



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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27<sup>th</sup> June 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, 5<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006 at 6.00 P.M.**

**AGENDA**

Page No.

- |    |   |         |
|----|---|---------|
| 1. | Apologies for absence.  |         |
| 2. | To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2006 as a true record – copies previously circulated.   |         |
| 3. | To consider proposals to introduce a county-wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme.  | 1 – 3   |
| 4. | To consider the revised Void Procedure.   | 4 – 14  |
| 5. | To consider the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for Dale and Valley Homes.  | 15 – 39 |
| 6. | To consider proposals relating to the implications arising from the Asbestos Management Plan.   | 40 – 71 |
| 7. | To consider the findings of the Local Government Association survey on the Gypsy and Traveller Task Group.  | 72 – 75 |
| 8. | 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

5 JULY 2006

### Report of the Director for the Community **CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

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

To seek Committee approval to introduce a county wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

#### **background**

1. Previous Committee reports have detailed the Government's commitment that all local authorities must introduce a Choice Based Lettings Scheme by 2010. A Choice Based Regional Fund has been set up to encourage local authorities to implement cross boundary schemes.
2. In July 2005 Committee approved that discussions be held through the Durham and Neighbourhood Group about a bid to the Choice Based Regional Fund.
3. In November 2005 Committee agreed that the Housing Department be represented on a Core Group and Sub Working Group to progress the possibility of preparing a cross boundary bid to the Choice Based Regional Fund and a further report was to be made following these discussions.

#### **proposal**

4. Following discussions within the Core Group the following housing providers have given a clear indication of their commitment to introduce a cross boundary Choice Based Lettings Scheme: Sedgfield Borough Council, East Durham Homes, Durham City, Derwentside DC, Chester le Street DC, and Teesdale DC. The name of the scheme would be **Key Options**.
5. The Core Group is developing a Project Plan with a view to implementing a CBL Scheme of the key partners by January 2008. It is anticipated that the scheme would be extended to include housing associations and private landlords in 2010.
6. Richard Newby, Choice Based Lettings Advisor from the ODPM has met with the Core Group to assist with the preparation of the bid. He has informed the group that although each authority could retain their own policies there would have to be some commonality, such as all use a banding system or points system. Ideally all partners would share the same policy and procedure and it is hoped that this would take place in 2010. In the meantime it is likely that our current policy may need amending to reflect the proposed commonality.

7. The Council is not obliged to commit to this scheme, however, if it does not it will have to introduce its own scheme and will not be eligible to bid for funding and will have to meet all expenditure for IT, advertising and marketing itself.

### **financial implications**

8. A bid will be submitted for £100,000 from the Choice Based Regional Fund.
9. A budget bid of £50,000 will be submitted to the Council's budget setting process for 07/08.
10. All partners would contribute to the scheme.

### **equalities and diversity**

11. Specific consultation will be carried out with identified vulnerable groups. Agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, Help the Aged and Mencap will be fully consulted.
12. The anticipated choice based lettings scheme and revised allocations policy would still be in line with Dale & Valley Homes' current equality statement and policy.

### **human resource implications**

13. Should a CBL system be implemented the current staff structure will need to be reviewed. There is no suggestion that the number of posts will be effected.

### **legal implications**

14. The implications of Data Protection and Freedom of Information will be fully considered throughout the exercise.

### **it implications**

15. The current IT systems do not support choice based lettings and additional software would have to be purchased. This is accounted for within financial implications.

### **consultation**

16. There would need to be wide scale consultation with all customers, in particular the vulnerable groups. As a start of this consultation an Open Day was held on 16 March to introduce the scheme to members, staff and customers. It is likely that consultants would be commissioned to carry out consultation throughout the county.

## **RECOMMENDED**

1. Committee confirms the Council's commitment to introducing a joint CBL Scheme, should the bid for funding be successful.
2. Committee notes the financial implications

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

**5 JULY 2006**

Report of the Director for the Community  
**VOID PROCEDURE**

**purpose of the report**

To seek Committee's approval to the introduction of a revised Void Procedure.

**background**

- 1 The current void procedure was introduced in 2004. Since this time working practices have changed to reflect good practice, customer and staff feedback. A Working Group made up of staff and customers was established in March 2006 to review the current procedure.
- 2 During the Housing Inspection in September 2006 the Lettable Standard was found to be weak and did not link to the decent homes standard. The inspection team recommended that we could strengthen service user and resident focus by providing a comprehensive lettable standard. The inspection team also commented that targets were not applied consistently to all void properties regardless of the level of repairs required.

**proposal**

- 3 The void procedure at Annex 1 has been prepared following research carried out by the Working Group of the current working practices, the housing inspectors comments and good practice elsewhere.
- 4 Voids have been categorised according to the level of repairs required. This is also in line with good practice elsewhere and the inspectors comments.
- 5 It is proposed that we stop allowing customers, who transfer to another Council property, to keep the keys for an extra week, without paying rent. This practice means that every time a transfer takes place the re-let time is increased by 7 days and weeks rent is lost.
- 6 It is proposed that all customers' receive a welcome gift of £50 to help towards decoration costs. This will be a voucher redeemable at selected outlets and can only be used to purchase decoration materials. The customer will be required to sign the voucher in front of an officer and then again at the outlet at which they are purchasing their materials.

### **financial implications**

- 7 A budget bid has been approved to increase the level of decoration vouchers awarded to customers.
- 8 Improvements in re-let times increases the level of income received by the Council.

### **legal implications**

- 9 There are no legal implications to the amendment of the void procedure.

### **equalities and diversity**

- 10 There are no equalities and diversity implications to the void procedure.

### **human resource implications**

- 11 There are no human resource implications to the void procedure.

### **consultation**

- 12 Customers and staff have been involved in the preparation of the proposed procedure.
- 13 Customer Panel have approved the procedure.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Committee agrees to introduce the revised void procedure, detailed at Annex 1.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director for the Community  
Ext 281

**Author of the report**

Joanne Dunn  
Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager  
Ext 203

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# **Dale and Valley Homes**

## **Void Property Procedure**

**May 2006**



## 1 Introduction

1.1 The aim of the void procedure is:

- To achieve performance that meets the void target (BV212);
- To ensure expenditure on voids is within budget; and
- To raise customer satisfaction with the final product (74a).

## 2 Main features

2.1 Voids will be classified as casual voids or complex voids (see definition below). Void Managers are responsible for correctly classifying a void.

### 2.1.1 *Complex Void*

These are defined as voids which cannot be let immediately or after minor repair because they require structural alterations, damp or timber treatment, asbestos removal, major repairs, major re-plastering, rewiring etc., and those which are designated for an incentive move or disabled adaptations.

Complex voids will be given targets for time and cost, but **will be excluded** from the normal void relet target until such time as the complex work has been completed.

### 2.1.2 *Casual Void*

These will include all other voids and will form the majority of the voids we deal with.

Casual voids are split into 4 categories: Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze and are categorised depending upon the level of repairs required to bring a property up to the Lettable Standard. Other repairs will be carried out when the new customer moves in.

## 2.2 *The Lettable Standard*

Every property must meet a Lettable Standard before it is returned to the Housing Officer for letting.

- ▶ the gas and electricity supplies have been checked and any faults repaired
- ▶ sanitary ware is checked and hygienically cleaned
- ▶ all ground floor windows and external doors are 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
- 2.3 Housing Officers shall undertake pre-termination inspections and agree outstanding repairs, including any rechargeable items, with the customer.
- 2.4 The Council will pursue the cost of all rechargeable repairs in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy and Procedure.
- 2.5 Housing Officers will be set individual targets for their area and given the appropriate information, support and training to enable them to achieve them.
- 2.6 Housing Officers will complete weekly monitoring reports for consideration by their Neighbourhood Manager.
- 2.7 Void Managers will complete weekly void reports monitoring the progress of repairs for considering by their Neighbourhood Manager.
- 2.8 The Head of Neighbourhood Operations shall produce monthly statistics for consideration by the Director and departmental management team.

**2.9** *Responsibilities*

Re-letting void properties quickly is a key objective of the Housing Services Department. Officers will be set targets in their Personal Development Plan to ensure the overall target for Neighbourhood Operations is achieved.

A number of officers of the department are involved in the void management procedure and their responsibilities are set out below:

**Housing Officers** are responsible for advising outgoing customers of their obligations and responsibilities, for making offers of accommodation to prospective customers, viewing the properties with prospective customers and re-letting empty properties.

**Customer Service Assistants** are responsible for registering application forms, maintaining the Housing Register, advising the Housing Officers who is next on turn for a particular property and for the monitoring of keys.

**Void Maintenance Managers** are responsible for the inspection of properties once they become void, ordering the work, supervising the workforce and for ensuring the quality of work meets the lettable standard. Void Maintenance Managers deal directly with sub contractors, liaise with Housing Officers and meet prospective customers.

**Call Centre Staff** are responsible for the coding and inputting of void property repairs and logging of keys.

**Neighbourhood Managers** are responsible for monitoring the void process to ensure specified targets are met, keeping abreast of best practice and innovations.

**Principal Neighbourhood Manager** is responsible for ensuring the Neighbourhood

Managers implement and monitor the void procedure and ensuring void budgets are controlled.

**Councillors** are responsible for raising legitimate concerns about the condition of void properties on behalf of their constituents.

### **3 Dealing with Casual Voids**

#### **3.1 Pre Termination**

- 3.1.1 Customers are required to give the Council four weeks' written notice of their intention to terminate their tenancy, however in the event of the customer's death the tenancy will terminate on the Saturday following receipt of the keys from the next of kin.
- 3.1.2 Customers transferring to another Council property are not required to give four weeks' notice but must return the keys on the Monday following the termination of their current tenancy.
- 3.1.3 Where the property is abandoned (please refer to the Council's procedure for dealing with abandoned properties) or where the keys are handed back without four weeks' notice, the Customer Service Assistants shall assume that four weeks notice has been given from the date we are notified.
- 3.1.4 Where the customer (or his / her next of kin or estate in the case of a deceased customer) serves a valid Notice of Termination giving the appropriate notice period the Customer Service Assistant will:
- (a) acknowledge receipt by first class post on the same day;
  - (b) prepare the pre-termination paperwork for the Housing Officer.
- 3.1.5 The Housing Officer will carry out a pre termination inspection within five working days (or at a time convenient for the customer) to identify any outstanding repairs. The officer will advise the customer of any repairs he or she must carry out before leaving the property and explain the rechargeable repairs policy. Where possible a signature acknowledging the rechargeable repair should be obtained from the outgoing customer. Note: The Council **will not** recharge the next of kin or estate of a deceased customer.
- 3.1.6 The visit will also be an opportunity to discuss other issues such as the need for a forwarding address and telephone number, return of keys, leaving the property and garden clean and tidy, compensation for customer's improvements, rent arrears, housing benefit and termination of gas, electricity etc. It is important that the Housing Officer clarifies the need for the outgoing customer to remove all personal belongings from the property before handing it over to the Council. The Housing Officer will ask the outgoing customer's permission for viewings to be carried out before they leave.
- 3.1.7 The Housing Officer will obtain the customer's signature on the Pre Termination Inspection Checklist. If the outgoing customer is not present at the pre termination inspection the Housing Officer must advise them in writing of the intention to raise rechargeable repairs within two working days.
- 3.1.8 Where rechargeable repairs have been identified the Housing Officer will record this information on the void report. The Void Maintenance Manager will use this information during his or her inspection of the void to verify whether the customer has carried out any

of the work.

### **3.2 Control of Keys**

3.2.1 All keys are to be returned to the Council on the Monday following the termination date, before 10.00am. In extreme circumstances, and at the discretion of the House Officer, where customers are unable to bring the keys to the local office, arrangements can be made for them to be collected.

3.2.2 If the keys are not returned by 10.00am on the Monday, the Customer Service Assistant will arrange for the termination period to be extended by one week and will advise the Housing Officer of the non return of keys. The Housing Officer will investigate and make a decision on whether or not to change the locks to the property. If a decision to change the locks is made, the outgoing customer will be charged for the forced entry in addition to the extra week's rent.

**Note:** The customer(s) will have been advised of this during the pre-termination stage.

3.2.3 Customer Service Assistants shall record the return of the keys on the computerised key logging system and the key control card. They will ensure there are two sets of keys, attach one set to the void report and telephone the Void Maintenance Manager to arrange for their collection.

### **3.3 Inspecting the Void**

3.3.3 The Void Maintenance Manager will identify repairs under two categories: those that need to be done before the customer moves in and those that can be left until after the customer has moved in. A copy of the repair schedule will be given to the new customer at the sign up interview.

3.3.4 Any rechargeable repairs not previously identified shall be notified to the outgoing customer in writing.

3.3.5 Repairs to be carried out when the customer has moved in will be done on days convenient to the customer who will be given the choice of appointments. The Housing Officer will arrange these appointments with the Call Centre at the sign up interview.

3.3.6 Although a gas and electric safety checks will be carried out while the property is void, a full service of the gas appliance and a live electric check will be carried by appointment during the first week of occupation. This service will take place even if the last annual service had been carried out within the last 12 months.

All documentation is filed on the house.

3.3.7 Where rechargeable repairs were identified during the pre termination inspection, the Void Maintenance Manager will check that the customer has carried these out. Where the repairs are still outstanding, this will be identified on the computer in the usual way and the customer pursued for the cost of the repair in accordance with the Council's Rechargeable Repairs Procedure.

### **3.4 Monitoring the Void**

3.4.1 *Once the repairs are complete the Void Property Manager will inspect the premises prior to returning the keys to Neighbourhood Operations to ensure that the premises are ready to let and reach the lettable standard.*

3.4.2 The Void Maintenance Manager will complete an activity report recording all void activity on the weekly Void Report. The report is to be completed by Friday morning of each week for consideration by the Neighbourhood Manager.

3.4.3 Where performance is identified as being below the expected standard the issues will be raised during the following week's meetings between Housing Officer and Void Maintenance Manager.

3.4.4 Monthly reports will be presented to Departmental Management Team, with housing Committee appraised each quarter.

### **3.5 Viewing of Empty Properties**

3.5.1 In order to reduce re-let times a viewing will take place (if appropriate) with the prospective customer before the outgoing tenants moves out of the property. If this is not appropriate the prospective customer, with the Housing Officer and Void Manager will view the property before repairs are carried out. This will enable us to offer a service tailored to the customer's needs. The Officers and customer can negotiate on which repairs will be carried out and which ones can be left.

3.5.2 Customers will be given a copy of the Lettable Standard at the viewing stage and will be asked to sign to confirm the property meets the standard. (Annex 1)

## **4 Dealing with Complex Voids**

4.1 A complex void can be identified in five ways:

- (a) As part of a wider demolition program;
- (b) Following a complaint from a customer (for example of dampness or floor heave);
- (c) Where the property becomes void following an emergency such as flood or fire etc;
- (d) Where a long term void is identified for possible demolition, remodelling or alternate use;  
or
- (e) During a routine inspection of a casual void.

4.2 The procedure to be adopted for a complex void identified as part of a wider demolition is contained within the Council's Demolition Procedure

4.3 Monitoring a complex void will follow the same process as set out for a casual void above (see 3.4), taking account for the extended target times.

## **5 Preparing an Offer**

5.1 For full details on preparing an offer please refer to Council's Lettings Policy.

- 5.2 In relation to the void process, the Customer Service Assistant will check the Council's waiting list for potential applicants immediately upon receiving a valid Notice of Termination from the outgoing customer or next of kin / estate.
- 5.3 Where a property is thought to have been abandoned the Customer Service Assistant will check the Council's waiting list for potential applicants immediately upon receiving notification of this.
- 5.4 The Customer Service Assistant will contact the applicant who is next in turn to ascertain whether they are still interested in remaining on the list for accommodation within the area and to check that their details are correct.
- 5.5 Where the property has been abandoned, or the outgoing customer is no longer in occupation, the Housing Officer will arrange a pre-allocation inspection as soon as the property is considered safe.
- 5.6 A viewing of the property with the successful applicant will be arranged as soon as the Void Maintenance Manager returns the keys following the maintenance work and the home reaches the Council's Lettable Standard.

## **6 Rechargeable Repairs**

- 6.1 We will not operate a blanket or rigid policy on recharging customers each case will need clear reasons for pursuing. The circumstances where a recharge may not be considered include where:
- 6.1.1
- a. The repairs are a result of 'fair wear and tear' rather than deliberate wilful damage;
  - b. There is insufficient evidence to prove that the customer caused the damage;
  - c. The customer is incapable of carrying out the repair due to age, ill health, disability etc;
  - d. The recharge would result in extreme financial hardship for the customer; and
  - e. The customer has made every effort to maintain the property and there are only a few minor items outstanding. Officers should take into account any past history of the customer neglecting the property.

Please refer to the Council's Rechargeable Repairs policy for further details.

- 6.2 One of the aims of the pre termination inspection is to minimise the need for recharging by encouraging outgoing customers to make good any outstanding repairs. However, where rechargeable repairs are required the Housing Officer must agree this with the outgoing customer and explain the procedure for invoicing and payment.

- 6.3 The customer should be given the option to carry out the repair(s) before any recharge is considered. If the customer agrees to carry out the repair, the standard of repair and timescales for completion should be specified. The Housing Officer should obtain the outgoing customer's signature to this effect on the pre termination inspection form.

- 6.4 All items for repair or recharge should be recorded on the void inspection report. During the void inspection the Void Maintenance Manager will use this record to check that recharges still need to be pursued. This will include work not carried out or completed to a satisfactory standard.

## **7 Decoration Vouchers**

7.1 Decorating vouchers are purchased from retailers and issued directly to customers when the Housing Officer feels that a property's decoration is below standard. The use of Decoration Vouchers is considered by The Chartered Institute of Housing to be good practice and was recommended by the Housing Inspectors

7.2 An allowance of £50 per room in need of decoration will be awarded, to a maximum of £300. If a Housing Officer believes there are exceptional circumstances to award an allowance in excess of £300 they should seek approval from their Neighbourhood Manager. A record of the decoration allowance will be recorded on the

## **8. Welcome Gift**

8.1 All customers will receive £50 decoration vouchers as a welcome gift. This will be given to the customer at the sign up stage.



## LETTABLE STANDARD

- ▶ the gas and electricity supplies have been checked and any faults repaired
- ▶ sanitary ware is checked and hygienically cleaned
- ▶ all ground floor windows and external doors are 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

I ..... viewed the property

.....

on ..... and agree/disagree it meets the

Lettable Standard as set out above.

Signed: .....





**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**5 JULY 2006**

Report of the Director for the Community  
**DRAFT EQUALITY & DIVERSITY STRATEGY**

**purpose of the report**

To seek Committee approval of the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy for Dale & Valley Homes.

**background**

- 1 One of the service areas that the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate (ACHI) assessed during their interim inspection of the Council's housing services in September 2005 was Diversity. They commented that there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses in the approach to diversity. Since that time the Management of the Housing Service has transferred to Dale & Valley Homes.
- 2 Weaknesses highlighted were the absence of an Equality and Diversity Strategy (paragraph 52 of ACHI Indicative ALMO report) and no actions in place to achieve Level Two of the Equality Standard for Local Government (paragraph 53 of ACHI Indicative ALMO report). R1 of the recommendations of the report makes specific reference to "involving hard-to-reach groups in housing activities ensuring they have equal access to services" with a deadline of May 2006.
- 3 Dale & Valley Homes commissioned PS Consultants to prepare the strategy and accompanying action plan.

**purpose**

- 4 The purpose of the Equality and Diversity strategy at Annex 2 is to satisfy the requirements of R1 of the ACHI Indicative ALMO report and address the further weakness mentioned above.

**section one of the strategy**

- 5 It details in this section the service provision that the strategy encompasses which are governance, employment, provision of services, procurement and partnership working. The legislation governing the equalities framework is listed as well as national strategic frameworks that we have a duty to adhere to – the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice in Rented Housing and the Equality Standard for Local Government. The further regulatory regime in

respect of equalities is ACHI Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) 31 – Diversity that investigates quality of services.

- 6 The introduction states the mechanisms that Dale & Valley Homes currently has in place (adopted from the Council) through the Equalities Statement and Race Equality Action Plan. Finally, it defines terminology in respect of discrimination, harassment, racism and victimisation.

#### **section two of the strategy**

- 7 A profile of the whole District in respect of equalities is stated.

#### **section three of the strategy**

- 8 Dale & Valley Homes Customer Profile is discussed in this section of the strategy in respect of customers from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) background, findings that came from the Customer Profile that the Northern Housing Consortium carried out and consultation with customer representatives.

#### **section four of the strategy**

- 9 Section four of the Strategy looks at the strengths and weaknesses of Dale & Valley Homes approach to equalities and diversity issues. It details the work completed under the Housing Services Department Race Equality Action Plan. The weaknesses of the current approach were highlighted following a self-assessment exercise using KLOE 31 as a baseline and the comments of the ACHI arising from the indicative inspection.

#### **section five of the strategy**

- 10 This section of the Strategy details Dale & Valley Homes' values in respect of equalities and diversity. The objectives are stated as highlighted in the background information in this report – The achievement of Level Two of the Equalities Standard for Local Government by April 2007.
- 11 The commitment of the Strategy is detailed through a series of bullet points highlighting the stages required to achieve Level Two of the Equalities Standard.
- 12 Equalities and diversity is a distinct service area in respect of the fact that it needs to be part of every service area of Dale & Valley Homes. Actions to ensure this are highlighted under Governance; Employment; Procurement of External Services, Provision of our Services and Service User Involvement.
- 13 This section also provides detailed policy statements in respect of how the strategy will apply to the following specific customer groups:
  - BME communities
  - Disabled People
  - Women
  - Customers from Rural Communities

## **section six of the strategy**

- 14 The responsible body for the delivery of the Strategy is identified as Dale & Valley Homes Board, with the Senior Management Team of the Company providing regular updates on progress to the Board.
- 15 Finally, the Strategy details how information will be provided to customers in respect of progress on attainment of Level 2 of the Equality Standard.

## **appendices to the strategy**

- 16 The appendices provide information on the Housing Services Department Race Equality Action Plan 2003 and Dale & Valley Homes Equalities Statement.
- 17 The final appendices contains the Dale & Valley Homes Equalities and Diversity Action Plan which details all the actions required for successful delivery of the Strategy.

## **consultation**

- 18 Customers have been involved in the development of this strategy through initial work with the Customer Panel resulting in an Equalities Working Group involving customers investigating KLOE 31. A series of focus groups have been carried out with Residents Associations representatives, random customers and Customer Panel representatives.
- 19 The strategy was presented to Dale & Valley Homes Board on 27 June 2006. Due to short time-scales, it would be beneficial if Committee could instruct the Strategic Director for the Community to include all agreed amendments of Dale & Valley Homes Board and Committee's comments on the Draft Equalities and Diversity Strategy.
- 20 The strategy has also gone out to consultation to Durham and Darlington County Race Equality Council, Wear Valley Disability Forum and 2D.

## **financial implications**

- 21 There are no additional financial implications to the adoption of this Strategy as funding for Equalities is from current resources. These current resources relate specifically to a budget of £30,000 which has been set aside to include both the development of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the implementation of the action plan to achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard based on the recommendations within the strategy.
- 22 However, failure to deliver the Action Plan in respect of the Strategy could potentially have major implications on the ACHI awarding Dale & Valley Homes 2 stars and the £27m needed to deliver the Decent Homes agenda.

### **legal implications**

- 23 The legal implications of the adoption of the Strategy are detailed within the document.

### **human resource implications**

- 24 The implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan will utilise resources from the Dale & Valley Homes Access and Customer Care Team and PS Consultants.

### **it implications**

- 25 There are no IT implications in the development of this Strategy as current systems have been utilised.

### **equalities and diversity implications**

- 26 The equalities and diversity implications of the adoption of the Strategy are detailed within the document.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 That Committee instructs the Strategic Director for the Community to include all agreed amendments of Dale & Valley Homes Board in the Draft Equalities and Diversity Strategy.
- 2 Committee approves the Draft Equalities and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director for the Community  
Ext 281

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**Author of the report**

Louise Butler  
Access & Customer Care Manager  
Ext 299

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## Dale & Valley Homes

### Equality & Diversity Strategy

#### Foreword

Dale & Valley Homes was established as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) by Wear Valley District Council (the Council) and became responsible for the management, repair and improvement of the Council's housing stock with effect from April 2006.

Our vision is to: -

"Leading the way to the best housing of choice for everyone, so helping our neighbourhoods to become sustainable communities that learn and grow'.

Dale & Valley Homes is committed to Equality and Diversity in all aspects of our operations and fully endorses the removal of all barriers to the effective participation of all stakeholders arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

This strategy has been produced in order to confirm our commitment to the development of Equality and Diversity issues and to outline our vision for what can be achieved. It contains: -

- A summary of the statutory, strategic and regulatory framework within which we operate,
- Information about Wear Valley,
- An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of our current approach to Equality and Diversity issues,
- Our objectives for Equality and Diversity; and
- An Action Plan detailing the work that we intend to undertake in order that we can achieve our objectives.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years the increasingly diverse nature of British society has driven a policy agenda that has placed an increased emphasis on Equality and Diversity issues.

Within the provision of Local Government services Equality and Diversity issues have been promoted for two reasons: -

- The **Business** Case for diversity emphasises the need to develop an understanding of the customer to enable the development of products and services that meet the needs of communities.
- The **Public Sector** Case for diversity emphasises equality of access to services and the requirements for local government to meet the needs of all service users. Equal access to services is fundamental to the Government's Best Value regime and is monitored through a number of Best Value performance Indicators (BVPIs).

The promotion of Equality and Diversity represents a commitment to ensure that no individual suffers discrimination in their use of, and access to, public services in any way, including as a result of their ethnic origin, religious beliefs, educational ability, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

The Housing Corporation's Good Practice Guide for Equalities and Diversity notes that, 'From a housing perspective, ensuring Equality and Diversity can be seen as everyone having access to the housing they need, and that their views are heard and taken into account in the provision of such services.'

Equality and Diversity does not, however, simply relate to service provision. This strategy outlines how Dale & Valley Homes will approach Equality and Diversity issues within: -

- Our own governance arrangements
- Our role as an employer
- The provision of our services
- The procurement of external services; and
- Our approach to partnership working.

The development of this strategy has been based upon a substantial statutory, strategic and regulatory framework.

This Strategy is closely linked to our Access and Customer Care Strategy and to the Customer Involvement Framework that is currently being reviewed.

## 1.1 Relevant Legislation

Equality legislation has been fundamental to addressing discrimination. Recent legislation has placed a duty upon public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination for specific groups.

The principal legislation that governs the equalities framework is: -

- Equal Pay Act, 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act, 1975
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- Human Rights Act, 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations, 2003

## 1.2 Strategic Framework

### **The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice for Rented Housing**

The CRE's Code of Practice does not have legal status but provides good practice information with regard to race issues in rented housing. The code requires landlords to record the ethnic origin of their customers and to monitor and report on the delivery of their services in order to ensure that they are done so in an equitable manner.

BVPI 164 requires Dale & Valley Homes to be compliant with the Code of Practice.

The Code was produced prior to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 and, following extensive consultation, is to be updated and incorporated within the CRE's Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing during 2006.

### **The Equality Standard for Local Government**

The Equality Standard for Local Government was published by the Employer's Organisation for Local Government in 2001.

The Standard defines the following five levels for organisations to achieve in their approach to Equality and Diversity issues: -

**Level One:** Commitment to a comprehensive Equality Policy

**Level Two:** Assessment and consultation

**Level Three:** Setting equality objectives and targets

**Level Four:** Information systems and monitoring against targets

**Level Five:** Achieving and reviewing outcomes.

This strategy, and the commitments contained within it will assist Dale & Valley Homes in achieving Level One of the Standard. The accompanying Action Plan details how we will achieve Level 2.

### **Other Relevant Strategies / Documents**

- ODPM's Code of Practice for Social Landlords in Tackling Harassment (compliance with which is also required by BVPI 164).
- Housing Corporation's Good Practice Guide – Equality and Diversity

### **1.3 The Regulatory Regime**

The quality of the services provided by Dale & Valley Homes, including with regard to Equality and Diversity issues, is judged by the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate who undertake inspections through a series of Key Lines of Enquiries (KLOEs).

KLOE 31 deals specifically with diversity issues and considers the quality of services according to the following range of factors: -

- Corporate culture and governance
- Access and customer care
- Service user involvement
- Partnerships
- Harassment and domestic violence

### **1.4 The Local Context**

Upon its establishment Dale & Valley Homes adopted the Council's policies and practices with regard to Equality and Diversity. These included: -

- The Housing Services Department Equality Statement
- The Housing Services Department Race Equality Action Plan (see Appendix One)
- Racial Harassment Procedural Guide

Dale & Valley Homes have since adopted their own Equality Statement which is attached at Appendix Two.

We recognise that we will have to undertake significant further work if we are to meet our objectives with regard to Equality and Diversity.

This Strategy has been produced in order to meet the weaknesses that have been identified within our current service provision and details how we intend to address those weaknesses.



## **1.5 Definitions of terminology**

Dale & Valley Homes recognises that discrimination can take many forms: -

- **Direct Discrimination**

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person, as a result of, for example, their ethnicity or gender.

- **Indirect Discrimination**

Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is placed upon something which, although applied equally to all groups, would in practice exclude people from certain groups. Such a situation is illegal if it cannot be justified and is detrimental to the group who cannot comply.

- **Harassment**

Harassment can take many forms, can occur on a number of grounds and may be directed at groups or individuals. It is almost any form of unwanted behaviour including looks, remarks, written or electronic communication, or unwanted contact that results in the victim feeling threatened or uncomfortable.

- **Institutional Racism**

Institutional racism is a term that comes from the MacPherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence and refers to the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

- **Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs where a person is treated less favourably because they have pursued, or it is suspected that they might pursue, their rights under the Equal Opportunities Policy, or the law via the internal complaints procedure, an external agency or legal proceedings.

## 2. Wear Valley District Profile

Wear Valley is situated in the South West of County Durham. It covers an area of 50,507 hectares that consists of the principal urban areas of Bishop Auckland and Crook and a substantial rural hinterland. Based on the Country's population projections there were approximately 61,287 people living in Wear Valley in 2000, of which 29,703 were male and 31,584 were female. The 2001 Census indicated that the population had risen slightly to 61,339, consisting of 26,491 households.

The 2001 Census also indicated that 0.8% of the population in Wear Valley was from a BME background.

As at 31 March 2006 the Council owned a total of 4,435 properties in the District. The table below demonstrates how the Council's properties are distributed across the district: -

	<b>% of Housing Stock</b>
<b>Bishop Auckland Area.</b> Including Coundon, West Auckland, St Helen's Auckland, Woodhouse Close Estate, Escomb and Henknowle	<b>54.2</b>
<b>Crook Area</b> Including Willington, Howden-le-Wear, Sunnybrow, Billy Row, Hunwick and Tow Law	<b>39.4</b>
<b>Weardale</b>	<b>6.4</b>

## 3. Dale and Valley Homes' Customer Profile

Dale & Valley Homes do not hold a comprehensive customer profile detailing the age, ethnic origin, physical ability or information requirements of all of our tenants.

We do, however, have some information that has been obtained through previous research that has been undertaken by the Council: -

### 3.1 Customers from a BME Background

In 2004 Social and Market Strategic Research (SMSR) were commissioned in order to undertake research into the ethnic origin of customers. SMSR achieved a 71% response rate to their research and identified 27 households that contained at least one member from a BME background. This represents 1.19% of SMSR's sample or 0.55% of the total tenant population.

In 2005 the Darlington and Durham Racial Equality Council (DDREC) was commissioned in order to undertake consultation on the Council's behalf with customers from a BME background. They found that: -

- 4 customers did not use English as their first language
- 70% of those who were surveyed were either very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council
- 70% of those who were surveyed were either very or fairly satisfied with the Council's repairs service
- 56% of those who were surveyed considered that the Council were either very or fairly good at keeping them informed
- 71% of those who were surveyed would be interested in opportunities to provide their views on issues relating to their community.

### **3.2 General Customer Profile**

In 2006 the Northern Housing Consortium was commissioned in order to undertake a customer profile on behalf of Dale & Valley Homes.

Some of their findings were relevant to the development of this strategy and are as follows: -

- 47.1% of households in council accommodation contain an elderly member, compared to 36% in the general population
- 24.9% of households in council accommodation contain a member who is permanently sick or disabled, compared to 10.2% in the general population
- Violence is a significant reason for new cases of homelessness that arise. During 2004/05 27 households became homeless as a result of violence involving a partner.
- The greatest percentage of people who are bed-bound, are wheelchair users or who need a walking frame in Wear Valley reside in council accommodation.

### **3.3 Consultation with Tenants' Representatives**

During the course of the development of this Strategy we undertook consultation with 34 customer representatives through a series of Focus Groups with customers from the 'Involvement Database', representatives from Residents' Associations and members of the Customer Panel.

The findings of the consultation were: -

- All of those surveyed considered that the Council / Dale & Valley Homes valued their customers and made some provision to meet the needs of different customer groups
- All were aware that information produced by the Council / Dale & Valley Homes is available on request in different languages and formats
- All were aware of how complaints of harassment could be made to the Council
- All found the Council's / Dale & Valley Homes' offices to be easily accessible
- All found that most staff were sympathetic to the needs of individual customers

- Some representatives did not consider that the needs of disabled customers were fully met. Respondents had had experience of: -
- A lack of information about the adaptations service that is provided by the Council
- Difficulties with mobility around our estates
- Representatives considered that they had not received sufficient training on Equality and Diversity issues
- Members of Residents' Associations told us that they were not aware of their own obligations with regard to Equalities and Diversity
- Although representatives were aware of the work that the Council / Dale & Valley Homes did with regard to Equality and Diversity they considered that the standard of information that they produced could be better

#### **4. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Our Current Approach to Equality and Diversity Issues**

This section of the strategy is based upon a self-assessment exercise undertaken by Dale & Valley Homes that included customer representation and the comments of the Housing Inspectorate arising from their indicative inspection of the housing service that was undertaken in September 2005.

The Council, and now Dale & Valley Homes, have made some progress with regard to Equality and Diversity issues but overall there remains a balance of strengths and weaknesses within this element of the service.

In August 2003 the Housing Services Department adopted its own Equality Statement that incorporated advice from the CRE. The Housing Services Department was also fully compliant with the CRE Code of Practice for Rented Housing and had adopted a Race Equality Action Plan containing 13 objectives.

The Race Equality Action Plan sought to promote race issues amongst all stakeholders within the housing service and to introduce ethnic monitoring within the delivery of the housing service.

The Council undertook partnership work with the DDCREC in order to undertake research into the views of tenants from BME backgrounds and took positive action to engage with hard to reach groups, including through attendance at regular liaison meetings with representatives of the Gypsy and Traveller Community in Bishop Auckland.

The Council took positive action to promote Equality and Diversity issues by ensuring that: -

- Its offices comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- That information is available in alternative languages and formats on request
- Advice and support is available to customers experiencing harassment and domestic violence
- Appropriate training was undertaken with all staff and customer representatives.

Dale & Valley Homes have, however, identified the following weaknesses within its service: -

- There has not previously been a comprehensive strategy to outline the approach to Equality and Diversity within the provision of housing services
- Dale & Valley Homes do not hold comprehensive information with regard to the age, ethnicity, physical abilities and information requirements of individual customers. Such information is fundamental in helping Dale & Valley Homes to shape their services to the needs of their customers.
- Our reporting arrangements are weak in some areas
- Information that has been obtained about the needs of tenants from BME backgrounds has not been used to shape service delivery, for example with regard to the alternative language formats that are available for published information.
- Only limited training is provided to contractors providing maintenance services with regard to the promotion of the Council's / Dale & Valley Homes' approach to Equality and Diversity.

## **5. Our Values, Objectives and Detailed Policy Statements**

Dale & Valley Homes is fully committed to Equality and Diversity in all aspects of its operations. We believe that the services we provide will best meet the needs of our communities if: -

- Our system of governance reflects the community
- Our customers have equal access to the use of our services and, through our involvement structures, to opportunities to comment upon them; and
- Our workforce reflects our communities, with individual members of staff being given equal opportunity to progress within the organisation according to their ability and not, for example, their gender or ethnic background.

We fully endorse the removal of all barriers to the effective participation of all stakeholders arising from (this is not an exhaustive list): -

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Geographic location
- Special needs
- Language differences
- Learning difficulties
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Age
- Disability.

Equality and Diversity will be central to Dale & Valley Homes organisational culture and this strategy will underpin all of our work.

Our objectives for Equality and Diversity are: -

- To achieve Level One of the Equalities Standard for Local Government by September 2006; and

- To achieve Level Two of the Equalities Standard for Local Government by April 2007.

The development of this strategy, and the commitments contained within it, will assist us in achieving Level One of the Standard and the Action Plan that is attached at Appendix Three describes the work that we intend to undertake in order to ensure that we achieve Level Two of the Standard.

In order that we can achieve Level One of the Equalities Standard Dale & Valley Homes is committed to: -

- Producing and adopting an Equality and Diversity Policy
- Ensuring that all of our operations comply with the provisions of all of the relevant equalities legislation that is identified in this Strategy
- Establishing targets in respect of our work with regard to Equalities and Diversity
- Undertaking detailed consultation with all of our stakeholder groups in order to determine the successes or failures of our work and to help us to determine priorities for our future work with regard to Equalities and Diversity
- Undertake training with all of our stakeholders on their respective responsibilities with regard to Equality and Diversity
- Review our employment practices to ensure that they are compliant with all relevant equalities legislation
- Undertaking impact and needs / requirements assessments for all aspects of our service delivery
- Establishing appropriate methods for undertaking regular monitoring and reporting on our work with regard to Equalities and Diversity issues
- Establishing a framework within which we review our work with regard to equalities and Diversity.

In order that we can achieve Level 2 of the Standard Dale & Valley Homes will: -

- Undertake impact and needs / requirements assessments in respect of all of our service areas
- Undertake consultation with all stakeholder groups
- Develop and implement information and monitoring systems
- Undertake equality action planning for employment, pay and service provision
- Develop a system for self-assessment, scrutiny and audit with regard to Equality and Diversity issues.

### **How We Will Put This Strategy into Practice?**

We will seek to incorporate Equality and Diversity into all of our operations through taking the following actions: -

#### **Governance**

Dale & Valley Homes' Board of Management will play an important role in ensuring that the services that we provide meet the needs of our customers. It is therefore important that the make up of the Board reflects, as far as possible, the communities of Wear

Valley, and that the Board is responsible for the promotion and monitoring of this strategy.

We will ensure that: -

- The composition of the Board is monitored in order to ensure that it reflects our communities
- All vacancies for the Board of Management are widely publicised and that we take positive action in order to encourage applications for Board Membership from members of groups who are considered to be under-represented at Board level
- All Board members are provided with appropriate levels of support in order to ensure that they are able to provide a full role in the governance process
- All Board members are provided with full training with regard to the provisions of this strategy and the responsibilities of the Board with regard to Equalities and Diversity
- The Board is provided with monitoring information with regard to Equalities and Diversity issues to ensure that our services are delivered equitably.

## **Employment**

Dale & Valley Homes values our employees and recognises the fundamental role that they have in the successful delivery of our services to our customers. We will take positive action to ensure that all of our employees are able to work in an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. We will also take positive action to ensure that our workforce reflects the make up of our communities, ensuring that no applicant for employment receives unfair discrimination.

We will: -

- Monitor the composition of our workforce in order to ensure that it reflects the make up of our communities
- Review the selection criteria for jobs to ensure that they do not appear to be discriminatory in nature
- Ensure that all vacancies are widely advertised and that positive action is taken to encourage applications for employment from people from groups that are under represented within our workforce
- Set targets for the recruitment of employees from groups that are demonstrated to be under represented within our workforce
- Ensure that all of our employment policies and practices are compliant with all of the relevant equalities legislation.
- Ensure that all employees are provided with training on the law with regard to Equalities and Diversity and to Dale & Valley Homes own strategy and objectives
- Undertake comprehensive monitoring of and reporting on Equalities and Diversity within our employment practices.
- Ensure that all of our employment policies and practices are compliant with all of the relevant equalities legislation, including in respect of the availability of flexible working arrangements.

## **The Procurement of External Services**

External contractors and consultants will undertake many of Dale & Valley Homes' services on our behalf. We recognise that we have a duty to ensure that organisations or individuals who undertake the provision of services on our behalf observe our principles for Equality and Diversity in their work.

We will: -

- Ensure that organisations who wish to undertake work on our behalf are committed to the principles of Equality and Diversity
- Ensure that all organisations that wish to undertake work on our behalf are treated equally and are not discriminated against unreasonably
- Take positive action to encourage contractors and consultants who are from groups that are under represented to bid for our work
- Require all contractors and consultants who do undertake work and services on our behalf to comply with appropriate equalities legislation and the provisions of this strategy.

## **The Provision of Our Services**

Dale & Valley Homes is committed to ensuring that all of our customers are treated equally in the provision of our services and that no individual is discriminated against on unreasonable grounds.

We will ensure that: -

- All of our offices are accessible to all of our customers irrespective of any physical disabilities that they may have
- Information about our services is produced in plain English and is available in a range of different formats according to the needs that are identified
- There are clear standards for dealing with all complaints of discrimination or harassment and are clearly communicated to all stakeholders
- We monitor individual elements of our services, including, for example, allocation of properties, and provide regular reports to ensure that our services are delivered equitably
- Work alongside the Council to ensure all complaints of harassment are investigated and that appropriate action is taken against the perpetrators

## **Service User Involvement**

In order that we can shape the services that we deliver around the needs of the communities that we serve we recognise the need to involve customer representatives from all groups of customers, including from hard to reach groups, in the design and monitoring of our services.

We will develop a framework for resident involvement that encourages representatives from all groups to become involved and will support all representatives in their involvement, irrespective of their individual needs.



We will: -

- Collect and maintain detailed information about all of our customers that records their ethnicity, age, disabilities, information needs and preferred method of involvement
- Ensure that there is a range of opportunities for customers to become involved in our services which are sympathetic to the needs of individual groups of customers
- Monitor and report on the numbers of tenants who do become involved in our involvement framework
- Take positive action to ensure that customers from groups who are demonstrated to be under represented within our involvement structure become involved.

### **Detailed Policy Statements**

The following statements explain how this strategy will apply to the way in which we deal with customers from specific groups.

#### **Black and Minority Ethnic Communities**

Dale & Valley Homes recognises that racist behaviour and harassment can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals. Negative perceptions of individuals that arise from their ethnicity, culture, dress or religious belief can significantly affect their access to services or to employment opportunities.

Dale & Valley Homes recognises its duty under the terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 to promote race equality and eliminate discrimination.

We will: -

- Review and update our Race Equality Action Plan
- Continue to monitor lettings made to BME applicants, and the delivery of services to BME customers, measuring the satisfaction of BME customers
- Develop targets for lettings to BME applicants
- Continue to undertake partnership working to promote race equality and to develop links with customers from BME communities
- Take positive action to promote the involvement of customers from BME groups
- Work alongside the Council to investigate any incident of racial harassment and take appropriate action against the perpetrators

#### **Disabled People**

Some people with disabilities are denied equal access to services or employment as a result of direct or indirect discrimination. Dale & Valley Homes recognises its duty under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and will work to ensure that all people with disabilities have equal access to services and employment opportunities.

We will: -

- Ensure that all of our services and offices are accessible to disabled customers
- Take positive action to promote the involvement of disabled customers through the development of appropriate involvement methods
- Ensure that the Council's adaptations scheme is widely publicised
- Ensure that information about our services is available in alternative formats, including in Braille or on tape, according to any identified need
- Develop our partnership working with agencies who represent the needs of disabled people so that we can better understand the needs of our disabled customers

## **Women**

We recognise that women can experience discrimination and disadvantage in access to services and employment opportunities. Women can also be the subject of sexist behaviour or harassment in the home or the work place. Dale & Valley Homes is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all women.

It will: -

- Ensure equal access to employment opportunities
- Ensure equal access to services
- Monitor the involvement of women in the involvement framework to ensure that women are adequately represented
- Continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that our services for women who have suffered domestic violence are appropriate to meet their needs
- Ensure equal access to decision making processes

## **Customers from Rural Communities**

The District of Wear Valley covers a large geographic area that includes a number of rural communities in which our housing is situated that are a significant distance from our main offices. We recognise that this could act as a barrier to our services.

We are committed to ensuring that all of our customers, irrespective of their geographic location, have equal access to our services and to opportunities to become involved in those services.

We will: -

- Ensure equal access to our services for all of our tenants
- Continue to work with the Stanhope and Wolsingham Residents' Associations to identify issues that may affect residents in our rural communities
- Monitor the involvement of customers from our rural communities in the other methods for involvement that we develop in our Customer Involvement Framework
- Take positive action to promote the involvement of tenants from rural communities in the event that they are discovered to be under represented
- Ensure that the information which we provide is relevant to customers who reside in rural communities and is easily accessible to them

- Through our Access and Customer Care Strategy monitor the extent to which customers from rural communities gain access to all of our services, and are satisfied with them

## **Sexuality**

Dale & Valley Homes is committed to the removal of barriers to services and employment opportunities that may arise from a person's sexuality.

We will: -

- Work with gay and lesbian people to tackle discrimination against them
- Work with partner agencies that represent the needs of gay and lesbian people to ensure that our services meet with their needs.

## **6. Responsibilities and Review**

The successful delivery of this Equality and Diversity Strategy is the responsibility of the Board of management of Dale & Valley Homes.

The Managing Director, and other senior officers, will provide the Board of Management with a 6 – monthly report that detail: -

- The progress that has been made with the delivery of this strategy,
- Performance with regard to specific service areas
- Recommendations in respect of further work that should be undertaken.

Information will also be provided to customers through: -

- The 6 – monthly 'Housing Matters' magazine
- Specific leaflets
- Dale & Valley Homes' Website

This strategy will be reviewed following the attainment of Level 2 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government, the target date for which is April 2007.

### Appendix One – Housing Services Department Race Equality Action Plan 2003

	Objective	Action	Target	Resource	Cost	Corporate Links	Lead Officer
1	To implement the Council's Harassment Policy (including racial) – agreed in draft in January 2003.	CW to contact Race Action Net to consider the Racial Harassment Policy.	June 2003	CW	£150	Need for Race Equality Scheme, Crime & Disorder Strategy, Community Safety Best Value Review, Corporate Objectives 1 & 4.	CW
2	To introduce a 'First Impressions' visit to assess user friendliness of offices from an ethnic minorities view point.	LB to contact Race Action Net, DDCREC and IT to visit 3 offices and assess.	June 2003	LB; KH	£300	All offices are representatives of the Council as a whole.	LB
3	Make sure that minority groups are represented on our literature.	1. To review and revamp all Council literature and posters to reflect diversity and equalities. 2. To include equalities statement on all literature in all available languages.	July 2003 ongoing	LB, KH, CDg, CDo, DG	£5,000 for translations	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1, 2 and 5	LB
4	To introduce a departmental equalities statement in accordance with the Council's Race Equality issues	1. To input ethnic monitoring information onto database. 2. To consult staff, customers, members and DDCREC on the production of a departmental Diversity's and equalities statement	September 2003	LB, KH, LS, AW, SR, SB, MSU students.	£50	Race Equalities Scheme, Corporate Objectives 1 and 2.	LB

	Objective	Action	Target	Resource	Cost	Corporate Links	Lead Officer
5	To quantify and improve the Department's performance in addressing equality issues.	1. Establish equality targets for the Department. 2. Monitor and report on a quarterly basis.	August 2003	DMT, SHMT	-	Corporate Objective 1	MK
6	To publicise actions being undertaken by the Housing Service Department in accordance with equalities legislation, the Council's Race Equality Scheme and Department's own services aims.	Undertake publicity campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Contact Northern Echo</li> <li>• Poster Campaign</li> <li>• Wear Valley Matters</li> <li>• Tenants Newsletter</li> </ul>	November 2003	LB, KH, CDo, DG, GC, RR	£2,000 for translations	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1	LB
7	Facilities and improve mechanisms for members of ethnic minority community to contact the Housing Services Department.	Work with DDCREC and Race Action Net to produce "gateway" to services via the internet.	November 2003	LB, GC, CDo, RR	£2,000 for translations	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1	LB
8	Introduce an ethnic classification system under which applicants for housing or housing services are asked to state their ethnic origin.	1. Implement relevant systems to monitor access, quality and service delivery. 2. Record and report to Committee on relevant statistics.	October 2003 6 Monthly	BA	-	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1	BA
9	To ensure that all appropriate documents are available on request in alternative formats.	1. Promote availability of documents in other formats and languages. 2. Ensure resources are available to arrange translations when required.	July 2003 Ongoing	LB, KH	£2,500	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1, 2 and 5.	LB

	Objective	Action	Target	Resource	Cost	Corporate Links	Lead Officer
10	Ensure effective co-ordinated consultation with hard to reach groups.	1. Establish links with minority communities (see objective 4 above). 2. Ensure the Diversities and Equalities are included in the Council's Public consultation Strategy and Community Involvement Strategy.	November 2003	LB, KH, CDo, EB, JD	£100	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1 and 2.	LB
11	To have due regard to our duty to promote race equality.	Assess functions and policies within Department for relevance to the general duty imposed under the 2000 Act.	November 2003	MSU/ MSU Students	-	Race Equality Scheme, Corporate Objective 1, 2 and 5.	LB
12	Consultation with local communities to explain why monitoring is being introduced and to obtain views on issues such as the ethnic classification system.	1. Publicise in Wear Valley Matters and website with reply slip for comments/ consultation. 2. Consult with other district Councils in County Durham over common classification system for monitoring purposes.	November 2003	LB, CDo, CL, DG, GC.	-	As Objective 3	LB
13	Produce neighbourhood service directories and implement neighbourhood management model.	Consult with all customers and local service providers at a neighbourhood level	December 2004	MK ,LB, JD, RR, DM, CDo, KH, NM	£500	Corporate Objective 1, 2, 3 & 4	MK

**Appendix Two – Dale & Valley Homes Equalities Statement**

## Dale &amp; Valley Homes Equalities and Diversity Action Plan

We will: -

Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Strategic Links
<b>Governance</b>			
1. Review the profile of our Board of Management and take positive action to encourage applications from groups who are under represented when any vacancies arise.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Sept 06	
2. Ensure that the Board of Management receives training on their responsibilities with regard to Equalities and Diversity.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Sept 06	KLOE 31 Level 2
3. Produce and adopt an Equalities and Diversity Policy.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Sept 06	KLOE 31 Level 1
<b>Employment</b>			
4. Review all of our employment practices to ensure that they are compliant with all of the relevant equalities legislation, including through the undertaking of an Equal Pay Review.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Oct 06	Level 2
5. Review the profile of our workforce and contractors and take positive action to encourage applications from groups that are under represented when any vacancies arise.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Oct 06	KLOE 31 Level 2
6. Ensure that all employees receive training on their responsibilities with regard to Equalities and Diversity.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Dec 06	Level 2
7. Undertake consultation with our employees to test the effectiveness of this strategy within our employment practices.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Oct 06	Level 2
<b>Procurement of Services</b>			
8. Review our arrangements for the procurement of external services to ensure that they incorporate appropriate consideration of Equality and Diversity issues.	Head of Business Support	Nov 06	KLOE 31 Level 2
9. Ensure that all contractors and consultants, and their operatives, are aware of, and observe, the principles contained within this strategy.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Nov 06	KLOE 31 Level 2
10. Ensure that all contractors receive training on their responsibilities with regard to Equality and Diversity.	Access & Customer Care Manager	Jan 07	Level 2
<b>Provision of Services</b>			
11. Maintain and update our customer profile to record information about the age, ethnic origin, physical disabilities, information requirements	Principal Neighbourhood Operations	Sept 06	KLOE 31



and preferred method of involvement of all of our customers.	Manager		
12. Ensure that we use the customer profile in order to monitor customer need.	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	Ongoing	KLOE 31
13. Ensure that we use the customer profile in order to inform the delivery of our services to meet the needs of individual customers, ensuring that all of our employees and contractors have access to the information recorded within the profile.	Principal Neighbourhood Operations Manager	Ongoing	KLOE 31
14. Review all of our communication with customers to ensure that we promote our work with regard to Equality and Diversity including through, 'Housing Matters', press releases, our website and other information.	Community Involvement Manager	Ongoing	KLOE 31
15. Ensure that we continue to engage in partnership working with appropriate agencies in order that we can meet the needs of individual customer groups.	Community Involvement Manager	Ongoing	KLOE 31
<b>Customer Involvement</b>			
16. Take positive action to ensure that all sections of our community are represented within our Customer Involvement Framework.	Community Involvement Manager	Mar 07	KLOE 31
17. Undertake training with customer representatives to ensure that they are aware of the provisions of this strategy.	Community Involvement Manager	Mar 07	KLOE 31 Level 2
<b>General</b>			
18. Undertake detailed impact and needs assessments with regard to all of our service areas.	Access & Customer Care Manager	April 07	Level 2
19. Review and update our Race Equality Action Plan.	Access & Customer Care Manager	April 07	KLOE 31 CRE Code
20. Develop appropriate targets with respect to all Equality and Diversity work and review current ethnic monitoring system	Access & Customer Care Manager	Sept 06	KLOE 31 Level 2 CRE Code

### Key: Strategic Links

- KLOE 31 - Housing Inspectorate, key Line of Enquiry 31, Diversity
- Level 1 - Level 1, Equality Standard for Local Government
- Level 2 - Level 2, Equality Standard for Local Government
- CRE - CRE Code of Practice in Rented Housing



## HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE

5 JULY 2006

Report of the Director for the Community

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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

To ask Committee to adopt the recommendations for meeting the requirements of the Asbestos Management Plan and associated regulations at Annex 3.

#### **background**

- 1 The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations requires the Management of Asbestos within the Council's public buildings and Dale and Valley Homes managed properties.
- 2 In order to comply with the regulations Wear Valley District Council needs to put into place effective arrangements for surveying and where necessary removing asbestos from public buildings and from the housing stock.
- 3 The cost per annum of surveying Dale and Valley Homes managed properties for the presence of asbestos during capital works is £80,000. This does not include the cost required for surveying properties prior to maintenance work, as this is not currently occurring.
- 4 All of Dale and Valley Homes managed properties require asbestos surveys. At the present time 45% of these properties have been surveyed. Following this blanket survey, on-going surveys of properties and public buildings are required prior to work occurring and as part of the monitoring of the condition of asbestos containing materials.
- 5 MIS Ltd Environmental is the company currently undertaking the asbestos surveys. On examination of these surveys it has been identified that they are largely generic and are poor quality. In addition to this there have been issues with surveyors who have not identified the presence of asbestos containing materials during surveys resulting in disturbance of asbestos or additional costs during demolition. MIS were the only company who tendered for the asbestos work.

#### **legal implications**

- 6 Wear Valley District Council has adopted an Asbestos Policy and Asbestos Management Plan to meet its legal requirements under the Health and Safety at

Work etc. Act 1974, the Asbestos at Work Regulations and Guidance produced by the Health and Safety Executive. This Management Plan includes a requirement for the surveying of asbestos containing materials.

- 7 Wear Valley District Council is not meeting its legal requirements as maintenance work is occurring on Dale and Valley Homes managed properties which have not had an asbestos survey. This may result in the disturbance of asbestos and the contamination of the tradesperson and the property where work is occurring.

**proposals**

- 8 It is therefore proposed that the Council employ an in-house asbestos surveyor.

**financial implications**

- 9 The following chart identifies relevant costs.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Surveyors wages (including on-costs)	£32,500
Training costs for relevant training course	£1,400
Surveying kits (unit cost for one sampling kit)	£19.09
Tools (single unit cost)	£84.85
Approximate cost of surveying the remaining housing stock (55%) using an in-house asbestos surveyor (including wages and materials). This does not include the ongoing costs of surveys/sampling.	£78,000
Cost of using a contractor to complete the surveys of the remaining housing stock (55%) based on current costs of £80 per survey. This does not include the requirements for on-going surveys/monitoring.	£184,000

- 10 It is not possible to identify the cost of removing asbestos from public buildings or the housing stock as this will occur on an individual basis where high risk items are identified by the surveyor.
- 11 Accidental disturbance of asbestos will result in costs incurred for clearance and decontamination of the property and potential claims from employees and tenants. These costs cannot be estimated.
- 12 The cost of employing an in-house asbestos surveyor will be contained within existing budgets.

**human resources implications**

- 13 Recruitment is required from either in-house personnel or from an external appointment.
- 14 Training will be required if an in-house appointment is made.

- 15 Individuals should be identified to act as cover for the in-house surveyor during any absence from work. Training will be required for these individuals. Examples of such persons include the void squads who are the individuals most likely to accidentally damage asbestos containing materials during their work.

### **conclusions**

- 16 The appointment of an in-house surveyor will ensure that Wear Valley District Council can complete asbestos surveys of Dale and Valley Homes managed properties in accordance with regulations and the Asbestos Management Plan. Quality control issues present in the current surveys should be addressed through effective in-house management and surveys will be customised to meet the needs of the Council and Dale and Valley Homes. The cost for the surveying of the housing stock can be charged to Dale and Valley Homes, and therefore the cost of employing a surveyor will be managed within existing budgets.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 Wear Valley District Council employs an in-house asbestos surveyor.

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**Officer responsible for the report**  
Michael Laing  
Director for the Community  
Ext 281

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**Author of the report**  
Tony Bough  
Health and Safety Officer  
Ext 416

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# **Asbestos**

# Management Plan



WEAR  
VALLEY  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# **Asbestos Management Plan**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Asbestos is the generic term applied to a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals that have remarkable insulating and heat resistant properties. Due to this they have been used extensively in a range of building materials either in the pure form for pipe and cylinder lagging or incorporated into additional products (bonded) such as cement and used as decorative panels etc.

## **1.1 Types of Asbestos**

Asbestos is the generic name for a group of fibrous silica minerals, which have excellent fire and chemical resistance, high tensile strength and melting point temperatures, whilst at the same time being poor conductors of heat and electricity. It is these properties which have led the material to be widely used throughout the world in all types of products. Building products, oven gloves, ironing board covers, and brake pads are some of the commonly known uses, but in the past it has been used in toothpaste, mailbags, modelling clay and as artificial snow. The three most commonly used types of asbestos are, white (chrysotile), brown (amosite) and blue (crocidolite). The colours mentioned are not to be used for identification. Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) cannot be identified by visual examination, only laboratory analysis can indicate if a product is an ACM.

## **1.2 Health Risks**

There are various illnesses caused through work with asbestos, examples include.

**Asbestosis**            A serious, progressive disease associated with the long term exposure to asbestos that causes damage (scarring) to lung tissue. The symptoms of the diseases (such as shortness of breath) can be managed under medical direction.

**Lung cancer**            Asbestos is one of the leading causes of all types of lung cancer among non-smokers. Smokers have a dramatically higher chance of suffering from the disease.

**Mesothelioma** A progressive cancer of the tissue lining the chest or abdomen for which asbestos is one of the only known causes. It can take up to 40 years from initial exposure to contract Mesothelioma.

### **1.3 Legislation**

Work with asbestos is governed by the, Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002, the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 and the Asbestos Prohibitions Regulations 1992, all of which will be replaced and repealed on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 by the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2006.

These procedures detail the arrangements which have been drawn up for the management of asbestos containing materials in buildings, under Wear Valley District Council's control, and any buildings upon which the authority completes maintenance or building works.



## **2.0 Asbestos Management Plan – General overview**

Type 2 surveys to identify Asbestos Containing Materials have been completed for all Wear Valley District Council buildings and the resulting reports have been used to form the basis of the management plan.

### *Notes:*

*All items of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) which were identified during the surveys have been subject to a risk assessment, any items of Asbestos Containing Materials prioritised as being unsafe and needing immediate action have been removed or made safe using some other control measure. Therefore, all identified Asbestos Containing Materials, which have been surveyed, are now regarded as being in good condition, which does not pose any significant risk for persons using the area.*

*It is possible that some Asbestos Containing Materials may not have been detected by the type 2 surveys and therefore maintenance workers and Contractors must remain vigilant to the risk of this during any minor works. Where significant building works are to occur a type 3 survey must be completed prior to the work commencing.*

It is intended that all identified Asbestos Containing Materials will be left in place and managed by monitoring their condition. Regular monitoring for disturbance or degradation of Asbestos Containing Materials will be undertaken by the Acting Duty Holder. The frequency of these checks will be determined by the risk assessment having considered the condition of the Asbestos Containing Material, its position in the building and its potential for future damage or deterioration. Where significant disturbance or degradation is noted, appropriate management action will be taken to make the Asbestos Containing Material and the surrounding area safe for the people using it, through either removal or encapsulation.

The Management Plan also requires special permission to be sought from the Acting Duty Holder prior to the commencement of any work, which may possibly disturb Asbestos Containing Materials. This requirement shall ensure that adequate consideration of the dangers posed by Asbestos Containing Materials is given when determining the requirements of the work and devising a safe plan of work to protect

those working in the area and avoid unplanned asbestos fibre release. Information from asbestos surveys shall be used for this purpose, although further analysis may be needed. In the case of major works and demolitions a more intrusive survey (type 3) will be undertaken in order to determine the requirements of the work to be done, prior to work commencing.

Where Maintenance work is to occur the asbestos register should be consulted to ascertain if known or suspected asbestos is present in the area where the work is to occur. The tradesperson should be informed of the presence of the ACM, and if it may be affected by the planned works the maintenance must not occur (or stop where it is discovered during the work) until the asbestos is removed or made safe.

Where the asbestos requires removal the person arranging the work should secure a licensed asbestos contractor to complete the work and a permit to work should be requested from the Acting Duty Holder.

### **3.0 Management Action**

Asbestos Containing Materials do not pose a risk to health when in good condition. It is only when damage or deterioration occurs that asbestos fibres will be released into the atmosphere, creating risks to those occupying the affected area. Where significant disturbance or deterioration of Asbestos Containing Materials is reported or otherwise becomes apparent immediate action will be taken to minimise the risks this poses to those working in and using the building in question.

There are a number of circumstances whereby disturbance or deterioration may become apparent, and the procedure for deciding appropriate management action will be determined by these circumstances.

In all circumstances the first priority will be to reduce the immediate risks posed by Asbestos Containing Materials. Therefore, where any significant disturbance or damage of Asbestos Containing Materials has been noticed the area will be cleared and secured to prevent personnel entering the contaminated area and the Acting Duty Holder shall be consulted for advice. Once this initial action has been taken to reduce immediate dangers management decisions will be made.

When disturbance or deterioration of Asbestos Containing Materials results from an emergency situation (e.g. fire), advice concerning suitable management actions will be given by the Acting Duty Holder, who should be contacted immediately.

#### **4.0 Asbestos Surveys**

In order to comply with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations, all, buildings under the authority's control will be subject to a type 2 asbestos survey. Domestic dwellings shall be subject to a asbestos surveys on a rolling programme, carried out by a UKAS accredited analyst to identify any Asbestos Containing Materials present. The programme will run forward of all major Improvement schemes to determine any asbestos issues before any work starts. One-off asbestos surveys will be undertaken where possible asbestos products may be disturbed through repairs and maintenance work.










The survey will be a standard sampling, identification and assessment survey. This will involve analysis of samples taken from each type of material suspected to contain asbestos, to determine if there is asbestos content, or the assumption that asbestos is present.

*Note: Details of the three types of asbestos surveys can be found in 'Surveying, Sampling and Assessment of Asbestos-Containing Materials,' HSE Book MDHS100*

#### **5.0 The Acting Duty Holder**

Wear Valley District Council will appoint a competent person to act as its Acting Duty Holder. For the purpose of this Management Plan competence is defined as an individual with sufficient experience in the management of asbestos and an appropriate qualification in relation to asbestos.

The Acting Duty Holder's role is to lead on Asbestos Management on behalf of the Chief Executive in the interests of Wear Valley District Council. The Acting Duty Holder will head the Asbestos Management structure and implement and review the effectiveness of this procedure. The Acting Duty Holder will report all of his actions directly to the Chief Executive. Specifically the Acting Duty Holder shall;

-  Hold copies of all asbestos surveys.
-  Compile a corporate asbestos register for the authorities public buildings.
-  Complete asbestos risk assessments for all public buildings.
-  Monitor the condition of known Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's).
-  Make information regarding the location and condition of any asbestos or any such substance available to;
  - Every person liable to disturb it, and
  - To the emergency services.
-  Assess and approve all Tender documents and issue Asbestos Permits to Work, as required.
-  Ensure that staff are informed and trained on issues around the management of asbestos.
-  Provide advice and guidance to staff as required in relation to all remedial/removal works etc.
-  Report on the operation of the asbestos management plan to the Chief Executive and the Health and Safety Panel.

## **6.0 Risk assessment**

Following a type 1 or 2 survey a risk assessment shall be completed for all buildings under the control of Wear Valley District Council. The risk assessment will be completed using the assessment matrix and scoring system shown in Section 16 of this document. Where the assessment shows that asbestos is or is liable to be present in any part of the premises the authority shall ensure that;

- (a) A determination of the risk from that asbestos is made.
- (b) A written plan identifying those parts of the premises concerned is prepared for each site.
- (c) The measures which are to be taken for managing the risk are specified in the written plan.
- (d) The Acting Duty Holder shall keep copies of each plan and ensure that relevant members of staff at each site are aware of them.

### **6.1 The Written plan**

The Written plan will ensure that;

- a) Monitoring of the condition of any asbestos or any substance containing or suspected of containing asbestos occurs.
- b) Any asbestos or any such substance is properly maintained, encapsulated or where necessary safely removed; and
- c) Ensure that information about the location and condition of any asbestos or any such substance is
  - i. Provided to every person liable to disturb it, and
  - ii. Made available to the emergency services.
- d) The person arranging the work shall ensure that a type 3 survey occurs prior to any alteration/building work or demolition work.
- e) The Acting Duty Holder shall ensure that this plan is revised at regular intervals and;
  - i. Ensure that the measures specified in the written plan are implemented by Managers.
  - ii. Ensure that the measures taken to implement the plan are recorded.
  - iii. Review the written plan where there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid.
  - iv. Review the plan where there has been significant changes to the premises which may indicate that the plan is no longer valid.
  - v. Review the plan at least annually.

## **7.0 Monitoring of the condition of Asbestos Containing Materials**

All asbestos surveys are to be held centrally by the Acting Duty holder and by each individual department. All ACM's are to be labelled with appropriate signage and an Asbestos Monitoring Checklist is to be completed (page 17). All staff who could come into contact with ACM's will be provided with appropriate training (please refer to section 10, page 15). The Asbestos Monitoring Checklist will detail the frequency of monitoring checks to be completed on an individually assessed basis.

## **8.0 General Duty to Avoid Unplanned Disturbance of Asbestos**

**9.0** It is the duty of any person (whether an employee, contractor, architect, designer, consultant or any other person) who arranges for any work to be carried out on the fabric or services of buildings to which these procedures apply to determine whether the work will or will not possibly disturb Asbestos Containing Materials. This can be determined through consulting the asbestos survey. Where extensive building or demolition works is to occur the completion of

an asbestos survey (type 2 or 3 depending on circumstances) carried out by a UKAS accredited analyst will be required.

In relation to public buildings (excluding Leisure centres), the Facilities Manager is responsible for arranging any works and it will be his responsibility to check the asbestos surveys or the asbestos checklist prior to completing/arranging works to ensure that work will not disturb asbestos containing materials (whether the work is to be completed by contractors or in-house staff). Where work will disturb ACM's a specialist contractor will be used.

Within Leisure centres the Head of Community and Cultural services will instruct the Managers within the centres and the Manager of the plant that they must consult the asbestos survey and/or the asbestos checklist prior to completing work. These members of staff are also responsible for informing contractors coming onto site that they must not work on any product containing asbestos and identifying to them the location of asbestos containing materials. Only licensed asbestos contractors are permitted to undertake work where asbestos will be disturbed, e.g. removing gaskets, work on insulation, etc. Where any contractors are used the asbestos survey/checklist must be consulted by the person arranging the work prior to engaging them to ascertain if a specialist contractor is required.

In relation to Dale and Valley Homes managed properties (houses, flats etc.) the job ticket for all works involving tradesmen indicates that the asbestos register should be consulted and that where suspect materials are present that they should not be worked on without confirmation that the product does not contain asbestos. Where the survey does not mention the area to be worked on (e.g. some surveys may say 'no access' for certain rooms), or if a survey has not been completed for the property, a sample of the product to be worked on will occur prior to the job commencing. Where the product is found to contain asbestos a licensed asbestos contractor will complete the work(s). Where no asbestos is found the trades person can complete the work(s) as usual.

For all capital 'investment' works (e.g. replacement of kitchens, bathrooms etc.) an asbestos survey will be completed prior to the works commencing and where asbestos may be disturbed a specialist contractor will either remove the asbestos or encapsulate it to ensure that the contractor completing the investment work does not damage or disturb the ACM. This will be arranged directly by the clerk of works.

This approach has been agreed by Dale and Valley Homes.

## **9.0 Arranging work on or involving Asbestos Containing Materials**

The person arranging for work must keep a record of the location, type and condition of any asbestos located on Council premises. **These records are to be kept by departments and forwarded to the Acting Duty Holder.**

*Notes:*

*In general, asbestos work is **licensable** when it involves disturbance of asbestos thermal insulation, coatings or asbestos insulation board.*

***Non-licensable** asbestos work includes removal or repair of asbestos cement products, for example flat and corrugated sheets or guttering and other rainwater goods. Although non-licensable, the work should be given to licensed asbestos removal contractors to carry out such work, in normal circumstances.*

Tender documents must include information identifying the presence of asbestos and this must be brought to the attention of the Contractor. Where disturbance of Asbestos Containing Materials is known to be necessary or is possible, the person arranging the work will ensure that a licensed asbestos contractor is secured to carry out the work. Before any work commences the person arranging the work must provide copies of all documentation to the Acting Duty Holder, who must approve the method statements and associated documentation provided by the licensed asbestos contractor, and on approval issue a Permit to Work.

Where the work is licensable a copy of the ASB5 form should be sent to the Acting Duty Holder by the Licensed Asbestos Contractor.

## **9.1 Clearance Notes and Other Documents**

On completion of the asbestos work undertaken under an Asbestos Permit to Work. The original copy of the Asbestos Permit to Work and all other relevant documentation, for example any existing asbestos clearance notes, special waste consignment notes, smoke test reports, air sampling test reports, re-occupation certificate etc. must be passed to the Acting Duty Holder who will keep the records.

## **9.2 Contents of the submitted plan of work**

The plan of work/method statements provide by the licensed asbestos contractor must include the following information as a minimum;

- a) The nature and probable duration of the work.
- b) The number of persons involved in the work.
- c) The address and location where the work is to be carried out.
- d) The methods to be used to prevent or reduce exposure to asbestos, for example, the prevention and control measures, the arrangements for keeping premises and plant clean and the arrangements for the handling and disposing of asbestos waste.
- e) The type of equipment, including PPE, used for:
  - i) The protection and decontamination of those carrying out the work.
  - ii) The protection of other people present at or near the worksite.
- f) Details of the hygiene facilities, transit route and decontamination arrangements, vacuum cleaners, air monitoring, protective clothing and RPE, communication between the inside and outside of the enclosure (where relevant).
- g) Details of the use of barriers and signs, location of enclosures and airlocks, location of skips, negative pressure units, air monitoring, cleaning and clearance certification, emergency procedures (where relevant).
- h) Confirmation that all equipment complies with PAS 60 "Equipment used in the controlled removal of asbestos containing materials"

It will also be necessary for the plan to include the site layout and a description of the location and nature of the asbestos present and which ACMs will be disturbed by the work. Please refer to Section 15 of this document for further information on how Method Statements will be vetted by the Acting Duty holder.

The person arranging for work must ensure that all Contractors can comply with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations, as a minimum.

The person arranging the work must ensure safe working practices are implemented where employees may potentially be exposed to asbestos fibres identified as being present in Council premises. The Acting Duty Holder can advise in such instances.



The person arranging the work must maintain health records and medical surveillance of all employees who will be exposed to asbestos fibres above the action level. **These records are to be kept by departments and labelled as private and confidential. Copies should also be provided to the Acting Duty Holder.**

It is the authority's policy to engage specialist contractors for the removal of asbestos from its buildings.

### **9.3 Asbestos Permits to Work**

Only Licensed Asbestos Contractors shown as approved on Wear Valley District Councils contractor's database shall be engaged to carry out licensed asbestos work. These contractors therefore are the only ones eligible for a Permit to Work. The Acting Duty holder will approve all tender documents in relation to work with asbestos containing materials and will issue a permit to work for such activities. No work may commence unless a permit to work has been issued by the Acting Duty Holder.

Where an analyst is required a UKAS accredited analyst will be appointed by the contractor appointed to carry out asbestos work. A copy of the clearance/re-occupation certificates and consignment notes must be provided by the licensed asbestos contractor prior to the Permit to Work being signed off.

The analysts employed by the licensed asbestos contractor must hold the following:  
The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for asbestos sampling, site testing and analysis.

The analyst shall after reported completion of the work carry out the following checks:

- Pre-start inspection (including (he site condition and job completeness)
- Visual inspections
- Clearance and air monitoring and all other required work as required to ensure that the building is fit to be re-occupied and to ensure that exposure levels are below that which is stated in Regulations.
- Final inspection (including any other relevant tests/checks).

All of the analysts working practices should be in accordance with Regulations, Approved Codes of Practice (ACoPs) and guidance notes as a minimum.

*Note:*

*An analyst is required in order to ensure that the contractor's work has been carried out fully and completely and that the area is fit to be re-occupied.*

#### **9.4 Asbestos Projects Subject to Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994**

The Planning Supervisor of the applicable project shall ensure that any information relating to Asbestos Containing Materials supplied by the client and designers is included in the Pre-construction (also known as Pre-tender) Health and Safety Plan, and also passed onto any contractor/sub-contractor.

#### **10.0 Information, instruction and training**

Wear Valley District council shall ensure that adequate information, instruction and training is given to employees;

(a) Who are or who are liable to be exposed to asbestos, or who supervise such employees, so that they are aware of;

- (i) The properties of asbestos and its effects on health, including its interaction with smoking.
- (ii) The types of products or materials likely to contain asbestos.
- (iii) The operations which could result in asbestos exposure and the importance of preventive controls to minimise exposure.
- (iv) Safe work practices, control measures, and protective equipment.
- (v) The appropriate purpose, choice, selection, limitations and proper use of respiratory protective equipment.
- (vi) Emergency procedures (where relevant).
- (vii) Hygiene requirements (where relevant).
- (viii) Decontamination procedures (where relevant),
- (ix) Waste handling procedures (where relevant),
- (x) Medical examination requirements (where relevant), and

- (xi) The control limit and the need for air monitoring, in order to safeguard themselves and other employees (where relevant); and
- (xii) An introduction to the relevant regulations, Approved Codes of Practice, and Guidance that apply to asbestos work, and any disposal requirements (where relevant).
- (xiii) Other work hazards including; work at height, electrical, slips, trips and falls, manual handling etc (where relevant).

(b) Who carry out work in connection with the authorities duties under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations, so that they can carry out that work effectively.

The information, instruction and training required by the Regulations shall be;

- (a) Given at regular intervals.
- (b) Adapted to take account of significant changes in the type of work carried out or methods of work used by the employer; and
- (c) Provided in a manner appropriate to the nature and degree of exposure identified by the risk assessment, and so that the employees are aware of;
  - (i) The significant findings of the risk assessment, and
  - (ii) The results of any air monitoring carried out with an explanation of the findings.

### **Refresher training**

Refresher training in Asbestos awareness will occur every three years, unless situations or procedures change.

If staff were (in the future) required to complete any work on asbestos they would receive appropriate training prior to the work commencing (in addition to the formulation of risk assessments, safe systems of work, appropriate insurance etc.). In this instance refresher training would occur at least annually.



## **12.0 Asbestos Permit to Work**

Where asbestos may be disturbed or work involving asbestos is planned the person arranging for the work to be done must request an Asbestos Permit to Work on behalf of the appointed asbestos contractor. The person arranging the work must, in accordance with the contractor complete sections 1 – 5 and then pass this form, along with all method statements to the Acting Duty Holder.

On completion of this form, the person arranging the work should pass it to the Acting Duty Holder along with any information provided by the asbestos contractor .

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Details of Person Arranging the Work</b>		
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Name</b>		
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Position held</b>		
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Address</b>		
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Mobile</b>	
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Email</b>		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Details of Work</b>		
	<b>Name of Licensed Asbestos Contractor</b>		
	<b>Address of work</b>		
	<b>Location on site</b>		
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Description of planned work (with mention of specific hazards and any disturbance, encapsulation or removal works involved)</b>		
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Date for commencement of asbestos work</b>		
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Start time of asbestos work</b>		
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Daily working hours</b>		
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Expected duration of work</b>		
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Name of Planning Supervisor if CDM Regulations apply (please print)</b>		
	<b>Telephone Number</b>		
	<b>Mobile Number</b>		
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Analytic Laboratory Analysts appointed for Monitoring and Clearance contract</b>		
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Results of any asbestos surveys or sampling undertaken in addition to the existing asbestos survey.</b>		
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Work to be carried out in accordance with the contactors plan of work (attached)</b>		

**Items 4, 5 and 8 are to be complied with by the appointed contractor**

<b>4.0</b>	
<b>Precautions to be taken if plant machinery or systems are in operation, e.g. isolation</b>	
<b>Signature of person isolating the equipment</b>	

<b>5.0</b>	
<b>Contractors signature (verifying hazards and control measures)</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Confirming acceptance of the work to be done, the hazards involved and precautions required. Also confirming that the permit information and hazards associated with the task(s) have all been explained to all workers involved.</b>	

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Permits can only be issued by the Acting Duty Holder</b>		
<b>Acting Duty Holder</b>			
<b>Telephone</b>		<b>Mobile</b>	
<b>Signature</b>			
<b>Date</b>			

<b>7.0</b>	<b>Wear Valley employee confirmation that this permit to work form has been completed and work on site can commence.</b>		
<b>Name (please print)</b>			
<b>Signature</b>			
<b>Date</b>			

<b>8.0</b>	<b>Hand back the permit to the Acting Duty Holder to certify that work is completed and that the area/premises is ready for re-occupation (include clearance/re-occupation certificates where relevant).</b>		
<b>Contractors name (please print)</b>			
<b>Signature</b>			
<b>Date</b>			

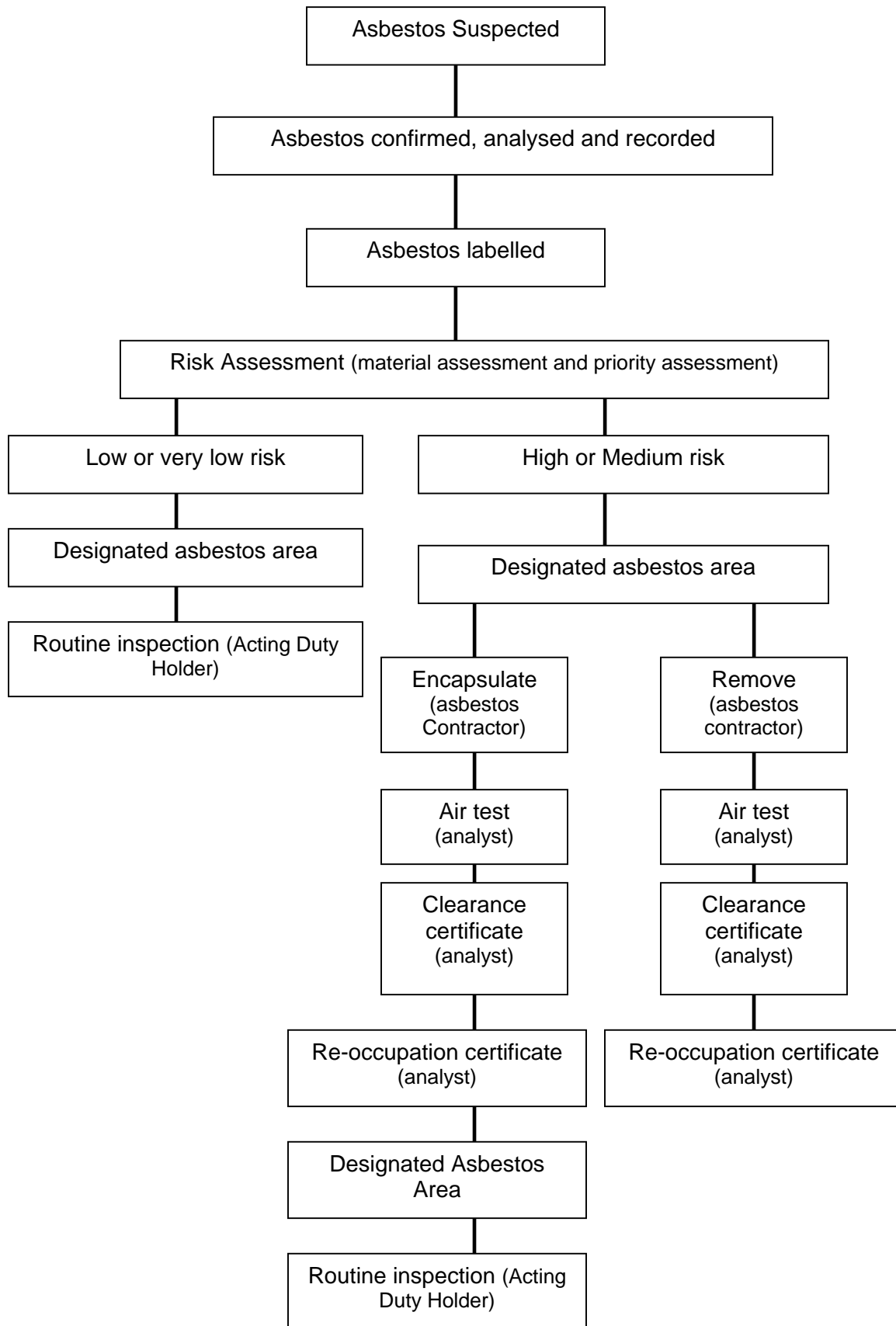
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<b>Acting Duty Holder Sign off</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

### 13.0 Licensed Asbestos Contractors

<b>Company name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tel</b>	<b>service available</b>
Darlington Borough Council	Department of Community Services, Vicarage Road, Darlington, Co Durham, DL1 1JW	01325 347460	Asbestos removal works
B.C. Environmental Services	Unit 22, Mainsforth Terrace, Newburn Bridge Industrial Estate, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25 1TZ	01429 860840	Asbestos removal
ENSECON	Ensecon Laboratories Ltd, Glover Network Centre, Spire Road, Washington NE37 3HB	0191 419 8100	Asbestos surveys/sampling
Chirmarn Limited	Newburn Bridge Road, Blaydon, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne & Wear, NE21 4NT	0191 414 8000	Asbestos surveys/sampling/removal
Asbestos Solutions (North East) Limited	Bank Chambers, 9 Kensington Cockton Hill Road, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 6HX	0800 1973907	

14.0 **Flowchart – Asbestos Removal process**





## Method Statement Assessment - Asbestos works

		Yes	No	Comments
<b>1.0 Scope of work</b>				
1.1	Name of client			
1.2	Name of Supervisor			
1.3	Address of site			
1.4	Number of samples taken			
1.5	Type of asbestos			
1.6	What form is it (e.g. sprayed, lagging, AIB etc).			
1.7	Location of asbestos (e.g. in roof space)			
1.8	Particular difficulties likely to be encountered			
1.9	Quantity to be removed (e.g. number of bags)			
1.10	Number of employees engaged in removal work			
1.11	Start date and finish date (days when work is to take place and times)			
<b>2.0 Hygiene facilities</b>				
2.1	If transit facilities are proposed, give reasons why it is necessary to transit			
2.2	Description of facilities			
2.3	Location shown on site plan			
<b>3.0 Waste Disposal</b>				
3.1	Bagging arrangements			
3.2	Temporary storage for bags			
3.3	Waste routes (i.e. separate bag lock)			
3.4	Skip location			
3.5	Arrangements for transportation and final disposal			
<b>4.0 Enclosure of work</b> (descriptions of the following)				
4.1	Construction of enclosure - attach sketch plan showing location			
4.2	Volume of enclosure			
4.3	Location of airlocks			
4.4	Removal of waste			
4.5	Viewing panel position			
4.6	Warning notices			
<b>NOTE - if no enclosure is planned, the reason to justify that decision must be given.</b>				

<b>5.0 Control Measures</b> (descriptions of the following)				
5.1	Expected asbestos fibre concentrations			
5.2	Specification of negative pressure units (i.e. provides sufficient air movement for size of enclosure)			
5.3	Number of air changes per hour			
5.4	Siting of negative pressure units			
5.5	Method of smoke testing and witnessing			
5.6	Type and specification of respirators to be used			
5.7	Assessment of PPE required for preparatory work (e.g. to construct an enclosure)			
5.8	When material is in bad condition			
5.9	Maintenance arrangements for RPE and other equipment to be used			
5.10	Protective clothing			
5.11	Specification of vacuum cleaners (and indication of where they are to be positioned)			
5.12	Examination and maintenance of control measures			
5.13	Record keeping			
<b>6.0 Method of Work</b>				
6.1	Wet strip technique to be used			
6.2	Additional local exhaust ventilation required (e.g. shadow vac)			
6.3	Glove bags			
6.4	Tools to be used			
6.5	Non-asbestos risks (e.g. access equipment)			
6.6	<i>Precautions to minimise risk of heat stress - where relevant</i>			
<b>7.0 Entry and decontamination procedures</b> (descriptions of the following)				
7.1	Facilities and procedure for entry into enclosure			
7.2	Arrangements for - cleaning and vacuuming before leaving enclosure			
7.3	Removal of contaminated overalls			
7.4	Washing boots and respirators			
7.5	Transit to decontamination			
7.6	Disposal of transit and working overalls			
7.7	The care and use of respirators			

<b>8.0 Air Monitoring</b> (descriptions of the following)				
8.1	When will it be carried out			
8.2	Nature of the monitoring (locations, personal, static and/or reassurance)			
8.3	Monitoring company or organisation			
8.4	Name of analysts laboratory (UKAS accredited for sampling and counting)?			
<b>9.0 Final Clearance</b> (descriptions of the following)				
9.1	Final cleaning arrangements			
9.2	Thorough visual examination			
9.3	Removal of enclosure and disposal			
9.4	Use of PVA or other sealants (only on disposable surfaces)			
<b>10.0 Emergency Procedures</b> (descriptions of the following)				
10.1	Fire precautions			
10.2	First aid arrangements			
10.3	Minor Incident procedures			
10.4	Major incident procedures (including placement of rescue equipment)			
10.5	Instructions to employees and liaison with emergency services			
<b>11.0 Emergency Procedures</b> (descriptions of the following)				
11.1	Test certificates for equipment			
11.2	Medical certificates			
11.3	Method statements			
11.4	Maintenance records			
11.5	Site log (including daily inspection of enclosure)			
<b>12.0 Emergency Procedures</b> (descriptions of the following)				
12.1	Supervision of job			
12.2	Visitors to site			
12.3	Client requirements			
12.4	Liaison with clients/employees			
12.5	Special characteristics of site			
12.6	Permit to work systems or formal systems for isolation of live plant agreed with client (WVDC)			
12.7	Heat stress			

12.8	Welfare (toilets and mess room facilities)			
12.9	Working at Height; prevention of falls (take into account additional risks from the use of PPE)			
12.10	Procedures for alterations/additions to the Method Statement			

**Any Other Comments (and if relevant Improvements required)**

<b>Assessor</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Accepted / Rejected</b>	

## Material Assessment Algorithm

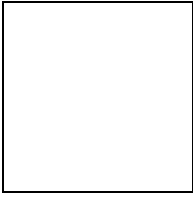
Sample variable	Score	Examples of scores
Product type (or debris from product)	1	Asbestos-reinforced composites (plastics, resins, mastics, roofing felts, vinyl floor tiles, semi-rigid paints or decorative finishes, asbestos cement etc.).
	2	Asbestos insulating board, mill boards, other low density insulation boards, asbestos textiles, gaskets, ropes and woven textiles, asbestos paper and felt
	3	Thermal insulation (e.g. pipe and boiler lagging), sprayed asbestos, loose asbestos, asbestos mattresses and packing).
Extent of damage / deterioration	0	Good condition: no visible damage.
	1	Low damage: a few scratches or surface marks; broken edges on boards, tiles etc.
	2	Medium Damage: significant breakage of materials or several small areas where materials have been damaged revealing loose asbestos fibres.
	3	High Damage or delamination of materials, sprays and thermal insulation. Visible asbestos debris.
Surface treatment	0	Composite materials containing asbestos: reinforced plastics, resins, vinyl tiles.
	1	Enclosed sprays and lagging, AIB (with exposed face painted or encapsulated), asbestos cement sheets etc.
	2	Unsealed AIB, or encapsulated lagging and sprays.
	3	Unsealed lagging and sprays
Asbestos type	1	Chrysotile
	2	Amphibole asbestos excluding crocidolite.
	3	Crocidolite
<b>Total</b>		

Risk assessment algorithm part 1

## Priority Assessment Algorithm

Assessment parameter	Score	Examples of score variables
<b>Normal Occupant activity</b>		
Main type of activity in area	0	Rare disturbance activity (e.g. little used store room).
	1	Low disturbance activities (e.g. office type activity)
	2	Periodic disturbance (e.g. industrial or vehicular activity which may contact ACM's)
	3	High levels of disturbance, (e.g. fire door with AIB sheet in constant use)
<b>Secondary activities for area</b>	<i>As above</i>	<i>As above</i>
<b>Likelihood of disturbance</b>		
Location	0	Outdoors
	1	Large room or well-ventilated areas
	2	Rooms up to 100m <sup>2</sup>
	3	Confined spaces
Accessibility	0	Usually inaccessible or unlikely to be disturbed
	1	Occasionally likely to be disturbed
	2	Easily disturbed
	3	Routinely disturbed
Extent / amount	0	Small amounts or items (e.g. strings, gaskets)
	1	<10m <sup>2</sup> or 10m pipe run
	2	> 10 - <50m <sup>2</sup> or >10 - <50m pipe run
	3	> 50 m <sup>2</sup> or > 50m pipe run
<b>Human exposure potential;</b>		
Number of occupants	0	None
	1	1 - 3
	2	4 - 10
	3	>10
Frequency of use	0	Infrequent
	1	Monthly
	2	Weekly
	3	Daily
Average time each use	0	<1 hour
	1	>1 < 3 hours
	2	> 3 - < 6 hours
	3	> 6 hours
<b>Maintenance activity</b>		
Type of maintenance activity	0	Minor disturbance (e.g. possibility of contact when gaining access)
	1	Low disturbance (e.g. changing light bulbs in AIB ceiling)
	2	Medium disturbance (e.g. lifting one or two AIB ceiling tiles to access a valve).
	3	High levels of disturbance (e.g. removing a number of AIB ceiling tiles to replace a valve or for recabling).
Frequency of Maintenance activity	0	ACM unlikely to be disturbed for maintenance
	1	<1 per year
	2	> 1 per year
	3	> 1 per month

Risk assessment algorithm part 2 – Priority assessment



Risk assessment scoring system for algorithms – Part 3

**Organisational Chart for the management of Asbestos**

Duty Holder (Chief Executive Wear Valley District Council)  
(Managing Director of Dale and Valley homes)

Acting duty Holder (Health and Safety Officer)

Facilities Manager  
Head of Community and Cultural Services

Head of Neighbourhood Operations

Head of Business Support (Housing)

Principal Property Services Manager (Works)

Managers in charge of operational activities in public buildings



## **18.0 Review**

The Management plan will be formally reviewed every 12 months by the Acting Duty Holder, who will report on its performance to the Chief Executive, Managing Director of Dale and Valley Housing and the Health and Safety Panel at this time.

The Management plan will also be reviewed as required (e.g. new licensed asbestos contractors being added to the list etc.) to reflect any changes to the management of asbestos.

Where the Management plan is reviewed and alterations are made, the Acting Duty Holder will inform staff of the alterations/additions by appropriate means.

Persons listed on the Organisational chart (page 29) will assist in the review of the plan, dissemination of information and the sampling of people's asbestos awareness within their departments. Records will be kept detailing the information given out to staff (e.g. name, information given, date, signature etc.).



**HOUSING SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**5 JULY 2006**

Report of the Director for the Community

**LGA GYPSY AND TRAVELLER TASK GROUP REPORT**

**purpose of the report**

To inform Committee of the findings of the LGA Gypsy and Traveller Task Group survey and of their implications for Dale & Valley Homes.

**background**

- 1 The Local Government Association (LGA) established a special Task Group in December 2004 to consider issues in respect of planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites and, subsequently, to look at enforcement issues amid concerns expressed in local government and the national press that enforcement issues were not being dealt with. The Task Group has endeavoured to look at the existing situation in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites and point to a way forward.
- 2 The report by the LGA has been produced based on the collation of information and results from a number of consultation activities between November 2004 and November 2005. These activities included roundtable meetings with local authorities, debate sessions at the LGA annual conference and a survey undertaken by MORI to improve understanding of Gypsy and Traveller site issues.

**main findings**

- 3 23 per cent of respondents of the survey had carried out an 'accommodation needs assessment' of local gypsy and traveller sites, 67 per cent of these were undertaken in partnership with other local authorities in their area. 88 per cent of those authorities who have undertaken an accommodation needs assessment have begun to address the needs of gypsies and travellers through Local Development Plans and Housing Strategies.
- 4 73 per cent of authorities who participated in the MORI survey agreed that the process has added to their understanding of the needs of the gypsy and traveller community with 25 per cent of authorities claiming that a gypsy and traveller community has been established in their area for more than 50 years.
- 5 Of those authorities with a recognised gypsy and traveller community, the most common methods by which local authorities consult and/or engage with them are

site visits to gypsy and traveller encampments. The most commonly used practice, which has been used by those authorities to promote community cohesion with members of their gypsy and traveller communities, are meetings between local authority officers and the gypsy and traveller community (75 per cent).

- 6 In relation to unauthorised encampments, 44 per cent of authorities have had to deal with one to ten unauthorised encampments between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005. 8 per cent of authorities claimed that they spend on average a month or more enforcing against each unauthorised encampment and the most commonly used enforcement action, by all authorities is Part 55 of the Civil Procedure Rules which relates to civil actions against trespassing.

### **understanding accommodation needs**

- 7 The survey undertaken by LGA highlights that a sound understanding of the supply and demand for gypsy and traveller accommodation is urgently needed. Government guidance on accommodation needs assessments goes some way to providing the methodological guidance needed to support local authorities but it does not set a sufficiently tight timetable for these needs to be met.
- 8 It would appear that in some areas, local authorities are working together to provide their own collective approach to assessing and meeting the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers which is encouraging. Partnership working with other key health, education and social service providers also compliments the work being undertaken and is regarded as Good Practice.

### **the role of council leadership**

- 9 Whilst national programmes to address the enforcement of unauthorised encampments play a key role in building capacity across local government, council leadership also has an important role in ensuring that these programmes are implemented and that the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers are met.
- 10 Council's and housing organisations have a role to play in promoting social cohesion between long-term housed communities and gypsy and traveller communities.

### **links and relevance to Dale & Valley Homes**

- 11 Dale & Valley Homes already contributes widely to the promotion of social cohesion and the strengthening of relationships between Dale & Valley Homes and local gypsy and traveller communities. Regular visits to the gypsy and traveller sites within Wear Valley in partnership with Durham County Council, who have overall management responsibility of the sites, and representatives from Sure Start, have contributed to the re-housing of some members of the

gypsy and traveller community and has strengthened Dale & Valley Homes partnership working with County wide agencies.

- 12 The Community Involvement Officer for Dale & Valley Homes is the nominated Wear Valley District Council County Wide Gypsy and Traveller Project representative. Along with six other local authorities and health, education and social service providers, Dale & Valley Homes is contributing to a County wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Project. This project will take place once sufficient funding has been obtained and enables partners at a local level to meet the needs of gypsy and traveller communities, one of Dale & Valley Homes' hard-to-reach groups.

### **national gypsy and traveller support unit**

- 13 As a means of securing commitment from local authorities in respect of consultation with and addressing the needs of local gypsy and traveller communities, the National Gypsy and Traveller Support Unit has been established to provide local authorities with good practice advice to help improve provision, management, enforcement and consultation.
- 14 It is imperative that Dale & Valley Homes implement this good practice guidance in respect of effectively engaging and consulting with the local gypsy and traveller community and as a means of addressing any social housing accommodation needs.

### **financial implications**

- 15 There are no financial implications for Dale & Valley Homes at present although Good Practice guidance which may evolve in the future may pose possible financial implications depending upon its nature.

### **legal implications**

- 16 Implementation of Good Practice guidance offered by the National Gypsy and Traveller Support Unit in respect of consultation has no major legal implications due to the sites within Wear Valley being currently managed by the County Durham Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Unit. However, the guidance does refer to planning issues on new sites and the enforcement of unauthorised sites which may have future implications for the Council.

### **human resource implications**

- 17 Implementation of Good Practice guidance offered by the National Gypsy and Traveller Support Unit may have implications in respect of officer time in relation to researching and implementing good practice and in relation to the continued visits to the local gypsy and traveller sites which are already undertaken on a 6 weekly basis.

## it implications

18 There are no IT implications for Dale & Valley Homes.

## equalities and diversity implications

19 The implementation of Good Practice offered by the National Gypsy and Traveller Support Unit may support and compliment the statutory duties placed on Dale & Valley Homes in relation to engaging with hard-to-reach groups and offering equality of access to services for all (KLOE 30, access and customer care and KLOE 31, diversity).

## RECOMMENDED

- 1 Committee approves the report on the LGA Gypsy and Traveller Task Group Report
- 2 Committee agrees to adopt future Good Practice Guidance produced by the National Gypsy and Traveller Support Unit as a means of improving the housing services Dale & Valley Homes provides.

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**Officer responsible for the report**

Michael Laing  
Director for the Community

Ext 281

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**Author of the report**

Corinne Gardner  
Community Involvement Manager

Ext 303

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# Equalities Statement

**We believe that everyone who approaches us is important and we will treat him/her 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 we can 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 deaf or hearing impaired people, if required;
- liaise with the DDCREC on any racial incident and work together on best practice about '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) 761 946 or (01388) 761 989.**

Civic Centre,  
Crook,  
County Durham,  
DL15 9ES.

Tel: 01388 765 555  
Fax: 01388 766 660

Woodhouse Close,  
Neighbourhood Office,  
64a Proudfoot Drive,  
Bishop Auckland,  
County Durham, DL14 6QT.  
Tel: 01388 765 555  
Fax: 01388 766 660