

DERBY HOMES RENT ARREARS POLICY

Derby Homes is committed to providing the best housing service in the country. We aim to continually improve the quality of our services. In dealing with rent arrears, this means:

1. ***Being firm but fair*** in dealing with all arrears cases. We will:

- take prompt action after two weeks' arrears are owed, and at key trigger points, to ensure arrears owed are kept as low as possible
- provide tenants with accurate advice on benefit entitlement
- help tenants get money advice to help clear debts
- involve other agencies, such as Social Services, money advisors, Citizens Advice Bureau, Derby Benefits, Benefits Agency, where we believe they can help resolve the problem, especially where the tenant is vulnerable through age, disability or circumstance
- agree repayment of arrears at a payment level tenants can afford
- use the arrears procedure as a guide, but will use our judgement when applying it, as circumstances of tenants differ
- evict tenants who fail to pay their rent and fail to keep to a court order requiring them to pay off their arrears.

2. ***Encouraging a good rent payment culture*** amongst tenants. We will:

- offer a wide range of payment methods
- send out regular rent statements
- reward tenants who pay their rent
- refuse to re-house or transfer tenants who owe arrears and who fail to keep to an agreement to pay
- publicise our performance and procedures on rent arrears to tenants.

3. ***Communicating effectively with tenants*** in arrears. We will:

- inform tenants in arrears of the steps to be taken in each case
- write letters, leaflets and publicity in plain English, and ensure these are accessible to minority communities
- keep in regular contact with tenants in arrears
- liaise closely with Derby Benefits to ensure housing benefits are paid as soon as possible

- visit tenants before an eviction order is carried out.



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4. ***Monitoring our performance*** on arrears and ***learning*** from the results. We will:

- measure customer satisfaction amongst service users
- develop our service together with tenants in a process improvement team
- agree targets for city-wide arrears' performance in consultation Derby Homes' Board and the City Council
- train and support our staff to deal with arrears as effectively as possible
- aim to achieve top quartile performance in comparison with other unitary authorities
- report regularly to the Board and tenants' meetings on arrears' levels
- monitor the service to ensure it is equal to all communities.