

## **HEADS OF SERVICE UPDATE**

This is a joint report prepared by Heads of Service. The report provides Operational Board Members with a general overview and update on current issues.

### **Head of Operations (Housing Management & Housing Options)**

#### **Government minister praises ongoing partnership work in Derby to tackle homelessness**

On Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2019 Leader of the Council, Chris Poulter, together with Police and Crime Commissioner Hardyal Dhindsa and our very own Managing Director, Maria Murphy, were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the RT Hon James Brokenshire MP, to Derby Homes.

During a roundtable discussion in our boardroom, including representatives from these organisations, Public Health and local partners Derby City Mission and Derventio Housing Trust, Mr Brokenshire showed a keen interest in our work to successfully reduce rough sleeping. One of the key areas highlighted was the successful partnership work taking place in the City to help prevent homelessness and support people back into sustainable, secure accommodation.

Afterwards, Mr Brokenshire MP visited Milestone House, which provides emergency accommodation for people in need. Whilst there, he met with residents and staff to hear from people with direct experiences of homelessness and the services provided in Derby.

Over the past year, Derby Homes, on behalf of the Council, has secured grants that will expand and strengthen our work tackling homelessness in the City.

Much of this funding is focused on helping rough sleepers into accommodation. So far the City has secured £283,000 to further develop our 'Rapid Re-housing Pathway that will quickly move those at risk into supported accommodation. We were also successful in obtaining over £300,000 to boost the Rehousing Engagement Support Team, who provide outreach support to those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping and help them back into sustainable accommodation.

Derby has been identified as an area that will particularly benefit from the funding, thanks to strong existing relationships between partnership organisations, including Derby City Council, Police and Crime Commissioner, Public Health, Derby Homes, Derbyshire Constabulary, Probation Services and several voluntary and charitable organisations.

## **Mutual exchange**

From 28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 'House Exchange' will be the new provider of our Mutual Exchange service for social housing tenants.

Mutual Exchange is where existing social housing tenants can choose to 'swap' homes with other existing social housing tenants, subject to both tenants complying with the terms of their tenancy agreements and where such a 'swap' does not create under or overcrowding.

To ensure a seamless transition for our customers the new system will retain the current name 'Homefinder Mutual Exchange'.

This new system will allow greater opportunities for our customer to do more complex multiple exchanges and will make it easier to pursue mutual exchanges outside of the City, if desired.

This is a free service and is available not only to Derby Homes' customers but also those customers from within our partner groups who are signed up to advertise their available stock through Derby Homefinder. Existing customers have been informed of the change of provider and we plan to further publicise the scheme through our usual social media channels.

## **Parklands View Extra Care shortlisted in TPAS Awards 2019**

We are delighted to have been shortlisted for the TPAS Awards 2019 in the Excellence in Engagement in Support and Care category. This category recognises those supported housing providers that are successfully engaging with and involving their customers.

Engagement can be more difficult to facilitate in supported housing settings because customers may have more complex needs. The award seeks to recognise providers who have created innovative, practical and person centred approaches to engage positively with people.

At Parkland View Extra Care Scheme the Derby Homes team has worked together with customers and partners to develop a Residents Forum. The aim of the Forum is to promote dignity, choice and independence for our customers. The Forum meets monthly to share information, discuss issues and make decisions. We use large print format on agendas and minutes, allow more time for the meetings and provide practical support to enable customers to attend. We listen to what the Forum want and support them to make it happen or explore realistic alternatives. For example: we supported customers to make a successful bid for funding from Estates Pride to develop the communal garden area and to make the outside space more accessible.

The Derby Homes team at Parkland View work together with customers and other agencies to facilitate regular onsite social activities. These include indoor bowling and games with Derby County Football Club, a weekly team quiz, bingo, Chill Out and Chat session on a Sunday afternoon, Shared Reading sessions with members of the local community, fish and chip supper and pizza night, customer led games afternoon and film club. We are in the process of arranging a regular chaplaincy service for customers at Parkland from St Peter's Church and have strong links with Derby College students with learning disabilities, Chellaston School and Landau Forte College performing arts students.

The building and facilities are regularly used as a venue for Talking Points with Adult Social Care and mental health services, a monthly Bi-Polar Support Group and Parkinson's Support group and is also be used by the Customer Experience team.

## **Head of Operations (Income Management & Customer Services)**

### **Income Management**

The Current arrears position, at around £1.4M, is better than expected. The 'Rent-Free Weeks' at Christmas produced the desired reduction in current arrears of over £450k, putting us in a good position going in to quarter four, considering the challenges of austerity and welfare reforms.

Further meetings took place with Mobyssoft and Orchard as we continue to explore more efficient ways of dealing with the expected increase in tenants needing to pay their rent as they start claiming Universal Credit. At is point in time, Mobyssoft do not feel their product will add value to what we do.

Mobyssoft are developing their product further so it integrates more with our computer system to save logging in and out of systems or having two screens. This development is expected to take place during 2019 and then they will re-present their product to us. At this stage, we will then assess their product along with Orchard's who have just started work in this area.

A presentation on rent arrears and the impact of Universal Credit was presented to the Council's Executive Scrutiny and this went well. The area of most concern was evictions and what happened to the tenants being evicted (most tenants have gone before the eviction takes place). Initial investigation shows only a small number have re-approached the Council for accommodation.

Although the recruitment in the team is complete and the team was at full strength, there have been some absences which we need to plan for. Consideration is being given to how we can plan and move forward to maintain the service.

### **Rental Control**

Testing started this week (21 January 2019) for Annual Rent Variation, Year End and New Year Direct Debit (DD) payment profiles.

These tasks will take up the majority of Rental Control Team's time over the next two months with DD running into April.

This will involve both testing and changes to how we all deal with DDs. We will need to work with relevant teams across Derby Homes to make sure we can capture tenants wanting to sign up for DD.

The initial idea was to have paperless DDs in place by April but while we will do all we can the go live date may have to be delayed until the team have completed year end processes, with these being our priority

### **Leasehold**

Testing and preparation is underway for Ground Rent notices which need to be with leaseholders by 1<sup>st</sup> March and Estimated Service Charges which need to be with leaseholders by 1<sup>st</sup> April.

The team is working with the Customer Engagement team on a consultation plan for Leaseholders, prior to writing a new Leaseholder policy.

### **Derby Advice**

Derby Advice is currently in the process of restructuring. It is planned that the new restructure will be place for 1 April 2019.

The Derby Advice training programme is currently being delivered. The Universal Credit course has been the course most in demand. These sessions are fully booked until the end of the current programme in March. The sessions that have already been delivered have received excellent feedback from both Derby Homes and Derby City Council staff. In addition to this, one member of staff has visited seven team meetings to do a 1-2 hour briefing on Universal Credit – again these have received very positive feedback. We have agreed to deliver some courses for partner agencies in Derby who are charged for the course.

Staff at Derby Advice also have to deal with a rise in complex queries around Universal Credit. The DWP partnership manager has met with staff to discuss some of the more systematic/process led issues that our clients are facing.

The specialist welfare rights project (Macmillan) that we deliver to Derby residents with cancer diagnosis was due to end in July 2019. However, as a result of the success of the project, Macmillan has agreed an extension until the end of December 2019. In April 2019, we will begin discussions with Macmillan for a further round of funding to continue beyond the end of the year.

### **Customer Service and Equalities**

We have successfully recruited two new full time Customer Service Advisors to the Customer Service Team to keep up with customer demand.

The Customer Service standards have been reviewed. In updating the new standards, we have worked with engaged customer groups, the Customer Voice, the Youth Panel and the DACP, taking their views on board.

The new complaints policy and procedure has been in place since November and is working well.

### **Incentive schemes update:**

The 24/7 campaign has been running since August 2018. Customers who have registered for “My Account” are entered into monthly draws. This initiative has now rewarded 178 customers with a Lenovo Tablet.

The “Get Online Incentive Scheme” is in its second year, customer have until 31.03.2019 to qualify.

Incentive schemes feature in every newsletter and regular social media posts are issued.

### **My Account:**

To date 3,795 customer have signed up to “My Account”, to access their rent account, update their personal details, view their account and request repairs. Promotion of “My Account” is ongoing.

## **Customer Communications**

### **Website redesign project with Derby City Council**

We are continuing our work with the Council on a combined design review of both websites (derby.gov.uk and derbyhomes.org). This should result in a redesigned website and inform a web style guide and best practices for content. The review will utilise the latest User Experience (UX) principles to enhance the User Interface (UI), content and visual appearance.

The project is currently at the “wireframe” stage, where we have seen mock-ups of how key page elements might look on desktop and mobile versions. The next stage will be an interactive, wireframe demo. These are currently built to Derby City Council’s design, but our site will have its own colour accent, images as well as our own choices of Top Tasks and other functional page elements in whatever order/structure we want.

A key focus for the team will be a complete content review and overhaul, which is long overdue. This will be carried out in conjunction with other teams and a customer, using a Customer First approach to ensure the site is purely focussed on customer needs. The new [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website is a good example of website content done well.

### **Targeting of customers not registered on MyAccount**

Leading up to the end of the two incentive campaigns, we have supported the Customer Services Team by targeting tenants who have valid email addresses, but who have yet to sign up for MyAccount. It is hoped that this will lead to an increase in sign-ups before the end of March 2019.

### **Derby Homes News**

The next Derby Homes News will be delivered with the Rent Variation letter at the end of Feb/March.

## **Head of Repairs**

### **Day to Day**

At the end of Quarter 3, performance in terms of ‘repairs completed in time’ is as follows:

- Emergencies – 100%
- Very urgent works –99.95%
- Urgent works – 99.94%
- Routine works – 99.68%
- Planned works – 98.13%

Performance up until the end of December is generally pleasing with all priorities above / better than the 99% targets other than planned works. There has been an

improvement in performance in the last couple of months on planned works and we are working hard to try and ensure the target is achieved by year end.

We are currently unable to report on the Appointments Kept Target due to issues with reports having to be rebuilt since the implementation of Open Housing. It is worth noting though that so far this year we have only missed 17 appointments.

Tenant satisfaction with repairs remains high and above target at 99.62% up until the end of December. During the month of December out of 1304 surveys sent out only 8 were dissatisfied.

We have generated rechargeable repairs up to the end of quarter 3 realising £18090.83

We currently have 7 live disrepair cases.

## **Void Repairs**

Up to the end of Quarter 3, the Voids Team has completed 446 active voids compared to 485 for the same period last year. Performance is currently averaging 14.9 days cumulatively to inspect and complete works.

The total number of void works carried out both active and passive is 620 voids compared to 633 voids last year.

It is pleasing that the average time is now better than the target of 15 days. We are confident of maintaining this figure until year end.

## **Gas Servicing and Electrical Testing**

At the end of December both the Gas and Electrical teams have met target and have achieved full compliance. Gas servicing and electrical periodic testing both finished at 100%.

Up to the end of Quarter 3 the Gas team carried out 11,319 services.

The Electrical testing Team for the same period have carried out 1925 Periodic tests

We attained high levels of first time access for gas servicing which so far this year averages 81% which is slightly down due to the Christmas holidays; this should be back up to target by year end.

We have now gone live with the new gas and electric servicing module. Servicing Jobs are now coming through hand held devices to trades people and we now have the capability to issue certificates from the handhelds. We have had some teething problems as is usual when introducing new systems but this is not affecting levels of performance.

In the month of February we are introducing an exciting new initiative where we will fit gas and electric cookers for new tenants moving into our properties. This will benefit our tenants in that there will be one less expense to worry about and they can be confident that their cookers will be connected up to the relevant legal standards. For Derby

Homes it is a benefit and a protection to our housing stock to know these gas and electric cookers are being fitted correctly and safely.

We have carried out the tenant's consultation at Kestrel house to install air source heating within the properties as we have at Rivermead house. This system has proved to be a success on cost saving and customer satisfaction. The work is planned to start in the new financial year

## **Head of Governance & Corporate Support**

### **Employee Development**

Our new apprentices have settled in well and we are continuing to work with the relevant training providers in order to maintain good working relationships and track all apprentices' progress. We are now looking at requirements for this year's apprenticeship vacancies and are aiming to advertise these vacancies during National Apprenticeship Week in March.