also felt that some of these priority

cases should not be put to the top as some of their problems will be self inflicted i.e. drug/alcohol abusers, ex-prisoners etc.

The possibility of a choice based letting scheme was discussed and residents seemed open to this idea. It was noted that one resident had seen a property advertised in the window of Crook civic centre and went in to enquire about putting their name down for it. The resident was told the council were unable to help, leaving the resident wondering why the property was in the window in the first place.

The length of time residents had been on the waiting list varied. Some had been on the list for four years whilst some had been on the list five months. For some residents it was felt that if they were not offered a suitable property soon they would be forced to consider other alternatives. Some residents had been offered properties but they did not match their requirements.

It was noted that some residents would consider shared ownership. Residents were not willing to compromise in terms of location and had strong preferences for their chosen area. Residents were willing to compromise to some extent on property type however there were good reasons why they had preferences for a specific property type. It was felt that if more properties had downstairs bathrooms there may be less demand for bungalows as some households would be able to manage.

In terms of the current properties available it is felt that they are not meeting resident's aspirations. It was felt that the council had built too many one bedroom properties when demand for two bedroom properties was higher.

Main factors determining the suitability of a property where;

- Being close to family friends
- Being in a good area with no anti social behaviour
- Being of a good standard and in a good state of repair

There is thought to be a mismatch between the council properties some people in the district are residing in and what they actually want. It is felt that a lot of elderly people are stuck in larger properties that they would like to move out of if they had the chance or if they were encouraged to do so. The lack of bungalows is felt to be stopping these people moving out of the larger properties, which in turn does not release the properties for families or other households needing the larger properties. It is felt that the council should be more proactive in asking households living within properties that are too large to move etc. It is also felt that the numbers of properties being lost due to right to buy are not being replaced.

It was felt that the whole process of the points allocation and the waiting list needs to be more transparent. It was also felt that more information is needed as to what happens to the current waiting list when the council stock is transferred.

There were some issues raised around tenants from outside the area, particularly London, being placed into properties which local residents could have had.

### *Future Customers*

The council were also keen on finding out more information on those households who are currently customers, but wish to change the properties that they occupy or the location in which they reside. Therefore a focus group was held with a selection on tenants who are currently on the transfer list. These attendees were asked details on why they require alternative accommodation, where they would prefer to live and what level of service they feel that they have received from the council.

Again, attendees came from a wide range of different locations and represented a wide range of different households and ages.

It was obvious from the discussions of the group that everyone wished to move for a variety of different reasons, due to their current circumstances; there is not a one size fits all, and there needs to be a better match between housing needs and properties supplied.

There were issues raised about the design of some of the estates, that they are too open plan and lack privacy. Some of the properties overlook each other and due to the lack of car-parking facilities many people park their cars on the grass, which can be dangerous where there is a speed slope. There is the need for more activities for children and teenagers on the estate; the lack of activities leads to ASB, drinking, drug taking. The group felt that the council should do more to prevent sink estates, as there are a number of empty homes that cannot be let due to their repair problems. The group highlighted that although mixed communities sounded well in practice a few bad tenants can bring down the whole estate and disturbs the good residents, the council need to monitor these more carefully.

The group raised some issues about the service that they are currently receiving, with a long time to wait for repairs, some areas still not getting any work to refurbish them. There are areas that have received a lot of work, and these are usually the low demand estates. Long-term tenants are missing out on repairs and feel as if basic issues, such as hot water, heating, and windows etc. should be undertaken quicker.

### *Area Issues*

Issues that need to be improved in the areas should include better employment opportunities, more enforcement on drug dealing and ASB, better enforcement of tenants who break their tenancy agreement, cleaner and safer areas, less litter, improvements in footpaths, better public transport services e.g. particularly buses which don't come on to the estates in the winter. There is a problem with crime in some areas with

fear of burglary being a major factor in wanting to move. Racial abuse has occurred within Billy Row, which is resulting in children not playing out; it was highlighted that it is not just racial abuse but also other households are having their children bullied by others causing parents to fear allowing their children to play out-doors. Easy access to services and facilities is important for those without their own transport, especially elderly households, which need to visit doctors, hospital, chemist, shops etc. on a regular basis.

Three main area issues that affect desirable locations to live:

- Good neighbours who can be trusted
- Clean areas with less litter and tidy gardens
- Safety, no fear of ASB and crime

*Property issues*

It was felt that the council need to meet the needs of particular households, not put single people in three-bedroom properties, but match tenants to properties more successfully; allowing properties to be adapted when needed. It was felt that more bungalows for older people are needed. Repairs are required, with dampness and heating problems effecting health of children and elderly households. Cracks in the walls and other structural problems have been highlighted in the properties but the council has not repaired these.

Three main properties issues that affect desirable properties:

- Size of property, to meet the needs of the household
- Privacy and having own front door
- Good state of repair, and getting repairs undertaken within good timescales.

There is the need to provide more affordable homes, better employment opportunities, better neighbourhood management and easier access to essential facilities. Larger houses, more bungalows and adapted properties and good condition homes were also highlighted as priorities for the council to look at in the future.

Although there are a number of different issues raised by the group there was some consensus of what is generally important for good neighbourhoods and good properties. There is a desire for the tenants to feel like they are being listened to and services being tailored to meet their needs. The group agreed that more should be done to check tenants before they are signed up, as this may result in less poor tenants gaining tenancies.

### *Residents not wishing to become council customers*

In addition to gathering data from those residents who are currently customers and, those who are wishing to become customers, this project also attempted to address why particular households did not wish to become customers of Wear Valley. This was to investigate why households may choose to reside within alternative social rented properties, or specialist providers that provide different services.

Information was gathered from a number of different social housing providers within Wear Valley. These interviews covered details of those households who are currently living within their properties, what services and accommodation they provide, why they feel they are living there and investigate if there is any movement between council and other social sector stock.

An interview with Home Housing found that the majority of their stock was thought to be in demand although Deerness estate and St Johns Gardens were highlighted as estates which are particularly in high demand. This is thought to be because it is perceived as a good area. St Johns estate is a red brick estate and has had a number of modernisations and is right next to the local school so it is particularly popular with families. Deerness estate has good access to local facilities. On both of these estates there is low turnover. There are no major problems with low demand in the district. The only properties that are thought to be in less demand compared to others are the one bed bungalows in Naismith Grove. They have had one long term void from these and have had to look at various options for dealing with it. If the association has a long term void they look at the possibility of demolishing it, refurbishing it or selling it. There are also some bungalows in Willington which are lower demand, these are also one bed and haven't had as much investment as others. Family houses, particularly those with three bedrooms are thought to be particularly popular.

Demand for accommodation has thought to have changed within recent years due to the investment that properties have had. More young single people are also approaching the association. Demand has also increased from those people who are working and applicants now tend to be less dependent on benefits than they used to be. Property type and location are thought to play a major role in determining the popularity of a property.

Residents are thought to be generally satisfied with their accommodation however it was noted that some residents in Pennine View in Tow Law are less satisfied. This is because some of the properties are in need of modernisation and have not been modernised as yet.

A number of incentives for possible tenants are offered including decorating vouchers if the property is in need of modernisation. The association used to operate an advanced voids scheme. They also



arrange flexible starting dates for tenants and they also provide help to sustain tenancies.

### *Turnover*

As expected there is low turnover in popular areas. Turnover tends to be higher in bungalows, particularly at Foundry Fields, however this is due to the nature of people living in the properties as properties are released due to death or the need to move to sheltered accommodation.

There are currently a number of people wanting to transfer properties.

Reasons for people leaving Home Housing accommodation include relationship breakdown and possibly moving to the private rented sector for a larger property. It is thought that very few people leave Home Housing stock to move to council accommodation. It is felt that the council do not have the stock in the areas that people would prefer. Some Home Housing tenants move into other Housing Association stock.

Any void properties are marketed so they are advertised in the local newspaper community centre etc.

### *Characteristics of current tenants*

There are a mix of household types currently living within Home Housing accommodation. All age groups are represented. There are a range of people in different economic groups however tenants are tending to be less benefit reliant and there is an increasing trend in single mothers working part time.

The Housing Association feel limited in what they can offer young people and it is thought that more people are approaching them due to their wanting independence, rises in house prices etc.

It is felt that the majority of people hear about the association through word of mouth as it has a good reputation. Some of the communities are close knit communities and often families want to live in close proximity so residents often know if a property is about to become vacant before the association does. Main reasons for households applying for accommodation include relationship breakdown, financial reasons and the need for independence. Currently there are 129 people on the waiting list for properties in the Wear Valley area. 26 are for bungalows, 53 for 2 bed properties and 50 are for three bedroom properties.

Home Housing feels that they are more competitive because they offer lower rents than the private rented sector. They do not require a bond and they offer long term tenancies. It is felt that the association offer security. In some situations the association has had to close the waiting list as they do not want to create a false impression of hope for those waiting.

The association have no immediate plans to develop properties within Wear Valley but they would not rule this out in the future. The association would also be very interested in developing shared ownership schemes.

### *Sheltered Schemes*

Hanover Housing Association only deals with sheltered schemes and extra care schemes – details for those within the Wear Valley District have been given. In addition, there are six Extra Care schemes throughout Co. Durham with the County Council.

Currently all stock is rented although Shared Ownership is something that the organisation are considering for the future.

The only low demand scheme that they have is South Church, which is close to a LA estate which has a poor reputation which reflects on the properties. However they do not have major problems renting them out and all other schemes are in high demand, with some being close to a super market and close to Bishop Auckland town centre which has a range of amenities. There is no problem with demand within Crook, the properties are located within an attractive area and there are nice bungalows in good condition, there is also a good level of privacy within the estate and many residents like that.

Within South Church some of the properties have been marketed, and the services which this scheme provides – this included giving information to Doctors surgeries, libraries and to social services to pass onto their clients.

Demand for properties is determined by location and the good condition of the properties. There are 42 units within Runnymede and half of these are first floor flats, therefore there needs to be some level of fitness as there are no stair lifts. The security element of these schemes are very important to residents, with community alarms and estate management on call, residents feel they can live their own life but have help when they need it.

There has been some tenant satisfaction surveys undertaken, although non that are specific to Wear Valley – but in generally tenants are happy with their accommodation and those who leave general leave to go into residential care or pass away. This leads to quite low turnover rates. Those who are moving into the properties tended to be from owner-occupied family homes, which they have sold as they can no longer maintain the property. Residents desire smaller properties, with little to manage, gardeners are employed to assist so therefore residents do not even have to maintain their gardens if they do not want to.

There are some of the schemes that hold social events and entertainment on a regular basis. All residents from all schemes are invited to these and many attend. All schemes have a communal room where residents can meet and socialise.

There are similar services within Hanover as there is within all sheltered schemes, including community alarms. The scheme within Bishop Auckland also has managers on site, so residents feel secure. There is a good community spirit within many of these schemes and everyone knows everyone else. There is a good reputation and this encourages many new residents to apply for this accommodation. Properties are in good condition, with many having new bathrooms fitted; in addition estates are also in good condition with no litter or other social problems. Many new residents come to Hanover due to word of mouth.

The association deals with elderly couples and single households as well as mixed elderly households – with no tenants under 60 in all single bedroom units apart from Crook. There has previously been disabled families residing within the properties, or sometimes abled-bodied carers can reside within two bedroom properties as long as their tenancy arrangement reflects this.

One-bedroom units are not an issue to let, but the organisation is aware that there could be issues in the future. The council do have problems letting these types of accommodation but as yet it has not affected the Hanover stock. Some of the schemes do have guest rooms, which family and friends can reside in (and they are charged £6 per night which in turn makes some money for the scheme), and they can use the communal rooms as well.

The organisation is aware of changing aspirations and this needs to be taken into account, although not many elderly couples approach the organisation, it is mainly elderly single households. The units do have living rooms for short-term stays, although Hanover will assist in finding more appropriate accommodation if this becomes a more permanent issue – even if it is not Hanover will try to find accommodation that is the most suitable, within the desired locations; this is when the estate management comes into it's own, it is a really good service for tenants.

Hanover is heard of through nominations; many apply through word of mouth and good reputation and to a lesser extent the marketing of the properties. Some applicants come and visit the estate and then apply as they wish to reside within the scheme. Hanover tries to keep marketing to a minimum, although if the chance for free publicity came up then they will utilise this.

Many of the households that move into the Hanover units moved due to a desire for a better location, including closer to family, friends and their support network; some households are returning to the area after some time away. There are a number of households that see entering Hanover as a long-term housing solution and therefore keep the properties nice making the estates more attractive. There have been some cases of homeless elderly people, who were living within the family and they need their own accommodation. Location in terms of shops, doctors and other essential facilities is essential for many of these households, although many need to go into Bishop Auckland town centre for good public

transport links. South Church has good public transport links and regular bus services. In addition, there is a good taxi service.

Movement from Local Authority properties to Hanover properties are generally due to requiring a higher level of security, some move from a bungalow. Stock is in excellent condition, and is quite young. There is some 'snobbiness' about living within a Hanover property as apposed to a LA home. However there are limitations to what stock is available and some households remain on the waiting list for very long periods of time.

The majority of movement within Wear Valley is very localised, with very little external migration; either short moves or returning residents from out of the area.

Future development is difficult to commit to, as it is believed that Extra Care schemes are what many households are aspiring to now, and the government drive is for this type of accommodation. There has just been six Extra Care schemes built within Co. Durham which have been developed by County Durham Council and Hanover therefore there is little chance of additional development within Wear Valley at this time.

It is felt that Extra Care schemes are the way of the future and although sheltered schemes are popular now this is likely to change over time as aspirations change, and government funding points towards Extra Care schemes. Sheltered schemes are still popular, and within the short-term will not be difficult to let, although the future needs to be considered. Extra Care schemes give good levels of security and some sheltered schemes have very small rooms. One-bedroom schemes are likely to reduce in demand as are smaller units as households tend to have more furniture and belongings now than previously; and they like extra room for people to visit when they like.

Shared Ownership is felt to be the way forward for many residents, with this being something that is currently being looked into. There has been the development of Shared Ownership sheltered schemes within other parts of the country and this maybe something for Durham in the future. Crook bungalows may be considered for this, although issues with land ownership need to be addressed.

The association need to look at mixed tenure estates, and the organisation would consider selling some of their stock on the open market; this has been again driven by the political agenda of the time. Residents do have a good range of property types, tenure and location within Wear Valley district; therefore it is not felt that any gaps are currently apparent within the area in terms of accommodation or service provision. There is still a waiting list, and each scheme has their own waiting list – with very low void rates and units not being vacant for long periods. The waiting list is in date order, although if households do have medical needs this would be considered. There are no references taken, but this is something that may need to be looked at. Applicants have three offers and if these are refused then they can be placed at the bottom of the list. Although the list is in date

order no guarantees can be made, and some households remain on the waiting list for long periods without being offered a property.

## **Section 4 - Conclusion**

This document will be used to assist Wear Valley in highlighting some of the major issues facing them in providing suitable and effective services to their tenants; and encouraging future customers to enter the tenure by meeting their needs and aspirations. This document highlights further areas of research and monitoring that may be required to ensure services are constantly meeting the needs and aspirations of their customers.

From the information and data collected there are a few elements of the tenant population that are worth mentioning, and these are likely to have some impact on the services that the council provide.

Not surprisingly the current council tenant population consists of a high percentage of elderly households, retired residents and those with long-term illnesses or disabilities. A high percentage of these households have been tenants of the council for long periods and although their needs and aspirations are changing many are happy for the council to remain to be their landlord. There is the requirement, now and more importantly in the next five to ten years, for additional adaptations and aids to be offered to these tenants to enable them to remain within their home longer. Where necessary more appropriate accommodation may need to be offered to these households, for example bungalows or ground floor flats. The most frequent adaptation required within council accommodation is a level access shower; other adaptations include redesigning or relocating the bathroom, and door answering systems. There are also a number of households highlighting their need for grab and hand rails, both inside and out.

The lack of two-bedroom bungalows within the district is resulting in some elderly households remaining within their family homes for long periods; these properties are more suitable for larger families with children. One-bedroom bungalows are experiencing some instances of low demand; this is due to changing aspirations of residents. Wear Valley needs to look into the most appropriate use of these units to meet the needs of the residents.

Within the council sector there is the greatest percentage of those who are bed bound, are wheelchair users or need a walking aid; therefore this needs to be considered when any new services are being developed. Given the age profile of the population and the increasing life expectancy this level is only likely to increase over a longer time period. Movement of these household is due to be closer to family and friends to receive support and also be to closer to essential facilities, such as doctors and shops.

The services provided for these households need to go beyond housing and additional support services are required for the majority of these households. A significant number of these households highlighted their requirement to move due to the need for additional support, the council should look to offer these services to tenants through the Home

Improvement Agency. The greatest issues highlighted with these households was mobility and arthritis, and asthma in younger households; ensuring that disabilities do not cause any difficulty in accessing services is the council's responsibility. All offices need to be accessible, through ramps, automatic doors, lowered counters and where necessary home visits.

It was commented by a social sector sheltered provider in the area, that many of their residents move from council stock into their accommodation due to the offer of security, including community alarms and an on-site warden, and that their smaller units are easier to manage, with gardening facilities.

In addition there are a number of households that are unemployed and have low incomes; there has been issues raised in regard to benefit receipt and resulting in housing costs becoming too expensive for some households within the council sector, better education and literature needs to be provided to tenants, particularly the elderly, on claimants qualifying and processes on gaining correct levels of benefits.

Other social providers in the district highlighted that there is a lower number of households renting their properties that are benefit dependent than in the past. The need for independent living, and relationship breakdowns were the main reasons for new tenants entering the RSL sector.

There is an extremely low number of council tenants who are BAME households, and although there is a low percentage within the district in general there may be the need to conduct some further consultation with some ethnic groups within the district to investigate their views of social rented accommodation and why they are less likely to reside within council properties.

There are a significant percentage of tenants who are long-standing tenants and are relatively happy with the services provided. As many of these long-standing tenants are elderly, within the next ten years some of these properties are likely to become available either as tenants move into residential or supported accommodation or die. The waiting list for council properties is high, but the suitability of the available properties needs to be addressed, and there is a general mismatch of property types and housing requirements.

Many tenants highlight that reasons for movement and dissatisfaction is the neighbourhood, with crime and harassment being highlighted within many locations of the district. The council needs to ensure that in addition to decent homes the desire for decent communities is also evident to guarantee high levels of satisfaction from tenants. Notwithstanding this there are a number of council tenants that have highlighted the need for some repair work on their homes, and although this is the responsibility of their landlord, the inability to afford the repairs or not being physically able are preventing these household from repairing the problem.

Better design of the estates, with more privacy, was highlighted from current customers; the need to address Anti-Social Behaviour and crime also needs to be addressed. Enforcement of tenancy agreements and the cleaning-up of the estates, from litter and poorly kept gardens were also highlighted.

The location that is highlighted as desirable by those requiring council accommodation is Bishop Auckland, although there are very few LA owned properties within the town. Satisfaction levels with accommodation and neighbourhood are relatively high within Bishop Auckland. Households on both the waiting lists and transfer lists were more prepared to be more flexible with the properties they were offered rather than the location in which they wished to live.

Other area issues highlighted were that there was the need for more activities for children and teenagers, so that they are not 'hanging-around' the streets. The need for more employment opportunities was also highlighted as a priority for the district. It was felt that public transport was poor in certain locations of the district, particularly in the rural areas, making it more difficult for people to access the services that they require.

Homelessness is consistently high, although it has decreased from 2001/2. The council needs to concentrate on prevention of homelessness as well as providing accommodation and services to those who find themselves in this position.

There are several reasons for households being in housing need within the council sector, although overcrowding and the presence of a concealed household is worth particular note. The trend for changing aspirations, towards larger accommodation, is evident through the country and although the increase of single-person households suggests additional one and two bedroom units may be required, it is likely that through this changing demand and changes within family situations the requirement for larger properties will become more prominent. The lack of larger properties has been highlighted, with larger families being unable to gain suitable accommodation within the council stock.

The mismatch between household needs and available properties has been highlighted throughout this research, with the expectation of additional affordable properties being made available throughout the district, including Shared Ownership units.

It was felt that some of the other social landlords are more desirable to residents due to their reputation, the state of repair and age of their properties, and the specialist accommodation and security services that they offer. In addition, extras such as decoration vouchers and social activities also encourage new tenants to join this sector. Relationship breakdowns and the need to set-up own independent home were cited as main reason for households entering the RSL properties. Good location,



nice neighbours, sense of community and high quality repairs were also highlighted as positive aspects of this sector.

Easy to understand information and regular updates for those on both the waiting list and transfer list is required. Households feel that the current system is difficult to understand and hard to follow. Hopefully the new Choice Based Lettings scheme, which is currently being set-up throughout County Durham, will address some of these issues. Households spoken to, who are currently on the waiting or transfer lists were quite positive about the introduction of this new system.

## SERVICE STANDARDS

### Introduction

In 2005, Wear Valley District Council's Housing Services Department had another look at its standards of service. With customer representatives, we developed a set of service standards. The intention is to make sure we include all the changes in what customers want and expect from the housing services department.

In November 2005, preparing for Dale & Valley Homes being set up, the Audit Commission suggested that the Service Standards should be updated.

This booklet is about the Service Standards for Dale & Valley Homes.

Customers and staff will keep an eye on the service standards at all times. Progress towards meeting the service standards will be reported regularly in resident newsletters, on the Dale & Valley Homes website, and in local offices. The standards will be looked at yearly. A programme of mystery shopping, focus groups and reaction from customer satisfaction questionnaires will all form part of the review.

### Other languages and ways you can obtain this booklet

We can let you have this document in other forms such as Braille, large print, on audiotape, on CD-Rom or in other languages: Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu and Welsh. You can get a copy by ringing 01388 761946 and asking for the Community Involvement Team.

এই ডকুমেন্টটি নিচের ভাষাগুলোতে অনুবাদ করা যাবে : বাংলা, কেনটনীয়, হিন্দী, মানডারিন, পানজাবী, উরদু, উয়েলস।  
আপনি এর কপি পেতে ফোন করুন (01388) 761 946

“這份文件能複製成下列語言：孟加拉語，廣東話，北印度語，普通話，旁遮普語，烏爾都語，威爾斯語。您可以致電(01388) 761 946 索取副本。”

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“यह लेख्य पत्र अगले भाषाओं में पेश किया जा सकता है: बंगाली, कान्टोनीस, हिन्दी, म्यानडरीन्, पंजाबी, ऊर्दू, वेल्श। आप एक प्रतिलिपि के लिए (01388) 761 946 में सम्पर्क कर सकते हैं।”

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਅਗਲੇ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਵਿਚ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ: ਬੰਗਾਲੀ, ਕਾਨਟੋਨੀਸ, ਹਿੰਦੀ, ਮਾਨਡਰੀਨ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਉਰਦੂ, ਵੇਲਸ਼। ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਕ ਉਤਾਰਾ ਲਈ (01388) 761 946 ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ।

اس دستاویز کو مندرجہ ذیل زبانوں میں بھی حاصل کیا  
جا سکتا ہے:- بنگالی کنٹونیز ہندی منڈارن پنجابی اردو  
ویلش اپنی کاپی حاصل کرنے کے لیے اس نمبر پر ڈائل  
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"Gellir atgynhyrchu'r ddogfen hon yn yr ieithoedd canlynol: Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Hindi, Mandarin, Pwnjabeg, Wrddw, Cymraeg. Fe gewch chi gopi trwy ffonio (01388) 761 946".

## **DALE & VALLEY HOMES' VISION FOR HOUSING**

“Leading the way to the very best housing of choice for everyone that contributes to sustainable communities, which learn and grow.”

To succeed in this, Dale & Valley Homes has made a promise to deliver the very best quality in housing services. This promise is set out in the Service Standards and these will lead towards excellent service. The council's strategic housing objectives are to achieve the best possible choice of housing and make sure:

- Achieve an optimum balance and choice of housing
- Deliver ever improving community safety and reducing fear of crime
- Deliver an ever improving greener, cleaner and healthier environment
- Develop people and communities who can work together, able to say what is needed and make it happen

Dale & Valley Homes is fully committed to equality of opportunity for all people with positive and fair treatment for all communities regardless of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, race, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependants, disability, trade union or political activity and any other disadvantaged group.

We will:

- Provide a friendly and efficient service.
- Make sure that our people have an NVQ Level Two in Customer Service.
- Offer a service that recognises that we are dealing with a mixture of people; one that meets the different needs of all our customers.
- Offer an open, honest and clear service.
- Actively involve customers and all those who play an important part locally in planning, checking, designing and delivering service.
- Give customers opportunities to have their say on changes, developments and improvements to services showing real progress as a result.
- Make sure that we give customers enough time to read and understand information and be on hand to answer any questions.
- Build up and continue an action plan with customers to check the delivery and performance of these service standards.
- Take action where problems arise.

### **To use our services**

Our call centre is open:  
Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Please get in touch with the Call Centre if you want to:

- Report a repair
- Check the progress of a repair you have reported
- Change an appointment

If you want to report a repair, you can get in touch with the Repairs and Maintenance department on Freephone number **0800 083 333**.

You can text your repair to us on **07768 522 542**

You can report a repair through our website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

You can email our call centre direct: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

If you have an emergency such as no electricity or a burst pipe in your home and the Call Centre is closed, you can get in touch with our on-call Maintenance Officer. This officer is available 24 hours a day on emergency number **07785 517 565**.

Please remember that as part of your tenancy agreement you have agreed that **you** are responsible for some repairs. These repairs include:

- Sink plugs and chains
- Inside redecoration
- Light bulbs and tubes
- Electrical equipment not owned by the Council – including washers, kettles, TVs and aerials, satellite equipment and cables
- Fences such as boundary and party fences

## **HOUSING RECEPTION OFFICES**

### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre**

**Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office - opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

### **Neighbourhood office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office  
64a Proudfoot Drive  
Woodhouse Close  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6QT**

Tel: 01388 604 568

Fax: 01388 608 479

Opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Wednesday - 12.00pm to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

Cash office - opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

## **CUSTOMER ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE**

### **Using our reception areas**

We will:

- Make sure that our reception areas are easy for everyone to get to.

- Make sure that there are clear signs within all our reception areas.
- Make sure that our people wear badges clearly showing their names.
- Make sure that we keep reception areas clean and tidy.
- Provide leaflets and information that are easy for you to obtain and make it clear that all information can be had in different forms, including Braille, audiotape and large print. If other languages are needed, please ask.
- We can bring in a person with sign language skills to help hearing impaired customers so, again, please ask.

If our offices are going to be closed, we will:

- Tell people beforehand, putting up notices in our reception areas up to one week before closing.
- Make sure you know when the office will open up again.
- Give out information about emergency services and other staff contact details.
- Make sure that we train our people in customer care and provide you with a caring, polite and efficient service.
- Make sure that the contact details of staff, including full name, telephone number and e-mail address are on hand for all customers.

### **Making appointments and interviewing you**

- If you have a meeting, we will make sure that the appointment is kept and we will say sorry if we are late.
- If we have to cancel your appointment, we will let you know as soon as we can. We will explain to you why we are cancelling the appointment and we will make another appointment with you.
- We will try, wherever we can, to offer a choice of appointment times and to meet any needs you tell us you have.
- If we need to visit you, we will give you a choice of appointment times.
- If you do not have an appointment, our reception areas will operate on a first come first served basis.
- We will make sure that your privacy is respected. When we think it is right to do so, we will offer you a private interview room. When you ask for one, we will do this also.
- We will make sure that you know you can bring someone to an interview with you to help you.

- We will make sure that you know that, should you wish to, you can ask for an interview with a person of the same sex as yourself.
- We will confirm any action we agree with you, in writing or in another form if you ask.

### **Writing to you and speaking with you**

We will:

- Try to answer all letters and requests for information within 5 working days. If we cannot answer your question within that time, we will contact you to let you know that we have your enquiry and to explain the delay.
- Write to you in “Plain English”.
- Make sure that addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of those dealing with your question are clear on any correspondence sent to you.
- Reply to messages left by e-mail within one working day, answering your question in full. If we cannot answer your question in full within that time, we will reply to your e-mail saying we have received it and telling you when we will have an answer for you.
- Put an “out of office” message on e-mail addresses. These will give the date of the officer’s return and details of other officers to contact in an emergency.
- Answer the telephone within 20 seconds.
- Give our name and tell you which section we work in when we answer the telephone.
- Direct you to an answering machine or a voicemail if we are not able to take your call. You will be able to leave a message. The message on the machine will tell you when the officer you are trying to contact may be able to take your call and give details of others you can contact in an emergency.
- Reply to any messages left on answering machines or voicemail within one working day of the officer returning to work.
- Give you a choice of ways to contact us to report repairs and maintenance problems: a text messaging service, a Freephone number and an email address.

### **UNDERTAKING WORKS ON YOUR HOME - RESPONSIVE REPAIRS**

Our staff will be clean, tidy, polite and courteous. They will all wear Wear Valley District Council uniforms.

We will:

- Provide an emergency service 24 hours a day 365 days a year.



- Do emergency repairs within 24 hours. We will tell you if your repair is an emergency when you report it.
- Deal with requests for urgent repairs within three days or agree an appointment.
- Arrange an appointment with you for repairs that we do not think are emergencies, if we need enter your home. We will keep at least 95% of these appointments.
- Make sure that we offer joint appointments to customers who are at risk.
- Send out letters to confirm appointments.
- Give you proof of identity before entering your home.
- Tell you why we are in your home and what work we will be doing.
- Make sure that all our staff wear foot covers to protect your floor coverings.
- Do our best to keep your home safe and secure at all times.
- Make sure that at the end of each day you will have water. You will also have gas or electrical heating and cooking services that work. If any of this is not possible, we will offer an alternative.
- Make sure that your heating appliances are serviced once a year.
- Make sure that we leave your home clean and tidy after all repairs.
- Give customers a “satisfaction card” at the end of the repair work. This can be posted to us free so that we can keep an eye on quality and satisfaction.
- Check at least 10% of all work to make sure quality is not falling.
- Regularly check with customers who have had repairs done on their homes to make sure we know about the quality of our services.

## **IMPROVEMENT / MODERNISATION WORK**

If we plan major work on your home, you can expect Dale & Valley Homes and its partners to:

- Invite you to an open day near to your home if appropriate.
- Give the details of a named liaison officer who you can contact with any questions, worries or special needs you may have.
- Give you at least 7 days notice before starting work on your home.
- Work between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday, unless we have agreed otherwise with you.

- Show care over your comfort and safety and disturb you as little as possible
- Make sure that we always use good quality materials, manufactured to the relevant British or European Standard.
- Make sure that work is done to a good standard.
- Only promise what we can deliver
- Do our best to make sure you are kept warm and comfortable while the work is being done.
- Act with particular care towards people with special needs
- Carry out all work safely and efficiently while you remain in the house.
- Give you daytime and out-of-hours telephone numbers.
- Pay you an allowance towards the cost of redecoration in the case of specific large jobs such as central heating replacement and kitchen and bathroom replacement.
- Leave your home clean and tidy.
- Take away building rubbish from outside your property as work goes on.
- Give tenants a choice in the style of replacement where possible when we replace a major part of your home, such as a kitchen or a bathroom.
- Give customers the chance to ask for one of our female staff to be present during any contractor works.

In addition:

- You have the right to refuse to let our staff or contractors into your home if you are not comfortable with their behaviour (except emergencies).
- Our contractors will give customers who do not speak English as their first language a card. This will show who the contractors are and why they are there, in a variety of different languages. An interpreter can then be asked for.

## **HOUSING SERVICES AND VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS**

Wear Valley District Council offers a “Homeline” service, which is paid for by the Supporting People programme. It is there for all at risk customers who live in the Wear Valley district. This service offers a variety of support services linked to housing, including a Community Alarm Service.

We will:

- Make sure that your needs are met by sensitive staff who have suitable skills.
- Talk to you fully about any assessment of your needs and the development of plans to help you live as independently as you wish.
- Help with any communication needs that you or your carer tells us you have.

If you would like more information, please contact Wear Valley District Council's Supported Housing Team on **(01388) 742 104**.

## **HOMELESSNESS AND YOUR RIGHTS**

Wear Valley District Council has a homelessness service. The main job of the service is to act when anyone finds himself or herself homeless or threatened with homelessness or else shows that they have a housing need that has not been dealt with. In doing this the Council will obey the legislation in the Housing Act 1996 amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

- The Council will give you information and advice on benefits and welfare rights, your tenancy rights, short-term housing and rent arrears. We can also make recommendations for help with tenancies, both with the Council's own service and with others.
- The Council can give advice and support in dealing with your landlord or Housing Association.
- If you have nowhere to sleep, the Council may be able to give you emergency lodgings if this is suitable in your case.
- If the Council decides that there is a real, immediate, duty to secure housing they may have to put you into temporary lodgings. That said, they have promised to cut their use of short-term housing.
- If you are homeless, we will put you into a priority group on Dale & Valley Homes' housing register.
- In all circumstances, we will try to give the best advice on how to solve your housing problems.

For further information, please contact Wear Valley District Council's Homelessness Service on **01388 742102**.

## **ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOU**

Improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for Dale & Valley Homes and Wear Valley District Council. We define anti-social behaviour in the same way as the Crime & Disorder Act 1998.

***“Behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.***

Many types of behaviour are considered anti-social. Some of these are listed below:

- Excessive noise
- Harassment and verbal abuse
- Unruly behaviour
- Selling drugs or drug abuse
- Playing ball games in the street or close to someone else's home.

If you are a victim of anti-social behaviour, you should report it to your local housing office. We will:

- Acknowledge all complaints about anti-social behaviour within 24 hours.
- Interview you within 5 working days if you report to us that you are suffering from anti-social behaviour.
- Try to interview the person(s) responsible for this within 7 working days, with your permission.
- Identify and take action against tenants who break their tenancy agreement.
- Make sure you know what is happening while we investigate your complaint.
- Work with the police and Wear Valley's Anti Social Behaviour Panel to tackle anti-social behaviour and fear of anti-social behaviour.

Action we may take can include:

- Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – ABC's
- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders – ASBO's
- Injunctions
- Possession proceedings

If the behaviour you report does not break a tenancy agreement, or is not carried out by a tenant of Dale & Valley Homes, we will point you to the appropriate section of Wear Valley District Council. If they cannot help, we will suggest another organisation that can help. We will do that within 7 days.

## **RACIAL HARASSMENT**

We promise to tackle racial harassment. Anyone who commits racial harassment is breaking his or her tenancy conditions and we will take action against them as tenants. This could include:

Injunctions  
Possession proceedings  
Criminal action with Police help  
Anti Social Behaviour Order.

**A racist incident is any incident thought to be racist by the victim or any other person.**

We see racial harassment as a serious problem. If you, or members of your family, experience racial harassment, we will look into it fully and do all we can to stop it.

This harassment does not only mean physical attacks on people and damage to property because of the victim's racial origin. It also means spoken abuse and other behaviour that stops these people from peacefully enjoying their homes.

If you feel you are a victim of any form of racial harassment please contact your nearest Housing Office and report it.

### **What we can do to help**

We will:

- Treat any complaint of racial harassment seriously and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
- Remove graffiti and repair damage to your property as soon as possible.
- With the Police, advise on extra security where there is still a risk.
- Give extra re-housing points to victims of harassment who need another home.
- Report all racial harassment to the Wear & Tees Hate Crime Forum.
- Involve all relevant agencies to make sure that victims receive support.
- Deal with people who commit racial harassment quickly and effectively.

### **HATE CRIME**

We promise to tackle all hate crimes. Anyone who commits a hate crime is breaking his or her tenancy conditions and we will take action against them as tenants. This could include:

Injunctions  
Possession proceedings  
Criminal action with Police help  
Anti Social Behaviour Order

**A hate crime is any act of harassment, abuse or victimisation against an individual or group because of race, religion, gender, sexuality, or disability perceived to be a hate crime by the victim or any other person.**

We see hate crime as a serious problem. If you, or members of your family, are victims of hate crime, we will look into the matter fully. We will then do all we can to stop it.

A hate crime not only means physical attacks on people and damage to property. It also means spoken abuse and other behaviour that deprives people of the peaceful enjoyment of their homes because of their difference.

If you are the victim of any form of hate crime, please contact your nearest Housing Office and report the incident.

### **What we can do to help**

More re-housing points are given to victims of harassment who need another home. We will:

- Treat any complaint of a hate crime seriously, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
- Remove graffiti and repair damage as soon as possible.
- With the Police, give advice on extra security where there is still a risk.
- Report all harassment to the Wear & Tees Hate Crime Forum.
- Communicate with all the relevant agencies to make sure victims of hate crimes receive proper support and that those who commit hate crimes are dealt with quickly and effectively.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

We aim to give general advice to people who are experiencing domestic violence. We will point out other organisations who can help. You do not need an appointment but you may have to wait until an Interview room is free so that you can speak to someone in private. We will:

- Offer a private interview.
- Offer same sex staff to give advice and carry out the interviews.
- Always treat everything you say as private.
- Help you to consider your housing options.
- Put you in touch with other organisations and provide you with telephone numbers.
- Give extra points to applicants on the housing register who suffer domestic violence.
- Give advice on emergency housing.

### **EMPTY PROPERTIES**

Everyone at Dale & Valley Homes wants you to be happy in your new home. To this end, we have worked with our customers to agree on a standard that properties have to reach

before they can be let - a lettable standard. This standard tells you what you can expect from us at the very least.

We will:

- Check empty properties within 3 days of receiving the keys from the last tenant.
- Finish repairs to empty properties within (TBC) working days.
- Re-let empty properties within (TBC) working days.
- Keep rent lost, through properties being empty, to (TBC)%
- Do an electrical, gas and solid fuel test before your tenancy starts.
- Ask you to look at the property with us to agree repairs, whenever possible.
- Fix up a convenient appointment with you for these repairs.
- Send you a Customer Satisfaction questionnaire within 10 weeks of your moving into your new home.

### **Lettable Standard**

- The gas and electricity supplies have been checked and any faults repaired
- Sanitary ware is checked and cleaned to a good hygienic standard
- Sufficient kitchen storage and cooking facilities are present and are clean and tidy
- Worktops will be clean and suitable for use
- There is plumbing for an automatic washing machine
- All floors, stairs, banisters and handrails have been checked and any faults repaired
- Internal doors are damage free and open and close easily
- All windows and external doors are safe and secure
- All locks or latches work
- All rubbish from inside and outside is removed
- Any graffiti are removed
- Gardens are clean and tidy
- Pantries are removed and other units fitted

- All units, floors and woodwork are washed
- All shared areas are clean
- Decoration vouchers will be awarded if the Housing Officer believes too much decoration is required to bring the property up to a satisfactory standard.

## **ESTATE INSPECTIONS**

We will make estate inspections monthly and look at each street. We will draw up an action plan with customers, councillors and other important local agencies should a problem arise.

We will

- Make sure Housing Officers make estate inspections monthly.
- Draw up an action plan after the inspection and deal with all problems within 5 working days.
- Invite local councillors and customers to come along with us on the inspections.
- Remove graffiti as soon as possible.
- Remove abandoned vehicles as soon as possible.
- Look into any breach of tenancy and take the most suitable action.

## **THE HOUSING REGISTER**

We use a housing register to allocate our properties. We assess every applicant against the same criteria to ensure we award points fairly.

- We will register fully completed housing application forms within 3 working days.
- We will write to you to let you know how many points you have within 5 working days of registering your registration form.
- If your registration form is not fully completed, we will write to you within 3 working days, explaining what we need.
- We will give you, on request, information on our recent lettings so that you can see roughly how many points you will need and how long you are likely to wait before being offered other housing.
- All information will be treated in strict confidence.



## **ADAPTATIONS**

Wear Valley District Council's Regeneration Department gives help and advice on equipment or adaptations for your home.

If you have a disability, are elderly or have a long-term illness that causes you difficulty coping with everyday tasks, they may be able to help you.

### **There is a range of help available including:**

- Advice on suitable equipment for you or adaptations for your home that will meet your needs
- Supply of some equipment on loan; for example, a raised toilet seat or bathing equipment
- Advice on minor adaptations to your home, like stair rails or outside hand rails
- Information on how you might pay for major adaptations, such as a lift or a ramp for wheelchair access
- Advice on the option to move to alternative housing.

For more information, including details of service standards, please contact the Regeneration Department at Wear Valley District Council on **(01388) 765 555**.

## **RENT COLLECTION**

### **Income Management**

Every year the Council's tenants lose out on improvements to their homes because of rent that hasn't been paid. You can expect this from us:

- We will clearly explain rent accounts to all new tenants
- We will send you a rent statement every 13 weeks
- We will provide you with these payment methods
  - Direct debit
  - Standing order
  - Post office payment card
  - Paypoint
  - On-line banking
  - Telephone banking
  - Cash offices
- Rent is to be paid weekly but if you want to pay fortnightly or monthly this should be in advance and not in arrears
- We will help you fill in housing benefit claim forms

- We will write to you if you do not pay your rent for 2 weeks
- We will arrange a way for you to catch up with your rent, in a way you can afford, if you fall into arrears
- If you do not make the agreed payments we will visit you at your home to talk to you about the situation
- We will refer you to our Money & Debt Advice Service if you are at risk of losing your home
- You can ask for help from the Money & Debt Advice Service at any time
- We will only take legal action against you if we have given you warnings; this means sending letters and visiting you at your home
- We will only evict you from your home if all other attempts to tackle the problem have failed

## **MONEY AND DEBT ADVICE**

Sometimes tenants get into financial difficulties. This can put their tenancy at risk. Dale & Valley Homes offers a Money and Debt Advice service to provide advice and help with these difficulties and to make sure your tenancy is successful. You can expect these standards from this service:

- We will treat everything you tell us in the strictest confidence.
- If you wish, the Housing Officer will refer you to the service if your tenancy is at risk because of rent arrears.
- We will make sure you are receiving the correct housing and council tax benefit.
- We will contact people you owe money to, for you, to discuss payment terms.
- We will agree fair instalments to help you clear rent arrears.
- We will make sure you are receiving all the state benefits you are entitled to.
- We will help to make a budget plan for you to follow.
- If we cannot help you, we will make a referral to another agency.
- We will help you until all financial problems are solved. We may then refer you to another agency.
- You can ask for more help at any time.

## **FORMER TENANT ARREARS**

Some customers leave their homes without paying all the money they owe. It is important that we collect this money as it affects the service that we can provide for our remaining customers. We will:

- Reduce former tenant arrears to (TBC).
- Discuss any debts you still have to settle before your tenancy ends.
- If we cannot discuss the matter with you, we will contact you within 7 days of your tenancy ending.
- We will agree sensible repayments with you.
- If we cannot contact you or agree repayments with you, we may ask a Debt Collection Service to collect the money from you for us.
- As a last resort, we may collect the debt from you using the County Court.

## **TENANCY SUPPORT**

We aim to provide a time limited floating support package to vulnerable people taking up new tenancies and existing tenants who are deemed vulnerable and are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancies

Issues such as lack of general skills, drug and alcohol dependencies, mental health problems, debt or difficulties in completing standard forms all effect how a person can manage a tenancy. Some people who have been through a traumatic experience, such as domestic violence may also struggle with their tenancy and may need support to help them rebuild their lives.

We will:

- Provide advice and support in setting up and maintaining your tenancy.
- Identify your needs through needs assessment and support planning.
- Review your support plan on a regular basis to ensure that sufficient support is being provided. The review can either be after a specific timescale or at the request of either the client or the Support Officer.
- Assign you your own dedicated Tenancy Support Officer who will listen to your views and opinions, be honest, respectful, non judgmental, and treat all information you give in the strictest confidence.
- Help you manage your finances, claim for benefits, Social Fund Loans and Community Care Grants.
- Help you make the most of your neighbourhood.
- Help you get in touch with services such as gas and electric utilities.

- Help you find furniture.
- Help you find work, education and training opportunities.
- Help you to get expert advice on matters such as debts, mental health, domestic violence, learning difficulties, drug and alcohol addictions.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Community Involvement plays a very important role within Dale and Valley Homes. Our aim is to give customers on our estates the opportunity and means to have their say about the services they receive. This includes how we plan services and how they are paid for. We realise that by doing this we can improve those services and make sure that we, and our customers, are getting value for money.

We are keen to look at many options for involvement, through the community involvement database, to make sure customers can get involved at whatever level suits them. The Community Involvement Team aims to:

- Help customers who wish to form Residents Groups
- Give information to tenants in plain language, with translation available on request, making sure it is approved by the Customer Editorial Panel to help participation
- Make best use of training for customers, encouraging both local and national training opportunities
- Support the Customer Panel and both new and active Residents Groups through a fair and equal sharing of available resources.

A new Tenant's Compact will be available from September 2006, with information about standards of service. Please contact the Community Involvement Team for more information on **(01388) 761 989**.

## **DALE & VALLEY HOMES EQUALITIES STATEMENT**

We believe that everyone who approaches us is important and will be treated equally as a valued customer. We understand that people are different and pledge that we will:

- Treat you fairly and as an individual regardless of your ethnic origin, religion, geographic location, special needs, language difference, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability;
- Do everything we can to meet your individual needs;
- Do everything in our power to ensure that discrimination of any kind does not take place in our neighbourhoods and encourage you to report any incident to us immediately;

- Ensure that our offices have access for wheelchair users;
- Ensure that our employees and contractors do not discriminate unfairly between our customers;
- Use plain English in our letters and leaflets;
- Provide an interpreter for any customers who have difficulty speaking English;
- Monitor the number of people on the housing register from different ethnic backgrounds and the length of time they spend on the waiting list to make sure that all groups are treated fairly;
- Not tolerate racial harassment or harassment of any kind;
- Fully investigate any incident of racial harassment or harassment of any kind and take appropriate action against the perpetrators;
- Offer assistance, including the chance to move home, to anyone who is the victim of harassment;
- Provide information in other formats, such as in Braille, on audiotape, in large print or other languages on request. A signer can be arranged for the hard of hearing;
- Ensure that a qualified BSL interpreter / communicator can be arranged for the deaf or hearing impaired if required;
- Liase with the DDCREC on any racial incident and work together on best practice regarding community cohesion.

To access any of these services, or to get a copy of this document in another format or language you can phone the Community Involvement Team on **(01388) 761 989**.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY**

Dale & Valley Homes promises to give the very best quality housing service to our customers. However, we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when we make mistakes or if you have not received the quality of service you expected. This will help us to improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint, you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
 Dale & Valley Homes  
 Civic Centre  
 Crook  
 County Durham  
 DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 761 597**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can fill in the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you with the form.

### **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments on the Service Standards please use a suggestion card and put it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Otherwise, you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

**Tel: (01388) 761 597**

**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Copies of the Service Standards can be had from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOU - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

Dale & Valley Homes fully endorses the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

We can produce this booklet in other formats, such as Braille; large print; on audiotape; on CD-Rom; or in other languages. You can get a copy by calling the Community Involvement Team on **(01388) 761 946**.

This document can be reproduced in the following languages:  
Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu, Welsh.

“यह लेख्य पत्र अगले भाषाओं में पेश किया जा सकता है: बंगाली, कान्टोनीस, हिन्दी, म्यानडरीन्, पंजाबी, ऊर्दू, वेल्श। आप एक प्रतिलिपि के लिए (01388) 761 946 में सम्पर्क कर सकते हैं।”

এই ডকুমেন্টটি নিচের ভাষাগুলোতে অনুবাদ করা যাবে: বাংলা, ক্যান্টোনীজ, হিন্দী, মানডারিন, পানজাবী, উর্দু, উয়েলশ।  
আপনি এর কপি পেতে ফোন করুন (01388) 761 946

“这份文件能复制成下列语言: 孟加拉语, 广东话, 北印度语, 普通话, 旁遮普语, 乌尔都语, 威尔斯语。您可致电(01388) 761 946 索取副本。”

“這份文件能複製成下列語言: 孟加拉語, 廣東話, 北印度語, 普通話, 旁遮普語, 烏爾都語, 威爾斯語。您可以致電(01388) 761 946 索取副本。”

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਅਗਲੇ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਵਿਚ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ: ਬੰਗਾਲੀ, ਕਾਨਟੋਨੀਸ, ਹਿੰਦੀ, ਮਾਨਡਰੀਨ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਉਰਦੂ, ਵੇਲ਼ਸ਼। ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਕ ਉਤਾਰਾ ਲਈ (01388) 761 946 ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ।

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"Gellir atgynhyrchu'r ddogfen hon yn yr ieithoedd canlynol: Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Hindi, Mandarin, Pwnjabeg, Wrddw, Cymraeg. Fe gewch chi gopi trwy ffonio (01388) 761 946".

### INTRODUCTION - Being a Good Neighbour

Improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour is a priority for Dale & Valley Homes and Wear Valley District Council. We use the following definition of anti-social behaviour taken from the Crime & Disorder Act 1998.

***“Behaviour that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.***

Everyone is entitled to enjoy their home quietly and peacefully. Customers of Dale & Valley Homes sign a tenancy agreement, which sets out all the terms and conditions that a tenant must keep to throughout the tenancy. If your neighbour is too noisy or causing a nuisance then please report it to our Tenancy Enforcement Team as quickly as possible.

Wear Valley District Council and Dale & Valley Homes recognise that Anti-Social Behaviour is a major concern to tenants and is committed to acting against it. There is a specialist **Tenancy Enforcement Team** who investigate and take action against cases of Anti-Social Behaviour and harassment.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

All Dale & Valley Homes tenants should be able to have the peaceful enjoyment of their homes and surroundings, free from harassment and other Anti-Social Behaviour. Your Tenancy Agreement sets out unacceptable behaviour and ways in which tenants should not behave, including such things as:

- **noise nuisance**
- **unruly youths and children**
- **drug use and drug dealing**
- **threats and intimidation**
- **vandalism and graffiti**

Tenants are responsible for their own conduct and also the conduct of any friends, family or children who live at or visit their home. The Tenancy Agreement also prohibits Anti-Social Behaviour anywhere in the local area, not just at the tenant's house.

We may take action against any tenant who is responsible for Anti-Social Behaviour. In extreme cases this may lead to an injunction, an Anti-Social Behaviour Order or eviction. Tenants evicted for anti-social behaviour are not likely to be rehoused by Dale & Valley Homes.

If you experience nuisance from your neighbours, tell us about it. If they are tenants, we may be able to take action against them. If they are not tenants, we will work with other agencies to stop the nuisance.

### **The Anti-Social Behaviour Panel**

Wear Valley District Council also works in partnership with the Police and other partners to tackle anti-social behaviour. The Council and the Police can apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order to control individuals who are causing alarm, distress or harassment to others in the area. Anti-Social Behaviour Order's (ASBO's) can be applied to anybody over the age of 10 regardless of where they live.

The process of applying for an ASBO is managed by the Anti-Social Behaviour Panel, a multi-agency panel made up of Wear Valley District Council, the Police and other partners.

Once in place an ASBO carries heavy penalties if breached, including fines and custodial sentences. In Wear Valley, several persistent offenders have been given custodial sentences for breaching the terms of their ASBO which has removed them from the local area.

### **Making a Complaint**

If you are troubled by nuisance or anti-social behaviour caused by a tenant, or a member of their household, we can take action against them.



An officer from the **Tenancy Enforcement Team** will contact you to get details of the incident then, if you wish, we will contact the person causing the nuisance. **We will always try to maintain confidentiality but in cases where this is not possible we will tell you before any action is taken.**

You can complete incident diaries to record anti-social behaviour or neighbour nuisance. **You can send the incident diaries to the Tenancy Enforcement Team anonymously if you wish.**

Tenants who have breached their Tenancy Agreement will be warned and in extreme cases could be taken to court and may lose their home. We will not re-house people who are evicted for Anti-Social Behaviour.

Wear Valley District Council and Dale & Valley Homes are committed to building sustainable communities where everyone is free from the fear of harassment and Anti-Social Behaviour.

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

If you are a victim of anti-social behaviour you should report it to your local housing office. We will:

- Upon receipt, acknowledge all complaints about anti-social behaviour within 24 hours.
- If you report to us you are suffering from anti-social behaviour, we will interview you within 5 working days.
- With your permission attempt to interview the perpetrator(s) within 7 working days.
- Identify and take action against tenants who breach their tenancy agreement.
- Keep you fully informed of what is happening whilst we investigate your complaint.
- We will work in partnership with the police and Wear Valley's Anti Social Behaviour Panel to tackle anti social behaviour and fear of anti social behaviour.
- Action we may take can include:
  - Acceptable Behaviour Contracts – ABC's
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Orders – ASBO's
  - Injunctive proceedings
  - Possession proceedings
- If you report behaviour that is not a breach of the tenancy agreement or which is not committed by a tenant of Dale & Valley Homes we will signpost you to the appropriate section of Wear Valley District Council or to another organisation who can help within 7 days.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Anti Social Behaviour, which is:

- If you report to us you are suffering from Anti-Social Behaviour, we will interview you within 5 working days

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

### **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments about our services please complete a suggestion card and post it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Copies of all our service leaflets are available from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

### **SERVICE CONTACTS**

If you are experiencing harassment or Anti-Social Behaviour please contact the **Tenancy Enforcement Team** on 01388 765555.

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**  
**Fax: (01388) 766 660**  
**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:  
Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm  
Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:  
Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

### **Neighbourhood office**

**Dale & Valley Homes**  
**Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office**  
**64a Proudfoot Drive**  
**Woodhouse Close**  
**Bishop Auckland**  
**County Durham**  
**DL14 6QT**

Tel: 01388 604 568  
Fax: 01388 608 479

Opening hours:  
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Wednesday - 12.00pm to 4.30pm  
Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

Cash office opening hours:  
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## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

### **EQUALITIES STATEMENT**

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আপনি এর কপি পেতে ফোন করুন (01388) 761 946

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## INTRODUCTION

Community Involvement plays a very important role within Dale and Valley Homes. Our aim is to give customers on our estates the opportunity and means to have their say in the services they receive, including how they are planned and how they are paid for. We realise that by doing so, we can improve those services and ensure we, and our customers, are getting value for money.

We are keen to explore numerous options for involvement, through the community involvement database, to ensure customers can get involved at whatever level suits them.

## Getting Involved

We want our customers to become involved in the services Dale and Valley Homes provides at a level, which suits them. The current options are:

### Residents Groups

These groups are usually formed when a number of residents on an estate or area get together to try to sort out issues and problems which are affecting everyone.

"We all got together to raise the standards of the neighbourhood and make residents feel safer - we managed to raise some money ourselves and applied for a grant so we could carry out some security work. We found that by helping ourselves and showing we were interested in what was happening on our estate, people took us more seriously."

Some groups concentrate on social events to help provide events for children and re-build community spirit.

"People were always criticising the local kids for hanging about the streets but they had no where to go - our group decided to do something about it and now we organise regular children's discos and fun events."

More frequently now, residents groups want to know what Dale and Valley Homes is doing and why. They feed into Dale and Valley Homes' decision making process by sending

representatives to the Customer Panel and receive regular information on the housing services to pass onto their members for comments.

"Before I joined the Residents Association, I didn't have a clue how Dale and Valley Homes managed our homes. I often wondered why things happened but didn't know where to go to find out more information. Now officers from Dale and Valley Homes regularly attend our meetings as well as the Police, and discuss all kinds of things and we get a chance to have our say."

A minimum of 6 residents is needed to form a Residents Group, but once your group is set up there is no limit as to how many can join. Some groups may cover a street or two whilst others represent a whole estate. The most important thing is that groups are representative of their area and follow a set of Standards for Residents Groups, which includes having a Constitution. This may sound daunting, but many groups have already achieved this.

**For detailed information, ask the Community Involvement Team for the "Setting Up a Residents Association" document.**

**For information on Residents Groups located within the district visit our website, [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk) or contact the Community Involvement Team.**

### **Wear Valley Customer Panel**

Wear Valley Customer Panel is a consultative body, which aims to represent tenants and residents across the district, tackling issues, which affect everyone. It actively promotes and encourages tenants and residents to become involved in the management of their homes and estates.

It is currently made up of representatives from each of the following areas:-

- South Church
- Henknowle
- Howden-le-Wear
- St Helen Auckland
- Stanley Way
- Sunnybrow
- Willington
- Rookhope
- Stanhope
- Wolsingham
- Dene Valley
- Coundon and Leeholme
- Woodhouse Close
- Crook

Councillor Jeff Gale, Chair of Housing, the Director of Dale and Valley Homes and the Community Involvement Team have standing invitations to each meeting which are held on the first Tuesday of every month at 5.00pm. The venue is Park Avenue Close, Crook.

Each Resident Group is required to join the Customer Panel by nominating two representatives. The Customer Panel includes representatives of recognised resident groups, individual customers representing specific estates in the district and individual customers representing community groups or partnerships.

The Customer Panel has two nominated representatives who attend Housing Committee meetings. These representatives comment on issues and their views are taken into account

but under the Housing Act 1989, they are not allowed to vote. Representatives discuss agenda items with Customer Panel members prior to attending the meeting to ensure that their views are shared by Customer Panel members and the areas they represent. Following Housing Committee, they report back to the Customer Panel, who in turn, pass the information onto their respective Residents Groups.

The Customer Panel has been instrumental in the development of the Wear Valley Housing Compact. Five representatives are members of the Compact Review Team (CRT) which are continually reviewing the Compact to ensure that it is a meaningful document which allows, encourages and promotes tenant involvement across the district.

Customer Panel members are committed to seeking out information and good practices by attending tenant involvement seminars, workshops and meeting with tenants from other local authorities up and down the country.

### **Compact Review Team (CRT)**

This Team is made up of:

- 2 Councillors
- Residents from Resident Groups and Customer Panel
- 1 Neighbourhood Manager
- 1 Community Involvement Manager
- 1 Community Involvement Officer

Its role is to continually review and develop the district wide, tenant participation compact to ensure meaningful tenant and resident involvement across the district.

### **Focus Groups**

These are formed to look at specific Dale and Valley Homes services such as Allocations, Repairs and Maintenance, etc. The purpose of these groups is to gather information regarding a particular service, look at ways of improving that service and seek tenant and residents views on proposed changes, usually through surveys etc. The groups meet over a relatively short period of time and there is no need for a long term commitment.

If you would like to attend any of these focus groups, please contact the Community Involvement Team.

### **Estate Agreements**

These are formal agreements between the residents on an estate, Councillors, Dale and Valley Homes and other relevant agencies such as the Police. The aim is to give residents more say in how their estate is managed by setting down minimum standards for various services and identifying priorities for improvements. Some services, which may be included, are estate management, tenancy enforcement, grass cutting, and environmental works. An Estate Agreement will need residents to meet regularly, say quarterly, with Council officers and possibly the Police to make sure the standards are being met, but it does not need a formal group.

## **Surveys**

Surveys are a valuable way of finding out from customers what they think of a particular service and how it can be improved. There are three main types of surveys - door to door, telephone and postal. Customers who participate in surveys will be asked a series of set questions. The responses are then collated and the results used to improve the service or to plan for new services. Dale & Valley Homes currently sends out regular surveys to our customers on Customer Access and Customer Care, Estate Management, Capital Works, Repairs and New Tenancies.

## **Newsletters**

Dale and Valley Homes produce a twice-yearly newsletter, which is sent to every Dale and Valley Homes customer. Residents groups and the Customer Panel contribute to the newsletter. It is an excellent opportunity to share success stories, experiences and to let everyone know what is going on.

For copies of recent and past newsletters, contact the Community Involvement Team.

## **Mystery Customers**

The community involvement team has recently developed a "mystery customers" scheme as part of their new involvement methods. The scheme involves Dale and Valley Homes Customers "mystery shopping" the services that are provided by Dale and Valley Homes in order to help us improve the services that we provide.

Included within the new project is an incentive scheme for customers whereby every customer who completes 5 mystery shops receives a £5 voucher for a local high street store.

If you would like to become a "Dale and Valley Homes Mystery Shopper", please contact the Community Involvement Team for an information pack.

## **Training Programme**

Dale and Valley Homes and the Customer Panel are currently arranging a new programme of training, which will be available to all resident groups and nominated resident representatives. The training will include joint sessions with resident representatives, councillors and housing staff wherever possible.

We hope to provide training, which will be relevant, interesting and enjoyable. Training may be provided by agencies outside of the department or it may be provided by experienced housing staff.

In addition, there are one-off opportunities for resident representatives to attend various conferences and seminars. These events usually involve a long distance journey and possibly an overnight stay in a hotel. Customer Panel members who attend training sessions have a commitment to produce a written report back to the group on what information was gathered and how it can help develop resident involvement in Wear Valley. The report is also circulated to all resident groups.

## **TENANTS COMPACT**

A new Tenant's Compact will be available from September 2006, with information about standards of service. Please contact the Community Involvement Team for further information.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

The Community Involvement Team aims to:

- Support customers who wish to form Residents Groups
- Provide information to tenants in plain language, with translation available on request and ensure it is approved by the Customer Editorial Panel to help participation;
- Maximise training for customers, encouraging both local and national training Opportunities;
- Support the Customer Panel and new and existing Residents Groups through a fair and equal distribution of available resources.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards.

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

## **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

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## **Comments and suggestions**



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## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

To help resident involvement grow, we have appointed a dedicated Community Involvement Team in the Dale and Valley Homes who are:

### **Louise Butler**

Principal Community Involvement Manager

Tel: (01388) 761946

### **Corinne Gardner**

Community Involvement Officer

Tel: (01388) 761989

The team are based on the 2nd Floor, Civic Centre, Crook, Co. Durham DL15 9ES

The **Neighbourhood Managers** are also responsible for encouraging and supporting resident involvement in their respective areas. They are:

### **Ian Hornsby**

Responsible for the North - Weardale, Crook, Willington, Sunnybrow, Hunwick, Billy Row, Tow Law, Howden-le-Wear and Witton-le-Wear.

Tel: (01388) 791929

### **Kath Wright**

Responsible for the South - Bishop Auckland, Coundon, Leeholme, Escomb, St. Helen Auckland, West Auckland and Escomb.

Tel: (01388) 604568

## **Housing reception offices**

### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes**

**Civic Centre**

**Crook**

**County Durham**

**DL15 9ES**

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**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

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Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

## Neighbourhood office

### Dale & Valley Homes

#### Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office

64a Proudfoot Drive

Woodhouse Close

Bishop Auckland

County Durham

DL14 6QT

Tel: 01388 604 568

Fax: 01388 608 479

Opening hours:

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Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

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## COMPLAINTS - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

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আপনি এর কপি পেতে ফোন করুন (01388) 761 946

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Complaints Procedure**

We want to provide good-quality services for everyone. But things can go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from them.

#### **What do I do if I am unhappy with one of your services?**

Please complete a complaints form. Within three working days of receiving your completed online complaint form we will send you an acknowledgement and inform you of who is dealing with your complaint.

Alternatively you can make your complaint to the service manager or a Complaints Officer by writing or telephoning the department responsible for the service you are complaining about. The Complaints Officers for each department will forward your complaint to the service manager.

There are three stages to the council's complaints procedure:

#### **Stage One**

Your complaint is forwarded to the service manager who will investigate your complaint and reply to you within ten working days.

If you are unhappy with the service manager's reply you can appeal to the departments Complaints Officer (this is what we call Stage Two).

#### **Stage Two**

We will let you know that we have received your appeal within three working days of you contacting us. A senior manager will investigate and reply to you within fifteen working days.

If you are unhappy with the Complaints Officers reply you can appeal to the Chief Executive (this is what we call Stage Three).

#### **Stage Three**

Your appeal to the Chief Executive will be acknowledged within three working days of you contacting us. The Chief Executive or designated officer will investigate your complaint.

He is independent of the service you are complaining about, and will send you a report of the investigation within twenty five working days.

### **Local Government Ombudsman**

If you are still unhappy, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman who is an independent person who investigates allegations of maladministration causing injustice to the person who has complained. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about most council matters including housing, planning, education, social services and council tax.

The Ombudsman who deals with this Council is at:

Local Government Ombudsman  
Beverley House  
17 Shipton Road  
York  
YO30 5FZ

Phone: 01904 663200  
Fax: 01904 663269

The Local Government Ombudsman has a leaflet called "*Complaint about the Council? How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman*". You can get a copy by telephoning or writing to the address above, or you can download it from the Ombudsman's website, <http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

If you have an enquiry about the Local Ombudsman's service you can telephone their **Adviceline** on **0845 602 1983**.

### **How do you make sure everyone is treated fairly?**

We recognise and value all of the people in Wear Valley.

We want to make sure that everyone can use the complaints system.

We want to make sure we treat you fairly when making any complaint about us.

To help us treat you fairly we ask you to tell us your sex, age, ethnic origin and if your are disabled. If you are using the online complaint form, these questions are included.

The information you give is confidential. We only use it to check that we treat all groups of people fairly and we do not discriminate against you.

If part of your complaint is about equal opportunities or discrimination, please tell us. We will make sure we look into that for you.

### **How can I complain?**

You can complete an online complaints form at our website, [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk). If you would like to talk to someone or send a written complaint by post and are unsure who to contact ask at any Dale & Valley Homes office.

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

## **Housing reception offices**

### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm

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## CUSTOMER ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Customer Care Statement**

Dale & Valley Homes is fully committed to equality of opportunity for all people with positive and fair treatment for all communities regardless of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, race, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependants, disability, trade union or political activity and any other disadvantaged group.

We will:

- Provide a friendly and efficient service.
- We will ensure that our staff and workforce have an NVQ Level Two in Customer Services
- Provide a service that recognises diversity and meets the different needs of all our customers.
- Provide an open, honest and transparent service.
- Actively involve customers and key local stakeholders in service planning, review, design and delivery.
- Provide opportunities for customers to comment on service changes, developments and improvements and we will demonstrate real improvements as a result.
- Ensure that we provide customers with enough time to read and understand information and we will make ourselves available to answer any questions that customers may have.
- Develop and maintain an action plan in partnership with customers to monitor the delivery and performance of these service standards.
- Take action where problems arise.

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

#### **Using our reception areas**

- We will ensure that our reception areas are accessible to all.
- We will ensure that all our reception areas are clearly signed.
- We will ensure that our staff wear badges that clearly display their name.
- We will provide easily accessible leaflets and information and we will make it clear that all information is available in different formats, including Braille, audiotape large print and in other languages upon request. A signer can also be arranged for hearing impaired customers upon request.
- We will ensure that reception areas are kept clean and tidy.

If our offices are closed we will:

- Give advance warning of the closure by displaying information notices in our reception areas up to one week in advance.
- Make sure you are aware of when the office will reopen.
- Provide information about appropriate emergency services and alternative contact details for staff.
- We will ensure that our staff are trained in customer care skills and provide you with a caring, courteous and efficient service.
- We will ensure that the contact details of the appropriate staff, including full name, telephone number and e-mail address are available to all customers.

### **Making appointments and interviewing you**

- We will ensure that if you have an appointment this appointment is kept and we will apologise if we are delayed.
- If we must cancel your appointment we will let you know as soon as we can. We will explain to you why we are cancelling the appointment and we will arrange another appointment with you.
- We will try wherever we can, to offer a choice of appointment times and to meet any needs you may have, that you tell us about.
- If we need to visit you, we will provide you with a choice of appointment times.
- If you do not have an appointment our reception areas will operate on a first come first served basis.
- We will ensure that your privacy is respected by providing a private interview room when appropriate, or requested by you.
- We will make sure that you know you can bring someone to an interview with you if this would be helpful.
- We will make sure that you know you can request an interview with an officer of the same sex should you wish to.
- We will confirm any agreed action in writing or in an alternative format on request.

### **Writing to you and speaking with you**

- We will answer all letters and requests for information within 5 working days, or if we cannot answer your enquiry within that time, we will contact you to acknowledge your enquiry and explain the delay in giving you a full answer.
- We will write to you in "Plain English".
- We will ensure that the full address, telephone number and e-mail address of the officer dealing with your enquiry are clear on any correspondence sent to you.
- We will respond to messages left by e-mail within one working day, answering your enquiry in full. If we cannot answer your enquiry in full within that time, we will reply to your e-mail acknowledging receipt of your e-mail and informing you of when we will be able to fully answer your enquiry.

- Staff will put an “out of office” message on e-mail addresses which will include the date of the officer’s return to the office and details of other officers to contact in case of an emergency.
- We will answer the telephone within 20 seconds.
- When we answer the telephone we will inform you of our name and what section we work in.
- If we are unable to take your call we may direct you to an answering machine or a voicemail facility, which will take a message and will provide you with details of when the officer you are trying to contact may be available to take your call and the details of other officers you can contact in case of an emergency.
- We will respond to any messages left on answering machines or voicemail within one working day of the officer returning to work.
- We will provide a range of ways to contact us to report repairs and maintenance issues, including a text messaging service, a freephone number and an email address.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.  
Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. Two of these relate to Customer Access and Customer Care, which are:

- We will ensure that all appointments are kept
- We will respond to all letters and requests for information within 5 working Days

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

**What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**  
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Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

### **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments about our services please complete a suggestion card and post it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

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**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

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### **Housing reception offices**

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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

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### INTRODUCTION

We aim to provide general advice to service users who are experiencing domestic violence and signpost them to other organisations who can help

### WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?

- Offer a private interview.
- No appointment is necessary, although you may have to wait until an Interview room is available, so that you can speak to someone in private.
- Offer same sex staff to give advice and conduct interviews.

- Keep everything you say confidential at all times.
- Staff will support you in considering your housing options.
- Staff will put you in touch with other organisations including providing you with telephone numbers.
- Award additional points to the applicant on the housing register who is suffering domestic violence.
- Give advice on emergency accommodation.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Domestic Violence, which is:

- We will treat any complaint of domestic violence as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

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### **Comments and suggestions**

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## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

Should you be subjected to any form of domestic violence, please contact your nearest Housing Office and report the incident.

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

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## EMPTY PROPERTIES - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

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আপনি এর কপি পেতে যোগাযোগ করুন (01388) 761 946

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### INTRODUCTION

#### What we have available?

We have many different types of properties in all parts of Wear Valley. Whether you are looking for a house, flat or bungalow, give us a call - we'll be happy to help.

#### How long will you have to wait?

Dale & Valley Homes operate a point scheme from which we compile waiting lists for the various housing areas. Points are awarded for such things as overcrowding, sharing and medical problems. Offers are then made to applicants on turn as properties become available. Obviously, how long you wait depends upon how many properties become empty and how many points your fellow applicants have been awarded. However, we often have good quality properties available to let without the need to wait a long time.

#### Where are the Properties?

Right throughout the district. Whether you're looking to rent in or around market towns such as Bishop Auckland or Crook or in picturesque areas like Weardale, we often have properties, which could be just what you want. Many are within easy reach of the major shopping facilities and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

### **Why should I rent from Dale & Valley Homes?**

Not only will you have a quality home at an affordable price, but you'll also find that Wear Valley has a lot more to offer. Rents can be paid weekly for easy budgeting and we will repair your home as well. Housing Benefit is available to those on low incomes. Many areas also have a local Residents Association, which meets to discuss ways to make the local area a better place to live. Wear Valley has many schools, a good range of shops and excellent leisure facilities. It could be the place for you!

### **How do I Apply?**

To obtain an application form and information pack, Just telephone any of the offices above. Staff will be pleased to help you.

### **Moving in**

Everyone at Dale & Valley Homes wants you to be happy in your new home. To help us achieve this aim we have worked with our customers to produce a lettable standard. This standard tells you the minimum you can expect from us.

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

- We will inspect every empty property within 3 days of receiving the keys from the outgoing tenant.
- We will complete repairs to empty properties within (TBC) working days.
- We will re-let empty properties within (TBC) working days.
- We will keep rent lost, through properties being empty, to (TBC)%
- We will carry out an electrical, gas and solid fuel test before your tenancy starts.
- Whenever possible we will ask you to look at the property with us to agree repairs.
- We will arrange a convenient appointment with you to carry out these repairs.
- We will send you a Customer Satisfaction questionnaire within 10 weeks of you moving into your new home.

### **Lettable Standard**

- The gas and electricity supplies have been checked and any faults repaired
- Sanitary ware is checked and hygienically cleaned
- Adequate kitchen storage and cooking facilities are available and are clean and tidy
- Worktops will be clean and suitable for use
- There is plumbing for an automatic washing machine
- All floors, stairs, banisters and handrails have been checked and any faults repaired

- Internal doors are damage free and open and close easily
- All windows and external doors are safe and secure
- All locks or latches are in working order
- All rubbish from inside and outside is removed
- Any graffiti is removed
- Gardens are clean and tidy
- Pantries are removed and alternative units fitted
- All units, floors and woodwork are washed
- All communal areas are clean
- Decoration vouchers will be awarded if the Housing Officer believes excessive decoration is required to bring the property up to an acceptable standard

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Empty Properties, which is:

- We will send you a Customer Satisfaction questionnaire within 10 weeks of you moving into your new home

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
 Dale & Valley Homes  
 Civic Centre  
 Crook  
 County Durham  
 DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

## **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments about our services please complete a suggestion card and post it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

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**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Copies of all our service leaflets are available from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

To obtain an application form and information pack, please contact any of our offices. Staff will be pleased to help you.

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

#### **Neighbourhood office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office  
64a Proudfoot Drive  
Woodhouse Close  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6QT**

Tel: 01388 604 568

Fax: 01388 608 479

Opening hours:



Monday, Tuesday, Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
Wednesday - 12.00pm to 4.30pm  
Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm  
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## EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

Dale & Valley Homes fully endorses the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We are committed to providing equal access to our services for all our customers.

We understand that people are different and we make sure that you are treated as an individual and do everything we can to meet your needs.

You can expect fair treatment from all our staff regardless of your age, race, sex, disability or sexual orientation.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

We believe that everyone who approaches us is important and will be treated equally as a valued customer. We will:

- Treat you fairly and as an individual regardless of your ethnic origin, religion, geographic location, special needs, language difference, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability;
- Do everything we can to meet your individual needs;
- Do everything in our power to ensure that discrimination of any kind does not take place in our neighbourhoods and encourage you to report any incident to us immediately;
- Ensure that our offices have access for wheelchair users;
- Ensure that our employees and contractors do not discriminate unfairly between our customers;
- Use plain English in our letters and leaflets;
- Provide an interpreter for any customers who have difficulty speaking English;
- Monitor the number of people on the housing register from different ethnic backgrounds and the length of time they spend on the waiting list to make sure that all groups are treated fairly;
- Not tolerate racial harassment or harassment of any kind;
- Fully investigate any incident of racial harassment or harassment of any kind and take appropriate action against the perpetrators;
- Offer assistance, including the chance to move home, to anyone who is the victim of harassment;
- Provide information in other formats, such as in Braille, on audiotape, in large print or other languages on request. A signer can be arranged for the hard of hearing;
- Ensure that a qualified BSL interpreter / communicator can be arranged for the deaf or hearing impaired if required;

- Liase with the Durham & Darlington County Racial Equality Council on any racial incident and work together on best practice regarding community cohesion.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **MONITORING OUR SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards.

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 761 597**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

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## **COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

**Tel: (01388) 761 597**

**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Copies of all our service leaflets are available from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website: **[www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

We have appointed a dedicated Community Involvement Team in Dale & Valley Homes who deal with Equality and Diversity issues. They are:

### **Louise Butler**

Principal Community Involvement Manager

Tel: (01388) 761946

### **Corinne Gardner**

Community Involvement Officer

Tel: (01388) 761989

The team are based on the 2nd Floor, Civic Centre, Crook, Co. Durham DL15 9ES

### **Main office**

#### **Dale & Valley Homes**

**Civic Centre**

**Crook**

**County Durham**

**DL15 9ES**

Tel: (01388) 765 555

Fax: (01388) 766 660

Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only):

(01388) 761111

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday

8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday

9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm

### **Neighbourhood office**

#### **Dale & Valley Homes**

**Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office**

**64a Proudfoot Drive**

**Woodhouse Close**

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**DL14 6QT**

Tel: 01388 604 568

Fax: 01388 608 479

Opening hours:

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Wednesday 12.00pm to 4.30pm  
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## ESTATE INSPECTIONS - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We want our estates to be clean and tidy. We want you to be proud of your home and the area in which you live. Our Housing Officers visit most estates on a daily basis whilst carrying out their duties.

We will undertake estate inspections on a monthly basis inspecting each street and developing an action plan in partnership with customers, councillors and other key local stakeholders should an issue arise.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

We will

- Ensure Housing Officers carry out estate inspections around the district on a monthly basis.
- Prepare an action plan following the inspection and deal with all issues within 5 working days.
- Invite local councillors and customers to accompany us on the inspections.
- Remove graffiti as soon as possible.
- Remove abandoned vehicles as soon as possible.
- Investigate any breach of tenancy and take the most appropriate action.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Estate Inspections, which is:

- We will inspect all estates on a monthly basis

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

## **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre

Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**  
**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

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### **Comments and suggestions**

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**Tel: (01388) 765 555**  
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## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

If you would like to join us on an inspection of your estate please contact your Housing Officer for details.

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes**  
**Civic Centre**  
**Crook**  
**County Durham**  
**DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**  
**Fax: (01388) 766 660**  
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Tel: 01388 604 568

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Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

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## **FORMER TENANT ARREARS - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

### **EQUALITIES STATEMENT**

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"Gellir atgynhychu'r ddogfen hon yn yr ieithoedd canlynol: Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Hindi, Mandarin, Pwnjabeg, Wrddw, Cymraeg. Fe gewch chi gopi trwy ffonio (01388) 761 946".



## **INTRODUCTION**

If a tenant leaves a Dale & Valley Homes tenancy and owes money this is known as Former Tenancy Arrears. We will make arrangements for a former tenant to clear the debt by instalments if appropriate. If the arrangements are not maintained we will take further action. This may mean taking proceedings in the County Court. This can result in court costs being imposed on the former tenant and will effect their chances of obtaining credit.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

Some customers leave their homes without paying all monies owed. It is important that we recover this money as it impacts on the service that we can provide for our remaining customers.

We will:

- We will reduce former tenant arrears to £(to be confirmed).
- Discuss any outstanding debts with you before your tenancy ends.
- If we are unable to discuss the matter with you we will contact you within 7 days of your tenancy terminating.
- We will agree reasonable repayments with you.
- If we are unable to contact you or agree repayments with you we may instruct a Debt Collection Service to recover the money on our behalf.
- As a last resort we may recover the debt through the County Court.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Former Tenant Arrears, which is:

- We will reduce former tenant arrears to £(to be confirmed)

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

## **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager

Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

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### **SERVICE CONTACTS**

Please contact our Money and Debt Advice Officer, or your Housing Officer if you need help and advice.

#### **National Debt Line**

Freephone helpline for debt advice - telephone 0808 808 4000 (Monday - Friday, 9am to 9pm. Saturday 9am to 1pm).

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

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## Neighbourhood office

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## HATE CRIME - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

**A hate crime is any act of harassment, abuse or victimisation against an individual or group because of race, religion, gender, sexuality, or disability perceived to be a hate crime by the victim or any other person.**

We recognise that hate crime is a serious problem. If you or members of your family are a victim of hate crime we will investigate it thoroughly and do all we can to stop it.

A hate crime not only includes physical attacks on persons and damage to property, but also verbal abuse and other behaviour which deprives people of the peaceful enjoyment of their homes on grounds of their difference.

Should you be subjected to any form of hate crime, please contact your nearest Housing Office and report the incident.

If you are being harassed get in touch with our **Tenancy Enforcement Team** straight away, they will take details from you. These details are the start of a full investigation. They help us to decide on the best action to stop the harassment.

Some groups who may suffer hate crime in the community include:

- **Women**
- **Disabled people**
- **People from Black & Minority Ethnic groups**
- **People with mental health problems**
- **People with learning difficulties**
- **Lesbians or gay men**
- **Transgender or trans-sexual people**
- **Older people,**

The Tenancy Agreement has a specific clause that forbids tenants, members of their family, or their visitors from harassing or abusing other people. Racist behaviour can result in eviction. This means the Council can take steps against racial harassment on its housing estates, help tenants suffering abuse and take legal action against perpetrators.

*If you are being harassed, tell us about it. We will help you.*

## WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?

- We will treat any complaint of a hate crime as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
- We will remove any offensive graffiti and repair any damage to your property as a priority.
- Together with the Police we will provide advice on additional security to your home where there is a risk of further harassment.
- Additional re-housing points are available to those suffering harassment who need another home.

- We will report all incidents of racial harassment to the Wear & Tees Hate Crime Forum.
- We will liaise with all appropriate partners to ensure that those experiencing hate crimes receive the appropriate support; and that those who commit hate crimes are dealt with quickly and effectively.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Hate Crime, which is:

- We will treat any complaint of a hate crime as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

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## IMPROVEMENT / MODERNISATION WORKS - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Home Modernisation - Council Properties

Dale and Valley Homes has been set a target of raising the standard of all its properties by the year 2010 by the Government. This target, known as the Decent Homes Standard is driving Dale and Valley Homes programme of modernisation in your homes.

In order to raise the standard of your home, a recent stock condition survey identified the following works are required to certain properties: -

- Replacement UPVC double glazed windows and composite doors
- Replacement fitted kitchens
- Replacement bathrooms
- Re-roofing
- Replacement heating systems

It is likely that in the forthcoming years your home may have one of the above improvements undertaken.

Dale and Valley Homes has also compiled a draft 7-year programme of works. A copy of Dale and Valley Homes Major Repair and Improvement Policy is also available. Please contact our Improvement / Modernisation Team for further details.

To ensure any future works reflect customers requirements we need to fully consult and take into account all comments.

This should be reflected against the need to produce a balanced programme taking into account other factors, such as demand for the houses and history of repairs.

The long-term programme will benefit customers in the following ways:

- It will show when future works will be undertaken to their home;
- It allows better links between the day to day
- It allows Dale and Valley Homes and its contractors to plan works in advance to provide a better service;
- It will reflect customers requirements;
- It will ensure better value for money.

#### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

If we propose to carry out major works to your home you can expect Dale & Valley Homes and its partners to:

- Invite you to an open day near to your home if appropriate.
- Provide the details of a named liaison officer who you can contact with any questions, concerns or special requirements you may have.
- Give you 7 days notice before starting work on your home.
- We will work between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday unless we have agreed otherwise with you
- Have due regard for your comfort and keep disturbance to a minimum
- We will ensure that we always use materials of a good quality and manufactured to the relevant British Standard
- We will ensure that work is carried out to a good standard
- We will only promise what we can deliver
- Ensure you are kept warm and comfortable throughout the duration of the works.
- We will pay particular regard to people with special needs
- Carry out all works safely and efficiently while you remain in occupation.



- Provide you with day time and out of hours telephone numbers.
- Pay you an allowance towards the cost of redecoration on specific major works such as central heating replacement and kitchen and bathroom replacement.
- Leave your home clean and tidy.
- We will take away building rubbish from gardens and other areas outside your property as work proceeds.
- If we replace a major component in your home, such as a kitchen or a bathroom we will give tenants a choice in the style of replacement where possible.
- You have the right to refuse to let our staff or contractors into your home if you are not comfortable with their behaviour (except emergencies).
- Our contractors will provide customers, who do not have English as ***their first language, with a card explaining who they are and why they are there in a range of different languages. An interpreter can then be arranged.***
- We will provide customers with the opportunity to request a female member of staff to be present throughout any contractor works.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Improvement / Modernisation Works, which is:

- We will give you 7 days notice before starting work on your home

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

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## **MONEY AND DEBT ADVICE - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

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"Gellir atgynhyrchu'r ddogfen hon yn yr ieithoedd canlynol: Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Hindi, Mandarin, Pwnjabeg, Wrdrw, Cymraeg. Fe gewch chi gopi trwy ffonio (01388) 761 946".

## INTRODUCTION

We offer a free confidential debt advice service to our tenants. We can advise on different types of debt such as rent arrears, credit card debts and bank loans. We can help:

- Check you are getting all the benefits you may be entitled to
- Help you to identify the most important debts and take action accordingly. The law gives different creditors different ways of getting their money back
- Help plan your weekly and monthly budget
- Draw up a financial statement by looking at your income and outgoings
- Help you to decide on a plan to deal with your debts
- Negotiate with the people you owe money to
- Advise you on court procedures
- Appointments can be arranged by using the contact details above.

### Type of debt and what could eventually happen:

All debts are important, but some are more pressing than others. The ultimate consequences of not dealing with a particular debt - in other words the worst that can happen - depends on what the debt is for. Some debts carry severe penalties and you should deal with these debts first. These are your priority debts. The list below shows what may eventually happen if priority debts are not dealt with.

- **Rent** - Eviction from your home
- **Council Tax** - Distraint\*; deductions from wages/benefit; imprisonment
- **Water rates** - Supply disconnected
- **Gas/Electricity** - Supply disconnected
- **Unpaid Magistrates Court fine** - Distraint\*; deductions from wages/benefit; imprisonment
- **Unpaid maintenance/child support** - Distraint\*; deductions from wages/benefit; imprisonment
- **Income tax/VAT/National Insurance** - Distraint\*; bankruptcy
- **Telephone** - Disconnection
- **Hire purchase** (not normal credit) - Repossession of HP goods
- **Unsecured credit card debts** - County Court Judgement; impaired credit rating

\* Distraint is the seizure of some of your goods by bailiffs.

The worst thing you can do when you owe money is to ignore the problem, hoping it will go away. The earlier you contact your creditors, the more flexible they're likely to be in coming to an agreement with you.

Decide which debts are priority debts and which are not. The list above explains what may happen if you fail to pay priority debts. Write to your creditors, or phone, and indicate that you want to work out an arrangement, which will reduce the debts.

If you make any arrangements over the phone, ask the name of the person you speak to. Write down what was said and then follow up with a letter to confirm the arrangement. Remember to quote your account reference and to keep a copy of all letters you send.

### **Don't make promises you can't keep**

Don't be bullied into agreeing to repayment arrangements, which you cannot keep. Arrange a rate of repayment that you can afford to keep up, based on the figures in your personal financial statement. Otherwise, sooner or later, you are likely to default or miss payments elsewhere and find yourself back in trouble. The aim is not just to solve the immediate problem but to get things organised so that you can afford to pay your creditors and meet your other expenditure for the foreseeable future.

### **Make regular payments**

Many firms are computerised and these systems are programmed to send reminders and warnings automatically if payments are missed. It is better to make regular payments, however small, rather than make large occasional payments.

### **The law is on your side**

Although the law gives creditors the power to take action to recover the money you owe them, it also makes them go through fixed procedures before the final action can legally be taken. So the law also gives you protection. For example, you cannot legally be evicted from your home without the creditor having been to court and obtained the necessary authority.

### **Don't be unduly intimidated**

Harassing people in debt is illegal. If you are harassed by creditors seek advice immediately. You can make a complaint to the local Trading Standards Office or the Police. If the person is your landlord, you should contact the Council's Housing Service.

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

You can expect the following standards from this service:

- We will treat all information you give us in the strictest confidence.
- If you wish, the Housing Officer will refer you for the service if your tenancy is in jeopardy due to rent arrears.
- We will ensure you are receiving the correct housing and council tax benefit.
- We will contact creditors, on your behalf, to negotiate payments.
- We will agree reasonable instalments for repayment of rent arrears.
- We will ensure you are receiving all state benefits you are entitled to.
- We will work with you to prepare a budget plan for you to follow.
- If we are unable to help you we will make a referral to another agency.
- We will assist you until all financial issues are resolved. We may then refer you to another agency.

- You can request further assistance at any time.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards.

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

### **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments about our services please complete a suggestion card and post it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

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Copies of all our service leaflets are available from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

Please contact our Money and Debt Advice Officer if you need help and advice:

### **National Debt Line**

Freephone helpline for debt advice - telephone 0808 808 4000 (Monday - Friday, 9am to 9pm. Saturday 9am to 1pm).

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:

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Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:

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#### **Neighbourhood office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
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## RACIAL HARASSMENT - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

Dale & Valley Homes fully endorses the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

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### INTRODUCTION

Racial harassment is a vicious crime, which by its persistent and brutal nature damages the everyday lives victims. We are committed to take all possible action to fight racial harassment and provide support to victims.

Racial harassment is an incident or a series of incidents intended or likely to intimidate, offend or harm an individual or group because of their ethnic origin, colour, race, religion or nationality.

The following definitions have been adopted from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report:

- “A *Racist Incident* is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person ”



- *“Racism in general terms consists of conduct or words or practice which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form ”*

Racial harassment can take many forms and includes but is not limited to:

- Abusive, threatening or insulting behaviour including racist abuse
- Threats of violence
- Physical assault
- Racist graffiti
- Abusive telephone calls
- Arson and attempted arson
- Vandalism
- Repeated and unfounded complaints against a tenant or groups of tenants
- Actions or activities intended to deter a person from occupying a particular property
- Placing rubbish, excrement or offensive materials near or in the complainant’s home

As with non-racial harassment, offending behaviour should be treated as harassment if it is:

- **Targeted**
- **Deliberate**
- **Continuing**

If you are being harassed because of your race or ethnicity, get in touch with our **Tenancy Enforcement Team** straight away, they will take details from you. These details are the start of a full investigation. They help us to decide on the best action to stop the harassment.

The Tenancy Agreement has a specific clause that forbids tenants, members of their family, or their visitors from harassing or abusing other people. Racist behaviour can result in eviction. This means the Council can take steps against racial harassment on its housing estates, help tenants suffering abuse and take legal action against perpetrators.

*If you are being harassed, tell us about it. We will help you.*

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

- We will treat any complaint of racial harassment as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.
- We will remove any offensive graffiti and repair any damage to your property as a priority.
- Together with the Police we will provide advice on additional security to your home where there is a risk of further harassment.
- Additional re-housing points are available to those suffering harassment who need another home.
- We will report all incidents of racial harassment to the Wear & Tees Hate Crime Forum.

- We will liaise with all appropriate partners to ensure that those experiencing racial harassment receive the appropriate support; and that those who commit racial harassment are dealt with quickly and effectively.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to Racial Harassment, which is:

- We will treat any complaint of racial harassment as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

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## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

Should you be subjected to any form of racial harassment please contact your nearest Housing Office and report the incident.

### **Housing reception offices**

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## RENT COLLECTION - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Dale & Valley Homes is reliant upon rental income to pay for the services that we deliver to our tenants. If rent arrears increase it does have a definite effect on the services that our tenants receive. For that reason it is critical that rent arrears levels are kept to the minimum.

If a tenant falls into arrears we are sympathetic and will permit repayment of those arrears by instalments. However, the most important thing is that a person falling into arrears should make contact with a Housing Officer.

We offer a Money and Debt Advice Service to our customers. We can only assist in solving the problem if the tenant contacts us to let us know what the problem is. If arrears continue to rise, and we can see no prospect of that changing, then we do have to take our tenants to Court.

At the Court we will normally ask for what is termed a 'Suspended Possession Order'. That is where the Court orders that the tenant must start paying the rent and a small amount per week, fortnight, or month off of the arrears. Tenants are encouraged to attend Court, should they be summoned. Even at this stage we would much prefer to have the problem of the arrears resolved rather than have the tenant evicted.

Regrettably, there does come a time when Dale & Valley Homes appears to be faced with no alternative but to evict a tenant. This is very much a last resort and it is not an action taken lightly. If a person is evicted they do have a right to make an appeal to Wear Valley District Council as being homeless. Whilst every case has to be dealt on its merits the Council may well argue that if a person had the ability to pay the rent, but did not do so, then they may be considered to be 'intentionally homeless' and the Council would have no obligation to rehouse them. That would apply even where there are children in the household. For this reason it is very important that tenants deal with arrears issues at an early stage and Housing Officers are always happy to give help and advice at any stage in an arrears problem.

The Council sets a rent for each property. There are a number of ways in which council tenants can pay their rent. We will help tenants to claim any available assistance with paying their rent. When tenants are in arrears we will make agreements to reduce the arrears. However, we do take legal action if tenants persistently fail to pay their rent.

### **Paying your Rent**

There are a number of ways to pay your rent such as:

- Direct Debit - The easiest way to pay (see below for details).
- Post Offices / Paypoint outlet - Please contact the Rent Section for a payment card which you can use at any Post Office or Paypoint outlet. There is no charge for this service.
- Internet - Access the service **WORLDPAY** (see "Related Pages" to the right of this page for further information about Online Payments).
- Standing Order - Please contact the Rent Section for a Standing Order form to take to your Bank or Building Society.
- Telephone - Ring 01388 761111 and payments can be made using a debit or credit card.
- Council's Cash Offices - see paying your bills web page for details of cash office addresses and opening times.
- By Post - DO NOT SEND CASH. Please send a cheque or postal order and write your Rent Account Number, name and address, on the back.

### **Direct Debit**

Direct Debit is an easy way in which you can pay your rent to the Council from your bank or building society account each month.

There are lots of advantages in paying your rent by Direct Debit.

- Once you have agreed to pay by Direct Debit, payments will be made automatically. You will no longer have to remember to pay each month.
- You can put behind you the worry of overlooking a payment, perhaps due to illness or being on holiday.

- If a credit or debit is created on your rent account, your Direct Debit payment will be recalculated to take into consideration any changes to your rent account for the remaining monthly payments. You will receive 14 days notification of any changes to your Direct Debit to make sure it is correct.
- When a tenancy ends the Direct Debit automatically ends.
- The Council will update your Direct Debit every year and inform you of any changes.

### **Help with paying your rent**

If you need help paying your rent you may be entitled to Housing Benefit (see Related Pages to the right of this page) or your Housing Officer could give you advice and assistance on paying your rent.

### **Repaying your rent**

If you are in arrears we will try and reach a realistic agreement for you to repay the amount due over a period of time. The Council follows a legal procedure to recover arrears.

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

Every year the Council's tenants lose out on improvements to their homes because of rent that hasn't been paid to it. This is the service you can expect from us:

- We will clearly explain rent accounts to all new tenants
- We will send you a rent statement every 13 weeks
- We will provide you with the following payment methods
- Rent is payable weekly or if you wish to pay fortnightly or monthly this should be in advance and not in arrears
- We will help you complete housing benefit claim forms
- We will write to you if you do not pay your rent for 2 weeks
- We will arrange an affordable repayment arrangement with you if you fall into arrears
- If you do not make the agreed repayments we will visit you at your home to discuss the situation with you
- We will refer you to our Money & Debt Advice Service if you are at risk of losing your home
- You can ask for help from the Money & Debt Advice Service at anytime
- We will only take legal action against you if we have given you sufficient warnings, which means sending letters and visiting you at your home
- We will only evict you from your home if all other attempts to tackle the problem have been exhausted

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. Two of these relate to Rent Collection, which is:

- We will reduce current rent arrears to £(TBC)
- We will collect (TBC)% of all rent due

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

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Crook  
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DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

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### **SERVICE CONTACTS**

Please contact our Money and Debt Advice Officer if you need help and advice:

**National Debt Line**

Freephone helpline for debt advice - telephone 0808 808 4000 (Monday - Friday, 9am to 9pm. Saturday 9am to 1pm).

**Housing reception offices****Main office**

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Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

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Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

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**Neighbourhood office**

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**DOING WORK ON YOUR HOME – RESPONSIVE REPAIRS - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

**EQUALITIES STATEMENT**



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## INTRODUCTION

Keeping our properties in a good state of repair is one of the most important functions of Dale and Valley Homes.

We have a legal responsibility to our tenants to keep their homes in a reasonable state of repair. At present we have approximately 4300 properties and a budget of about 3 million pounds to look after them. The work is carried out by a force of about 55 men, plus associated administration staff.

## About the Service

In all cases, tenants can expect a friendly and courteous response. In most cases we would hope to order the necessary work immediately and the tenant will be told when it is likely to be carried out. In some cases it is necessary for us to inspect the job before the work is issued so that we can find exactly what needs doing. Hopefully this should not delay completion of the work too much. At the same time we are working to reduce the number of inspections we do in this way, so as to improve the service to tenants.

Repair work comes in all shapes and sizes and obviously some jobs are more urgent than others. When a repair is reported, if no pre-inspection is needed, it will be given a priority. These are as follows:-

**Category 1** - emergencies to be completed or made safe within 24 hours.

**Category 2** - urgent repairs completed in 3 days, or by appointment.

**Category 3** - routine repairs completed by appointment.

When a repair is reported verbally, the tenant will be advised when they can expect the job to be completed by an appointment agreed with you.

### **Appointments for Repair Work.**

Dale and Valley Homes offer appointments for responsive repairs. Not only are appointments much more convenient for our tenants, but they also help us to organise our workloads more effectively.

### **Rechargeable Repairs**

Dale and Valley Homes do not bear the cost of all repairs to your property.

Where tenant's or visitors to their property, have caused damage (eg. broken window) or been negligent (eg. locked out of property) we will charge for the cost of works to rectify the problem.

Tenants will be advised whether a repair is rechargeable when reporting. An invoice will subsequently be raised for which you will be liable. It is possible to pay for recharged repairs by instalments.

You might be able to claim back the cost of rechargeable repair done through your personal Contents Insurance. It is up to you to check your policy details to see if you are covered for accidental damage.

### **Tenants Responsibilities**

The tenant is responsible for the cost of repairs that result from damage, misuse or negligence.

Where tenants are reporting damage caused by others it is a requirement that the tenant reports this to the Police first and that the Police crime incident log number is communicated to the duty officer before the repairs are put in hand.

Dale and Valley Homes will respond to repair requests where damage has been caused accidentally by tenants, e.g. broken window glass, but the tenant should be advised that this work will be charged to them.

The following is a list of repairs that are the tenant's responsibility to complete:

- All repairs to any fixtures and fittings installed by the tenant
- All internal decorating
- All electric lamps and fluorescent tubes (unless in Sheltered Scheme)
- Coat hooks and curtain rails
- Clothes posts and washing lines - except in communal areas

- Garden maintenance
- Floor coverings
- Minor cracks to plaster
- Door bells, plug tops
- Lock changes following loss of keys (unless Sheltered Scheme or elderly)
- Cracked or broken glass, unless caused by vandalism, in which case Police incident number to be submitted
- Boundary and Dividing fences between tenants

### **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

- We will provide an emergency service 24 hours a day 365 days a year.
- We will carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours. We will advise you on whether your repair is an emergency when you report it.
- We will respond to urgent repairs within three days or by agreed appointment.
- We will arrange an appointment with you for non emergency repairs where we need access to your home. We will keep at least 95% of these appointments.
- We will arrange an appointment with you for non emergency repairs where we will ensure that joint appointments are available for vulnerable customers.

We will send acknowledgement letters for appointments.

- Our staff will be clean and tidy in appearance and polite and courteous in their behaviour.
- Provide you with proof of identity before entering your home.

Wear Valley District Council uniforms will be worn by all our operatives.

- Explain to you why they are in your home and what work they will be doing.

We will ensure that all our staff wear foot covers to protect your floor coverings.

- Keep your home safe and secure at all times.
- Ensure that at the end of each day you will have working gas, water, electrical, heating and cooking services or an alternative.

We will ensure that your heating appliances are serviced annually.

We will ensure that your home is left clean and tidy after all repairs are carried out.

- We will provide customers with a “satisfaction card” upon completion of the repair, which can be posted to us free of charge to monitor quality and satisfaction.

- We will inspect at least 10% of all works after they have been carried out to ensure quality is maintained.
- We will carry out regular surveys of customers who have had a repair undertaken on their home to monitor the quality of our services.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. Two of these relate to Responsive Repairs, which are:

- We will carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours
- We will arrange an appointment with you for non-emergency repairs where we need access to your home. We will keep at least 95% of these appointments.

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

## **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

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## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

### **Accessing our services**

Our call centre is open:      Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm  
Friday                              - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Please contact the Call Centre if:

- You want to report a repair
- You want to check the progress of a repair you have reported
- You want to change an appointment

If you wish to report a repair you can contact the Repairs and Maintenance department on the following freephone number: **0800 083 333**.

You can text your repair to us on: **07768 522 542**

You can report a repair through our website: **[www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

You can email our call centre direct: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

If you have an emergency, for example you have no electricity or a pipe has burst in your home and the Call Centre is closed, you can contact our on call Maintenance Officer. This officer is available 24 hours a day on the following emergency number: **07785 517 565**

### **Housing reception offices**

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## **TENANY SUPPORT - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We aim to provide a time limited floating support package to vulnerable people taking up new tenancies and existing tenants who are deemed vulnerable and are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancies

Issues such as lack of general skills, drug and alcohol dependencies, mental health problems, debt or difficulties in completing standard forms all effect how a person can manage a tenancy. Some people who have been through a traumatic experience, such as domestic violence may also struggle with their tenancy and may need support to help them rebuild their lives.

## **How Can We Help**

Advice and support in setting up your home, this includes helping to organise the turning on of power supplies, claiming benefits, arranging home insurance, TV licences and offering security advise. We also help you get in touch with furniture schemes in the area.

Help to make the most of your neighbourhood- finding shops and services, looking for jobs, training/ courses advice and making the most of your leisure time.

Income maximisation, budgeting and money management

Sign-posting we will advise you of other organisations services in the area that can provide specialist advise and help such as, debt, drugs, alcohol or mental health advise, contacting service such as Social services or other organisations. We will contact agencies on your behalf as required

You will get your own dedicated Tenancy Support officer. They will carry out an assessment and agree a support plan with you and help you as much as they can with anything related to your tenancy. The aim is to get you on your feet and live independently- so after a time you won't need our support any more.

## **Eligible Criteria**

You must be 16 or over and have a Wear Valley District Council Tenancy, and be someone who is at risks of loosing their tenancy or may struggle to set up or maintain a tenancy. Clients must be willing to accept and co-operate with Tenancy Support Officer's

An assessment can be carried out while you are on the Council Housing waiting list, but you can not be accepted on to the Tenancy Support scheme until you are a Council Tenant. The interview can take place either in the housing department or at a venue that is convenient for the client. The aim of the interview is to assess the clients need for support and to help the Tenancy Support Section make a decision on the application

We may not be able to provide support, as your needs may be to great for our service in this situation we would refer you to another support provider who would be better able to meet your needs.

## **Duration of Support**

The support will be determined on an individual basis, normally support lasts for up to six months but can be extended for up to two years in certain circumstance. Support can be terminated at any time by the individual or Tenancy support officer.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARD CAN YOU EXPECT?**

- We will provide advice and support in setting up and maintaining your tenancy.
- We will identify your needs through needs assessment and support planning.
- Your support plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that sufficient support is being provided. The review can either be after a specific timescale or at the request of either the client or the Support Officer.
- You will have your own dedicated Tenancy Support Officer who will listen to your views and opinions, be honest, respectful, non judgmental, and treat all information you give in the strictest confidence.
- We will help you manage your finances, claim for benefits, Social Fund Loans and Community Care Grants.
- We will help you make the most of your neighbourhood.
- We will help you get in touch with services such as gas and electric utilities.
- We will help you find furniture.
- We will help you find work, education and training opportunities.
- We will help you to get expert advice on matters such as debts, mental health, domestic violence, learning difficulties, drug and alcohol addictions.

### **These standards will be reviewed annually. Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards.

- We will ensure that all appointments are kept.
- We will respond to all letters and requests for information within 5 working days.
- If you report to us you are suffering from anti-social behaviour, we will interview you within 5 working days.
- We will treat any complaint of racial harassment as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day.
- We will treat any complaint of domestic violence as a serious complaint, and an officer will speak to you on the same day you make your complaint.

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## **THE HOUSING REGISTER - DALE & VALLEY HOMES**

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## INTRODUCTION

If you want to apply for a home with Dale and Valley Homes you should complete a registration form. When we receive this, we will acknowledge it and your needs will be assessed in accordance with our point scheme. These point schemes vary from district to district, but details are readily available on request.

If you indicate you have special health or care needs, these will be assessed and taken into account in the priority given to your application. This may involve Dale and Valley Homes liaising with Social Services to ensure that your specific needs are catered for, if at all possible.

Geographical areas vary in popularity and in the availability of the type of housing you may be seeking. We will discuss your needs with you and advise you of the number of points your application has been given and we will endeavour to tell you approximately how long you will have to wait to be housed by Dale and Valley Homes.

Generally once your pointed application reaches the top of the list, you will be offered the next appropriate dwelling in your area of choice. You will have a specified number of days to decide whether you wish to accept the offer. If you refuse it, this will not affect your application.

### Who can apply for housing?

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply for housing however generally we will only offer accommodation once the applicant is 18. If you are under 16 and in need of housing you should contact us using the details to the right of this page.

### An applicant will not be offered housing if they:

- Are people who have conducted their present or previous tenancies in an unsatisfactory manner, and it is likely Dale and Valley Homes would obtain a Possession Order for such behaviour

- Are people convicted of an offence which would have resulted, had they been a Dale and Valley Homes tenant, in proceedings being instigated against them for possession of their home
- Are people who are subject to immigration control

### **How are my points calculated?**

When we receive a registration form we will assess it against the following criteria and award points:

#### **Homeless applicants (under the meaning of the 1996 Act)**

Applicants where full duty is owed - 50 points  
 Applicants where partial duty is owed - 25 points

#### **At risk of losing current accommodation when a legal notice has been served**

Single/Couple without child(ren) - 10 points  
 Single/Couple with child(ren) - 15 points

#### **Occupation of unsanitary or overcrowded accommodation (if an applicant is pregnant the unborn child is counted as a member of the family)**

Lack of inside WC - 5 points  
 Lack of bathroom or kitchen - 5 points  
 Lack of cold/hot water supplies electricity - 5 points  
 Lack of living room - 5 points  
 Lack of bedroom (1 person per bedroom) - 5 points  
 Single person sharing accommodation - 5 points  
 Couple (without children) sharing accommodation - 10 points  
 Single/couple (with children) sharing accommodation - 15 points  
 Couple unable to live together (without children) - 10 points  
 Couple unable to live together (with children) - 15 points  
 Household living in an upstairs flat with children under the age of 10 years - 15 points  
 Relationship breakdown – 15 points  
 House in disrepair (classified by Environmental Health) – 15 points

#### **Medical Need**

It is the applicant's responsibility to return the completed questionnaire from their doctor. Dale & Valley Homes will not pay for doctors' charges:

Mental illness or disorder - 10 points  
 Physical or learning disability - 10 points  
 Chronic or progressive medical condition (eg., HIV/AIDS) - 10 points  
 Infirmary due to old age - 10 points  
 Need for improved heating - 10 points  
 Need for ground floor accommodation - 10 points  
 Need for adapted housing or extra facilities - 10 points

#### **Violence**

To escape all forms of violence - 15 points  
 (incl sexual, racial and physical)

## **Social Need**

Applicants with a support plan in place – 10 points

Young people at risk - 15 points

The need to give or receive care - 15 points

Management reasons - 0 - 50 points

## **Time on waiting list**

For every full year - 5 points

## **Financial Difficulties**

Difficulty maintaining rent or mortgage payments due to a change in circumstances - 10 points

## **What if I am not entitled to any points?**

Your form will still be registered. Where there are no applicants with points left on the list, those applicants without points will be considered for accommodation.

## **What happens next?**

When we are told someone is going to leave their home we will immediately start looking for a new tenant. The computer will tell us who has the most points and we will contact them to see if they are interested in the property. If not, we will move onto the next person.

## **What checks will be carried out?**

We will check any previous tenancies you have had with us or any other landlord. You must not owe any rent, you must have carried out your tenancy in a satisfactory manner and the information you have told us must be correct.

## **What if I have rent arrears?**

We can adjust your priority, in other words, remove any points you are entitled to.

## **What can I do if I do not agree with the way in which my application has been assessed?**

### **You can appeal against the following:**

- Points awarded
- Ineligibility
- Adjustment of priority

Upon receipt of an appeal all related paperwork will be passed to the Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager or in her absence the Head of Neighbourhood Operations The Principal Neighbourhood Manager will review the application and respond to you within 5 working days.

## **Nominations**

We have arrangements with some Housing Associations that they will ask us for nominations if they have an empty property. We will give them details of applicants who are top of our waiting list, if they have told us they are interested in Housing Association properties.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

- We will register fully completed housing application forms within 3 working days.
- We will write to you to confirm how many points you have been awarded, within 5 working days of registering your registration form.
- If your registration form is not fully completed we will write to you within 3 working days, explaining what information is needed.
- We will provide with information on our recent lettings so that you can see approximately how many points you will need and how long you are likely to wait before being offered alternative accommodation.
- All information will be treated in strict confidence.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

### **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards. One of these relates to the Housing Register, which is:

- We will write to confirm how many points you have been awarded, within 5 days of registering a registration form

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

### **What to do if you are not happy**

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to providing the very best quality of housing services to our customers. However we accept that sometimes this may not happen. We hope that you will tell us when mistakes have been made or you have not received the quality of service you expected, so we can improve. You may want to do this by making a complaint.

If you would like to make a complaint you can write to:

Access and Customer Care Manager  
 Dale & Valley Homes  
 Civic Centre  
 Crook  
 County Durham  
 DL15 7ES

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**E-mail: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Complaint forms are available at our reception areas. You can complete the form and give it to a member of staff, post it to us or you can ask a member of staff to help you to complete the form.

## **Comments and suggestions**

If you would like to make any comments about our services please complete a suggestion card and post it in the suggestion boxes available in any area office.

Alternatively you can contact the Access and Customer Care Manager with your comments on:

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Email: [info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)**

Copies of all our service leaflets are available from all Area Offices and are also available to download from our website: [www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk](http://www.daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk)

## **SERVICE CONTACTS**

For a Housing Registration form, please contact any of our offices.

### **Housing reception offices**

#### **Main office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Civic Centre  
Crook  
County Durham  
DL15 9ES**

**Tel: (01388) 765 555**

**Fax: (01388) 766 660**

**Telephone (Credit/Debit card payments only): (01388) 761111**

Opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday - 8.30am to 4.30pm

Cash office opening hours:

Monday to Thursday - 9.00am to 4.30pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4.00pm

#### **Neighbourhood office**

**Dale & Valley Homes  
Woodhouse Close Neighbourhood Office  
64a Proudfoot Drive  
Woodhouse Close  
Bishop Auckland  
County Durham  
DL14 6QT**

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## VALUE FOR MONEY - DALE & VALLEY HOMES

### EQUALITIES STATEMENT

Dale & Valley Homes fully endorses the removal of all barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

We can produce this booklet in other formats, such as Braille; large print; on audiotape; on CD-Rom; or in other languages. You can get a copy by calling the Community Involvement Team on **(01388) 761 946**.

This document can be reproduced in the following languages:  
Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Urdu, Welsh.

এই ডকুমেন্টটি নিচের ভাষাগুলোতে অনুবাদ করা যাবে : বাংলা, কেমটনীজ, হিন্দী, মানডারিন, পানজাবী, উর্দু, উয়েলস।  
আপনি এর কপি পেতে ফোন করুন (01388) 761 946

“這份文件能複製成下列語言：孟加拉語，廣東話，北印度語，普通話，旁遮普語，烏爾都語，威爾斯語。您可以致電(01388) 761 946 索取副本。”

“यह लेख्य पत्र अगले भाषाओं में पेश किया जा सकता है: बंगाली, कान्टोनीस, हिन्दी, म्यानडरीन, पंजाबी, ऊर्दू, वेल्श। आप एक प्रतिलिपि के लिए (01388) 761 946 में सम्पर्क कर सकते हैं।”

“这份文件能复制成下列语言：孟加拉语，广东话，北印度语，普通话，旁遮普语，乌尔都语，威尔斯语。您可致电(01388) 761 946 索取副本。”

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਅਗਲੇ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਵਿਚ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ: ਬੰਗਾਲੀ, ਕਾਨਟੋਨੀਸ, ਹਿੰਦੀ, ਮਾਨਡਰੀਨ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਉਰਦੂ, ਵੇਲ਼ਸ਼। ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਕ ਉਤਾਰਾ ਲਈ (01388) 761 946 ਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ।

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"Gellir atgynhyrchu'r ddogfen hon yn yr ieithoedd canlynol: Bengaleg, Cantoneg, Hindi, Mandarin, Pwnjabeg, Wrddw, Cymraeg. Fe gewch chi gopi trwy ffonio (01388) 761 946".



## **INTRODUCTION**

Value for Money is not just about the lowest price for goods and services. Value for Money is a mix of:

- Quality
- Cost
- Fit for purpose
- Timescale
- Impact
- Benefit
- Convenience
- Social issues

That, together, can show we are getting good value.

Dale & Valley Homes are committed to looking at all its services and making sure all resources are giving the best Value for Money and achieving its key objectives.

Dale & Valley Homes will help Wear Valley District Council in hitting the Government's target for showing Value for Money and that services are delivered efficiently.

## **WHAT SERVICE STANDARDS CAN YOU EXPECT?**

We aim to provide services to you that offer the very best Value for Money by:

- Making a minimum saving of 2 ½ % on budgets
- Where possible involving customers in design and evaluation of works
- Responding to your comments and changing our services
- Directing resources in order that key priorities are met
- Consider all areas of services and see if there are better ways of providing that service
- Selecting materials that give the best whole life costs, not just the purchase cost.

**These standards will be reviewed annually.**

## **Monitoring our Service Standards**

The Customer Panel has chosen a set of 15 performance targets for monitoring our service standards.

Performance will be monitored quarterly with results published in offices, our tenant newsletter and our website.

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## LETTABLE STANDARD

- ▶ the gas and electricity supplies have been checked and any faults repaired
- ▶ sanitary ware is checked and hygienically cleaned
- ▶ adequate kitchen storage and cooking facilities are available and are clean and tidy
- ▶ we will carry out a Decent Homes assessment and feed this into future capital programmes
- ▶ Worktops will be clean and suitable for use
- ▶ there is plumbing for an automatic washing machine
- ▶ all floors, stairs, banisters and handrails have been checked and any faults repaired
- ▶ internal doors are damage free and open and close easily
- ▶ all windows and external doors are safe and secure
- ▶ all locks or latches are in working order
- ▶ all rubbish from inside and outside is removed
- ▶ any graffiti is removed
- ▶ gardens are clean and tidy
- ▶ pantries are removed and alternative units fitted, where appropriate
- ▶ all units, floors and woodwork are washed
- ▶ all communal areas are clean
- ▶ decoration vouchers will be awarded if the Housing Officer believes excessive decoration is required to bring the property up to an acceptable standard

..... viewed the property

.....

on ..... and agree/disagree it meets the Lettable Standard as set out above.

Signed: .....

## **Housing Services Department Annual Efficiency Statement**

### **Introduction**

The Housing Services Vision of:

*“Leading the way to the very best housing of choice for everyone that contributes to sustainable communities that learn and grow”*

is supported by the organisational objective to *“shape up the organisation to have a business like approach to stock management, which is inclusive, impacts economically and is valued”*.

A vital element of achieving this will be our ability to deliver real and sustainable improvements in the efficiency of our department. To achieve this we have introduced

- ♦ An updated and improve performance management process so that relevant, accurate data is considered on a regular basis and management decisions can be made to address priorities;
- ♦ Innovative procurement methods including partnerships, call down contracts and negotiation that have realised savings in tender costs and associated staffing costs; and
- ♦ New policies and procedures to deal with changing priorities and customer has enabled efficiency gains to be made in key areas of service delivery allowing scarce resources to be reinvested towards achieving local and national priorities.

## BACKWARD LOOKING ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

### HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT 2005/06

<b>Capital Works</b>	<b>Savings (£)</b>	<b>Quality Check</b>
Savings on partnering arrangements on delivery of central heating, window painting and demolition programmes against increases in tender price index.	£209,600.00	Customer satisfaction on capital schemes increased to around 95%. Good levels of survey returns. On site accidents impressively low and independent assessment from Considerate Constructors Scheme very encouraging. Increased number of homes assessed as 'decent'.
Efficiency gains resulting from long term partnering arrangements negating the requirement for tendering exercises.	£27,880.00	Contractors currently working as partners delivering quality as highlighted above.

<b>Management and Maintenance</b>	<b>Savings (£)</b>	<b>Quality check</b>
Improved performance on time taken to relet housing	88,000.00	Improved performance on BVPI 212
Improved performance on repairs where appointment made and kept	37,128.00	Improved performance on BVPI 185. Increased customer satisfaction.
Improvements performance of percentage rent collected on HRA dwellings.	152,400.00	Improved performance on BVPI 66a. Includes garages, houses and water rate collection.
Reduction in number of repairs carried out as emergency.	38,400.00	Reduction in costs as emergency jobs carry premium cost.

**Overall total efficiency savings (excluding efficiency savings identified on 'corporate' AES)**

**Capital Works      237,480.00**

**Management**

**& Maintenance      315,928.00**

**£553,408.00**

**FORWARD LOOKING ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

**HOUSING SERVICES DEPARTMENT 2006/07**

<b>Capital Works</b>	<b>Savings (£)</b>	<b>Quality check</b>
Efficiency gains resulting from long term partnering arrangements and contract negotiations negating the requirement for tendering exercises	36,840.00	Contractors currently working on delivery of Decent Homes Standard illustrate good quality of services

<b>Management and Maintenance</b>	<b>Savings (£)</b>	<b>Quality check</b>
Improved performance in percentage rent collected on HRA dwellings.	63,600.00	Improved performance expected on BVPI 66a
Tendering sub-contractors and suppliers on the responsive repairs contract (eg scaffolding, dpcs).	49,147.00	Increased efficiency and control over sub-contracts and suppliers
Extension of multi-skilling into additional work areas.	22,400.00	Increased efficiency. Improved customer satisfaction. Increased number of jobs completed in one visit.

**Overall total efficiency savings anticipated (excluding savings identified on Corporate AES)**

**Capital Works                      36,840.00**

**Management and  
Maintenance                      135,147.00**

**£171,987.00**