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your

DALEMail

can do, will do

for the customers of **DALE & VALLEY HOMES**



Issue 21 September 2012

WWW.DALEANDVALLEYHOMES.CO.UK

Welcome to your annual report

Last year we, the editorial panel, told you about the progress we had made in ensuring the annual report was customer friendly because it is our job to oversee all the newsletters and leaflets you receive from Dale & Valley Homes.

Making it more customer-friendly meant a new design with a clearer layout, no jargon and working in partnership with staff on the content and format.

This year, following positive feedback from customers about larger print used in Dale Mail, this report is also in a larger print size. There is no need for the magnifying glasses some people received with last year's edition!

Larger print means we have had to trim down the content to the essentials.

We feel the report still shows how the company is delivering our services, how satisfied customers are with this, where money has been invested in improving your homes and neighbourhoods, and plans to continue improving in the coming year.

We hope you find this year's report as readable, informative and interesting as we have found it.



Kathleen and Terry Hadden have switched

Digital switchover

By the end of September the terrestrial TV signal in the North East will be switched off.

To continue watching your television after then you must switch to a digital service - cable, satellite or Freeview.

Help is available for some older or vulnerable people (see back page).



Use the information below to contact us if you want to know more about anything in this magazine

Find us on



Facebook and Twitter



@DaleValleyHomes

Call us:

0800 0830333 (free from a landline)

or 0300 2000194 (cheaper for mobile phone users)

or 01388 770979

Write to us:

Freepost

RSBR-UREH-HYTX

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How did we do in 2011-12?

This year saw the introduction of new services, improved levels of customer satisfaction, reduced costs, greater input from customers in the development and scrutiny of services. The company was ranked nationally as the 11th-best not-for-profit organisation to work for in the Sunday Times Top 100 companies list.

Here are some more of our achievements this year.

- Two new services introduced - garden maintenance and intensive housing management - to help customers stay in their homes.
- Energy efficiency advisors employed with extra funding to help people keep warm for less money.
- We trained all our staff in customer care.
- Numbers of homes below the decency standard were reduced to only 2.3% of our stock.
- Customer guarantees were introduced to help us deliver the excellent services customers are looking for.
- New homes at Greenside Place and Park Avenue Close (phase 1) were completed on time.
- With the help of Durham County Council's under-occupation scheme we helped six customers move to smaller properties.
- We increased our opening times for customers to contact us by telephone, taking calls from 8am on weekdays.
- The proportion of customers satisfied with their neighbourhood rose by 6% to 87%.
- We reduced costs and made efficiency savings, offering a better service for less.



Listening to customers

Involving customers is very important to Dale & Valley Homes. We believe it is essential that we give customers a say in the services they receive in order to ensure they are continually improved and represent value for money.

Customer satisfaction with the outcomes of their involvement is well ahead of target at 76% . Here is an idea of the people who were involved this year.

- Tenant board members(5)
- Wear Valley Customer Panel (25)
- Scrutiny group (8)
- Residents associations (40+)
- Mystery shopping (27)
- Working groups (20+)
- Neighbourhood inspections (16)
- Focus groups (50)
- Surveys (152)
- Social activities (58).

To join in contact us in one of the ways listed on page 2



Customer satisfaction survey

Last year we published some information on customer satisfaction with things like our overall service and customer involvement.

This information comes from a survey called the STATUS Survey, which is only carried out every two years.

Because we do not have new figures for these things we are not reporting them this year, but we will publish the results of a new survey next year.

If you have received a survey please return it for your chance to win a prize.

Customer comments



The garden service is excellent, the two gentlemen are very pleasant and chatty and I think they are very nice people. ”

Getting better in 2012-13

Working with customers, we have come up with these improvements

which we will be working on in the coming year.

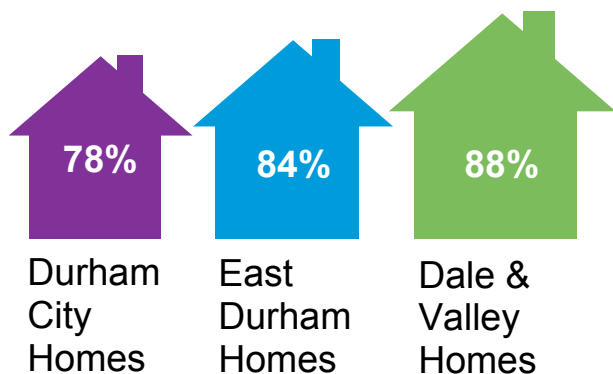
- Ensure customers continue to lead and shape services.
- Assess the impact of the scrutiny group on service delivery and value for money.
- Increase our involvement in improving the economic and social well-being of local communities.
- Improve the popularity and sustainability of our homes and neighbourhoods.
- Actively support Durham County Council in the stock options process to maximise the benefits to customers and ensure that customers exercise their right to participate in any future ballot, having been given appropriate information to make an informed choice.
- Enable staff to have accurate customer insight information when reviewing and developing services.
- To achieve the Customer Service Excellence award.
- To be recognised as an excellent employer.



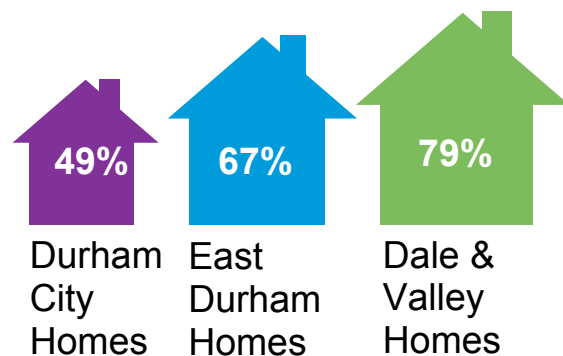
We believe the most important challenge facing us this year will be in responding to the impact of welfare reform legislation and the move to Universal Credit. This is a significant change for many customers and we recognise the need to provide timely, accurate and readily understandable information and advice to customers.

How do we compare with other local providers?

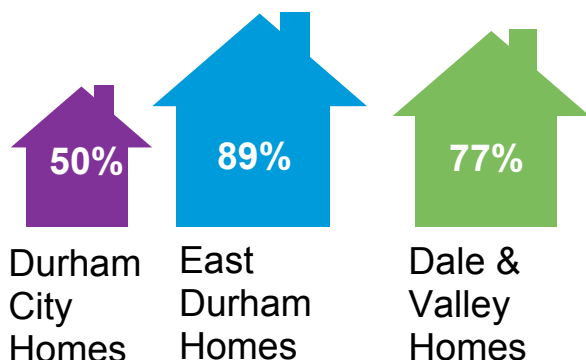
There are two other housing management organisations contracted by Durham County Council to manage landlord services. These are Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes. Below is some information on our relative performance.



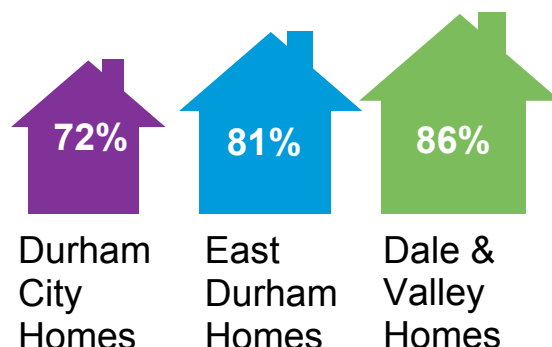
Customer satisfaction with overall services.



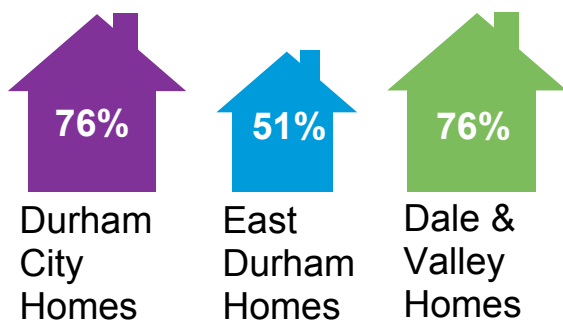
Satisfaction that tenants' views are taken into account.



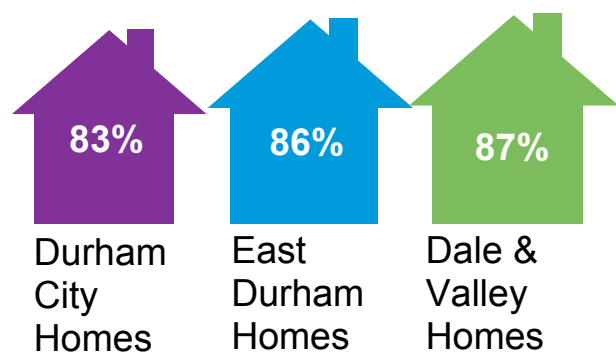
Percentage of customers satisfied that staff could deal with their problem.



Customer satisfaction with the repairs service.



Customers satisfied with the outcome of their anti-social behaviour case.



Customers satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.



Performance

Explanation

These statistics compare how Dale & Valley Homes performed in the year ending April 2012 with targets we have set for ourselves and with how the company performed the previous year.

They also show how the company performed compared with the best Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) in the country, where possible.

A green house shows the indicator is on target or better.



An amber house shows that the indicator is within ten per cent of the target.



A red house shows that we are more than ten per cent adrift of the target.



Average time taken to respond to complaints (working days)

2011-12 14.5

Target 14

2010-11 13.6

Top ALMOs 5.2



% repairs complete right first time

2011-12 86.9

Target 88.5

2010-11 88.1

Top ALMOs 94.7



% total responsive repairs completed in target

2011-12 96.4

Target 98.3

2010-11 97.4

Top ALMOs 98.9



% homes with gas safety certificates

2011-12 100

Target 100

2010-11 99.93

Top ALMOs 100



Tenant satisfaction with repairs - percentages

2011-12 89.3

Target 90.5

2010-11 90

Top ALMOs n/a



% of customers satisfied with outcome of their anti-social behaviour complaint

2011-12 76.3

Target 78

2010-11 78



- how are we doing?



% non-decent homes



2011-12 2.3

Target 2.5

2010-11 6.3

Top ALMOs n/a

% of rent arrears against rent due



2011-12 2.07

Target 2

2010-11 1.22

Top ALMOs 1.29

Customer satisfaction with tenancy management



2011-12 80.9

Target 80

2010-11 78.7

Top ALMOs n/a

Rent collected as % of rent owed



2011-12 99.4

Target 99.5

2010-11 101.1

Top ALMOs 99.9

Former tenants' arrears as percentage of rent due



2011-12 1.7

Target 1.3

2010-11 1.33

Top ALMOs 0.74

Appointments kept as a % of appointments made



2011-12 97.3

Target 98

2010-11 97.8

Top ALMOs 99.3

% of customers satisfied with major improvement works



2011-12 93.3

Target 91.5

2010-11 91.5

Rent lost from empty homes as % of rent due



2011-12 1.1

Target 1.2

2010-11 1.25

Top ALMOs 0.75

Satisfaction with aids and adaptations



2011-12 95

Target 98.5

2010-11 98.5

Top ALMOs n/a



Action on complaints

Do you feel confident that, when you're unhappy with a service you've received and complain, that something will be done about it?

Customer comments

“ Cannot praise Dale & Valley Homes enough. They were so helpful, politer and friendly to me from offering me the house to handing me the keys. The service was next to none. They have got to be the friendliest people in our county. They couldn't help me enough. God bless each and every one of them, sincere thanks. ”

Customer comments

“ - I would like to end on a positive note though. I am really very happy in my new home. I am wanting it to be nice and make me proud to live here. The service from DVH was great and I am pleased to be a tenant of yours. Thank you. ”

Dale & Valley Homes welcomes all feedback from customers, good and bad, as a way of finding out what may be going wrong with services and having the opportunity to put things right as quickly as possible.

We are pleased to report that the number of complaints is actually very low, with only ten formal complaints in 2011-12. They were all successfully resolved at the first stage in our complaints process.

There were also no common themes or surprises in the issues you raised with us. The largest number, three, being about outstanding repairs.

It often took us longer to resolve cases than we would have liked, on average 14 working days, with only 30% of cases concluded within the target time-scales.

Because we value being able to resolve problems quickly and so customers are satisfied with the solution, we asked the scrutiny group to look at how we manage and respond to complaints.

They made some interesting recommendations, which we have been putting into action.

We realised that we should be less concerned with the formal process, for example by rushing to meet deadlines for a response, and instead focus on achieving a positive outcome for the customer, especially in more complex cases.

Following the report we have ensured our staff and some of our contractors have received additional training on customer care and complaints handling. We're pleased to report that satisfaction with the way we handled complaints doubled to 92.3%.



Update on the scrutiny group

The scrutiny group has had a very successful and productive first year, recently being described by an external assessor as being “excellent- a class above the rest”.

Working with the finance and audit committee, managers, tenants and staff; we, the scrutiny group, aim to ensure that Dale & Valley Homes is well managed, provides the services needed or desired by customers and is held to account if it does not do so.

Having undergone extensive training and using our experience as tenants, we felt confident in scrutinising a number of services and making recommendations as to how they might be improved.

This year we have scrutinised the reporting and logging of repairs and the handling of complaints. Our findings are now being implemented by staff.



When looking at repairs we sat next to staff and visited Gentoo’s offices in Crook as part of our review. We recommended publicising an alternative number to the 0300 one (which costs more from mobiles), providing more information to customers when they report repairs and giving staff the flexibility to make appointments taking account of any specific needs of the customers.

For complaints we recommended that Dale & Valley Homes needed to concentrate more on resolving the often complex complaints rather than being concerned about meeting rigid time-scales. We also suggested additional customer care training for staff with reference to complaints.

Following receipt of our report satisfaction with the way complaints were managed increased significantly.

Lesley Mellis



Betty Todd

David Boal



Ben Hobbs

Chris Smith



Sarah Glendinning

Scrutiny in the coming year

What have we planned for the coming year? We’ve just finished a review of empty homes which has been very interesting and worthwhile. Following this we intend to look at:

- value for money
- anti-social behaviour
- decent homes
- neighbourhood inspections
- communication.



Value for money

Dale & Valley Homes currently defines value for money as doing the same for less, more for the same or, at best, doing more in terms of delivering better outcomes for customers for less money.

Put simply, we aim to improve outcomes and reduce costs wherever and whenever possible.

2011-12 saw a £400,000 reduction in our management fee from Durham County Council. The money was instead used to finance improvements to homes under the Decent Homes programme.

The reduction may have raised some concerns with customers that services might suffer. The reverse has in fact been the case, with levels of service being broadly maintained or improved in some key areas.

More importantly, satisfaction with the overall service provided by Dale & Valley Homes increased to by 10% to 88%.

Financial facts about repairs and maintenance

Would you be surprised to learn that we spent £2,040,700 on responsive repairs to customer's homes over the year? We also spent a further £478,796 on servicing the gas appliances and more than £4,000 carrying out urgent works to trees.

There was additional expenditure on other things such as servicing solid fuel appliances and stair lifts that meant we spent £2,684,987 over the year maintaining the 4,260 homes we manage.

The Decent Homes programme and other capital works to homes are funded directly by Durham County Council.

In 2011-12 they provided £6,827,000, less than last year's £8.9 million, because the programme is coming to an end.

Decent Homes work achieved the highest levels of customer satisfaction so far at 93.3%.



Achievements for the year:

- 570 homes had decent homes works completed
- 100% of homes had a current gas safety certificate
- highest ever level of customer satisfaction.



Customer comments

Just to say the service I received from beginning to end was excellent. I really appreciate it. Any problems had was seen to immediately. The staff's treatment to me was simply excellent. Thank you.💕

Customer involvement and empowerment

There is a growing number of local resident and tenant organisations working in partnership with Dale & Valley Homes to improve their neighbourhoods.

We also have the Wear Valley Customer Panel, which is made up of customer representatives from across the Wear Valley area.

Its purpose is to gain and share knowledge around social housing issues to all residents.

The Customer Panel said..

This year we've been working hard with Durham County Council on their stock options appraisal, ensuring the interests of *Members of the Customer Panel visit The Store in Stanley*

We have also been trying to spread the word and raise awareness of the impact the Government's welfare reforms are likely to have on many tenants' weekly budgets.

Members have increased their knowledge by attending a range of events and training courses on subjects such as Universal Credit, the Customer Excellence Award, neighbourhoods strategy and financial management strategy.

We responded on behalf of customers to consultation on subjects including anti-social behaviour, tenants' right to control and right to transfer, and social housing regulations.

For the first time we recognised a member's commitment with a Customer Panel Attendance Award.

For the coming year we are organising a team building day to draw up a new action plan.



Customer Panel achievements

Stock Options

Three officers have attended meetings about the future of social housing in County Durham.

Action plan 2011-12

We have continued support local residents associations, organised our first garden competition and recruitment drives. Preparations have been made towards website and Facebook pages for the Customer Panel.

Impact

Members of our panel have inspected empty homes and have been involved in groups looking at repairs services.

Events and activities

A joint welfare reform event was held in partnership with County Durham Residents Association, visits to new build properties at Greenside Place and Park Avenue Close, attendance at 2D Community Fair.



Your benefits will be capped

From April 2013, the overall amount of benefit you can receive will be capped.

The Government will add up how much money you get from a range of benefits, including: housing benefit, jobseeker's allowance, employment support allowance and child benefit.

The maximum amount of benefit you will receive from April 2013 will be:

- £500 per week for single parents
- £500 per week for couples with or without children
- £350 per week for single people without children.

This will not apply if:

- you receive Pension Credit or Working Tax Credit
- a member of your household is claiming Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or the support element of Employment Support Allowance.

Welfare

how will it

From 1st April 2013 there will be changes in the way Housing Benefit is calculated for claimants below pension credit age (61 years at present) living in a home rented from the council or from a housing association.

This means there will be restrictions on the size of home Housing Benefit will pay for, based on who lives in the property.

If someone is below pension credit age and is assessed as having more bedrooms in their home than is necessary, according to the new rules, they will be considered to be under-occupying that property and Housing Benefit will no-longer cover the full rent.



Kevin and Sally have two children, Lucy who is 8 and Jack who is 6.

Current rules. Their home has three bedrooms and they receive £75 Housing Benefit a week to cover the full rent.

New rules. They would only be entitled to Housing Benefit for a two bed-roomed property, one bedroom for themselves and one for Lucy and Jack, who would be expected to share a room as they are both under 10 years. The family will have a 14% reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit paid, meaning £10.50 per week less. Housing Benefit will only pay £64.50 and will have to pay the remaining £10.50 themselves.



Stuart and Isabel have two children, Jenny who is 9 and Alice who is 6.

New rules Stuart and Isabel would be entitled to Housing Benefit for a three bedroomed property; one bedroom for themselves, one for Jenny, and one for Alice.

Harry and Ann have a two bedroomed property. Harry is employed and Ann is 65. Harry receives £143 per week.

New rules. A 14% reduction will be applied because they will be under-occupying. A non-dependant child also applied because Alice is 16. Total deduction is £36.65. £143 - £36.65 = £106.35 weekly rent of Harry and Ann. Remaining £36.65.

e reform

t affect you



What will Housing Benefit cover?

The new rules will allow one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried)
- any other adult aged 16 years or over
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16 years
- any two children aged under 10 years
- any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
- a carer who does not live with the claimant but provides them or their partner with overnight care.

have three
who is 12 Max
who is 6.

and Isabel
to Housing
bed-roomed
room for
r Jenny and
Max.



ne live in a 3-
house with a son aged 18,
oyed. Their rent is £180

A 14% (£25.20) reduction is
use they are considered to
uppying by one bedroom.
dent reduction of £11.45 is
because their son is 18.
ons are £25.20 + £11.45 =
.35 will be paid towards the
f £180.
ne will have to pay the
6.65 themselves.

How can we help?

Dale & Valley Homes is working with Durham County Council to assess who may be under-occupying their home. Please remember that the new rules only affect those who are under pension credit age (61 years at present).

If you are over 61 years and are under-occupying your home, you will not have the 14% or 25% reduction applied.

Please contact us if you want to talk about your individual circumstances. We also have a helpful leaflet we can send you.



What options do I have?

If you are under-occupying your home here are some ways to consider dealing with the situation.

- Move to smaller accommodation or stay where you are and make up the shortfall in rent.
- Ask non-dependants to contribute towards the additional rent.
- Take in a lodger (you have a right to do this if you are a secure tenant but you must tell us immediately).
- Increase hours of work. If you are working you may consider increasing your working hours, if possible, to make up for the shortfall in rent.
- If you are not working, finding a job could help you pay the extra rent.

If you think you might be under-occupying your home and wish to talk about your circumstances please contact us in one of the ways on page 2.



Customer guarantee promise

Decent Homes

We said we would give customers whose homes are receiving major works a diary to fill in every day so they can see how work is progressing.



Target 98%
Performance 91%

We said we would complete decent homes work within 20 working days.



Target 95%
Performance 77.2%

Repairs

We said we will carry out repairs as soon as possible with a maximum time of 24 hours for emergencies, five working days for urgent cases and 20 working days for routine repairs.



Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours.



Target 99.8%
Performance 99.9%

Routine repairs completed within 20 days.



Target 97%
Performance 93.5%

Urgent repairs completed within 5 working days.



Target 99%
Performance 98.7%

Urgent and routine repairs carried out right first time.



Target 88.5%
Performance 86.9%

es - did we meet our s to you?

...more on page 16

When you move home

We said we would give a brief description of properties in newspaper adverts and more detailed information on the website.

Customers who felt the property matched what was advertised.



Target 90%
Performance 92.7%

We said we would publish the outcomes of allocations every month on our website, in the office and through our customer contact point.

Customers satisfied with the literature given to them when applying and whilst on the housing register.



Target 65%
Performance 87.2%



We said we would confirm your housing registration within 5 working days and give you more information on how Durham Key Options works.

Customers who were registered in 5 days.



Target 99%
Performance 99.9%

Customers who received a Durham Key Options application pack including all the relevant information.



Target 98%
Performance 100%



Managing your tenancy

We said we would give all new tenants a handbook to explain our services.

Tenants who received a handbook.



Target 98%
Performance 78.6%

Were satisfied with information provided when signing up.



Target 90%
Performance 94%

Customers who said we were responsive to any problems when they moved into their new home.



Target 78%
Performance 79.9%

More of our guarantees

In your neighbourhood



Customer comments

“ We have recently moved into Park Avenue Close and would like to express how happy we are. The facilities are first class and staff have been so helpful. It has made our lives much easier, the fact that the doors are wide enough for the wheelchair is so useful. There already is a sense of community which we are enjoying very much. Not only are the apartments great but the location is superb. Keep up the good works and once again many thanks. ”

Customer comments

“ Excellent service from all the team at D&V Homes. From being offered the property to moving in. Everything went perfectly. Thanks again to everyone at Dale & Valley Homes. ”

We said we would produce an action plan with you when you reported anti-social behaviour to us and keep you informed of progress resolving the situation.

Cases that have had an action plan.



Target 100%
Performance 100%

Customers who felt we had kept them informed of the progress of their case.



Target 90%
Performance 89.5%

Customers who felt we had clearly explained what we would be doing in their case.



Target 95%
Performance 83.8%

How we will improve things

Some of our indicators are red - meaning they are more than ten percent away from where we would like them to be.

We work to constantly improve performance and satisfaction in all areas but these red indicators need special attention. Here we explain why they were so far below our targets.

Decent homes completed within 20 working days.

We experienced difficulties at Stanley Way when the contractor initially under-estimated the extent of the works required. This meant having to reschedule works which lead to us taking longer than planned.

Not all new customers received a handbook.

Every new customer was actually given a handbook when they signed their tenancy but not all of the information was up to date. We were in the process of reviewing the handbook before sending a copy to all customers.

Customers who felt we had clearly explained what we would be doing in their case.

We identified a need to train staff to be able to give realistic and meaningful advice to customers on how long it might take to resolve any problem at the time it was reported.



Do you need a helping hand?

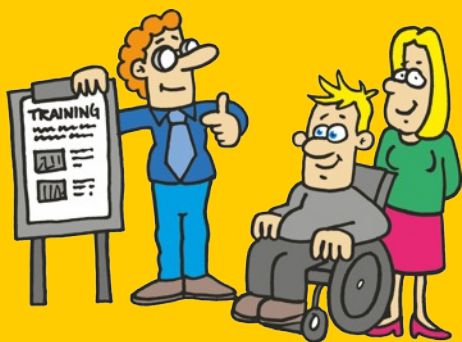
Helping hands is a free service offered to vulnerable customers of Dale & Valley Homes.

The service offers general help around the home for our customers who find it difficult to carry out these routine jobs themselves.

We can do small jobs in and around your home including:

- replacing light bulbs
- putting up shelves
- putting up curtain rails and poles
- assembling up to two pieces of flat pack furniture
- bleeding radiators.

To find out if you qualify, if your job is appropriate and to book an appointment please contact us in one of the ways on page 2.



Neighbourhood

these are the dates when we will be looking

Training update

Over recent months free training has been offered to customers.

These courses have included food safety, communication and report writing.

We will be running these courses again so, if you are interested in attending any of them, please contact a member of the customer insight team.

Training arranged within the next three months will include report writing, communications, forming a committee and making your meetings work.

As well as these courses we have ongoing 'roll on, roll off' courses which you can start at any time.

These include IT, get the skills get the job, maths and English.

If you are interested in attending any of these courses or would like further information please contact a member of the customer insight team in one of the ways listed on page 2.

	Oct	Nov	Dec
Liz Graham (01388 770949)			
Howden-le-Wear	9th		
Escomb/Witton Park/ Witton-le-Wear	18th		
South Church	11th		13th
St Andrew's Rd/North End Gdns/McCullagh Gdns	22nd	19th	17th
Hunwick		8th	
Natasha Meite (01388 770950)			
Stanley Way	10th	14th	12th
Low Mown Meadows	3rd	7th	5th
Wolsingham		26th	
Frosterley & Stanhope		22nd	
St John's Chapel & Wearhead		1st	
Rookhope	26th		
Bankfoot Grove	4th		7th
Jill Forbes (01388 770955)			
St Helen Auckland	3rd	7th	5th
West Auckland (upper)		14th	
West Auckland (lower)	10th	21st	12th
Henknowle	31st		19th
Craig Sams (01388 770956)			
Woodhouse Close (lower)			5th
Woodhouse Close (middle)		21st	
Woodhouse Close (upper)	10th	14th	12th

inspections -

coming at your area in the next three months

Terry Longthorne

(01388 770954)

Wear Valley View

Hall Lane

Sunnybrow

Bourne Way, St Thomas

Close, Rosedale, George/

York/Clarence/Oakenshaw

Sarah Dowson

(01388 770956)

Tees Walk

Grey Gardens

York Close

Buckingham Tce/

Cambridge St

Coundon Grange/Eldon

Lane

Lynn Hanson

(01388 770957)

Bishop Auckland Town

Centre

Janan Kay

(01388 770929)

Watergate estate, Crook

Steve Green

(01388 770942)

Crook town centre

	Oct	Nov	Dec
		16th	
	25th	22nd	20th
	30th	27th	18th
		16th	
	5th	2nd	6th
		9th	
		8th	
			5th
		14th	
			10th
	22nd	19th	17th
	10th		5th

If you would like to attend an inspection please contact the neighbourhood officer so we can inform you of the arrangements and any changes.



Join the scrutiny group

Dale & Valley Homes' scrutiny group has been running for more than a year.

The group has already reviewed stage 1 complaints, reporting and logging of repairs and the empty property process.

Staff have already implemented some important recommendations for changes and are looking at how they can make others a reality.

There are **two vacancies** on the scrutiny group.

If this sounds like something you would like to be involved with or if you would like more information please contact Amy Glendinning - see page 2 for contact details.

Full training and support is provided for new members.



Win shopping vouchers in our competition

Are you involved with our work?

There are many ways you can be involved with our work at Dale & Valley Homes. Some ways take up a lot of time while others are less demanding. Here is a list of involvement methods.

Strategic involvement

- Tenant board member
- Tenant scrutiny group
- Customer inspector
- Wear Valley Customer Panel

Regular Involvement

- Residents associations
- Mystery customer scheme
- Working groups
- Neighbourhood inspections

Irregular Involvement

- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Dale Mail
- Social activities

If you are interested in being involved in any of these ways please contact us in one of the ways listed on page 2.

Answer the questions below and you could win shopping vouchers to spend on a treat for yourself or your family. This quiz is a special on benefit reform. All the answers can be found in this edition of Dale Mail.

Make sure your entries reach us by Friday, October 19.

■ How much is the benefit cap for single parents?

.....

■ When will the new Housing Benefit rules come in?

.....

■ What percentage reduction will be applied if you have one spare bedroom?

.....

■ How much is the non-dependent reduction?

.....

■ At what age are adults entitled to their own room?

.....

■ What type of tenant can take in a lodger?

.....

Name

.....

Address

.....

.....

Telephone

.....

Return your entry by **Friday, October 19, 2012** to:

Reader competition
RSBR-UREH-HYTX
Dale & Valley Homes
Dale & Valley House
27 Longfield Road
South Church
Enterprise Park
Bishop Auckland
Co Durham
DL14 6XB

Introducing our new board members

Four positions on our board have been reviewed recently because all board members are only appointed to serve for a fixed period.

The positions reviewed this year have been two customer representatives and two independent members.

Terry Dean from Greenside Place in Crook is the new customer on the board. Terry works for Durham County Council.

Derek Beard has been re-appointed as a customer representative.

There was no election for customer representatives this time because the number of applicants was the same as the places available.

Former customer representative Colin Race has resigned.

The two independent representatives appointed this time are John Flynn and Anthony Garnett.

Both have served on the board for a number of years and wanted to continue their work ensuring Dale & Valley Homes is a well managed, customer-focused company.



Terry Dean



Derek Beard



John Flynn



Anthony Garnett



L to R Shirley Longthorne receives her prize from Joanne Wright

Competition winner

Shirley Longthorne has lived in Buckingham Terrace, Leeholme, for more than 40 years, since she moved to this area from Nottingham.

She is a keen competition enthusiast, entering those in her favourite magazines.

Success in the Dale Mail quiz is the first time she has won and Mrs Longthorne was planning to buy herself a treat with the shopping voucher prize.

You could win a prize by entering the competition in this edition. See page 20.

Second prize went to Mrs K Haddon from St Mary's Close, Woodhouse Close.



Improvement Before and a

How you have helped us

Your involvement means a lot to us. Here are some things that have helped us decide recently.

- A review of the way we deal with empty homes is planned.
- Repairs identified by the customer within the first weeks of moving in will be fast tracked.
- The lettable standard is to be reviewed and a wheelie bin included because customer expectations have risen.
- We will investigate the possibility of decorating hard-to-let properties to make them more appealing.
- Neighbourhood inspections to be used as an indication that a property may be in a poor state and need work.
- We will investigate the possibility of having customer reps do monthly spot checks on ready-to-let properties and monitoring properties taking longer than 6 weeks to repair.
- Investigate if the number of inspections carried out by Gentoo and D&VH on empty properties can be reduced.

The issues on this page were raised from neighbourhood inspections recently carried out on the Henknowle Estate in Bishop Auckland.

The issues were raised by members of the residents association and forwarded on to the appropriate department of Durham County Council by the neighbourhood officer. Representatives from Durham County Council also attended some of the walk-about.

If you would like to attend the neighbourhood inspections, the next one is scheduled for **October 31, 2012, at 10am. Please meet at the lower lay-by in Norfolk Place.**



Dilapidated bench in Dorset Place.



The bench has now been removed

ts in your area after pictures



Anti-crime experiment for Woodhouse Close

Victims of crime will be given the chance to come face-to-face with those responsible as part of a new scheme to reduce bad behaviour in Bishop Auckland.

The Woodhouse Close Restorative Project is being set up to provide an alternative way of dealing with anti-social behaviour and minor crimes.

Similar schemes elsewhere have been successful, changing the behaviour of criminals and meeting the needs of victims.

Staff from Dale & Valley Homes are among those trained to use the method.

Diane Maughan, safer neighbourhood coordinator, said: "This approach gives the victim the opportunity to tell the offender about the impact of their behaviour."



Vandalised wall at the rear of Dorset Place Community Centre.



The wall after repairs.



A vandalised wall seat adjacent to The Manor pub.



The seat after it had been repaired.



Don't lose your TV channels.

If you're 75 and over or eligible disabled you can get help switching to digital TV.

The switch to digital TV is coming, so you need to get ready. The Switchover Help Scheme has helped hundreds of thousands of people switch to digital and can provide everything you need to keep watching your TV.

- Easy-to-use equipment
- An approved installer to supply and install the equipment for you
- A 12 month aftercare service including a free helpline

This service is available for just £40 all-inclusive or is free if you're eligible and on certain income-related benefits.

Everyone who is entitled to help will receive an information pack from the Help Scheme.

But if you'd like to apply now, call us free on 0800 40 85 900

B B C The Switchover Help Scheme
is run by the BBC

 **switchover**
help scheme