

## **CUSTOMER VOICE – REVIEW OF SIGN UP PROCESS – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Report of Derby Homes Customer Voice

### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Customer Voice report at appendix 1 outlines the finding of the Customer Voice review of the Sign up Process and makes a number of recommendations for improvement. These recommendations have been reviewed by the relevant service manager who has provided their response.
- 1.2 Many of the recommendations will be implemented and these are outlined in the service manager's responses. Those not immediately agreed will be further discussed with the Customer Voice to agree a way forward.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To note the sign up process review carried out by the Customer Voice.
- 2.2 To note and approve the recommendations jointly agreed by the Customer Voice and Housing Services Manager
- 2.3 To note the continued dialogue regarding outstanding recommendations
- 2.4 To request a review of progress against the agreed recommendations in 6 months' time.

### **3. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To ensure the Customer Voice has an effective scrutiny role of Derby Homes and its services and that recommendations, wherever possible, are implemented and monitored.

### **4. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1 The Customer Voice carried out a review of the sign up process over the period of December 2018 to July 2019. This involved talking to the Housing Service Manager Murray Chapman and Liz Wilcox, the Housing Management Trainer. Further to this the Customer Voice took the opportunity to shadow staff on Escorted Viewings and sign ups in a number of local offices to observe common practise.
- 4.2 The following recommendations were made:
  - 1. Staff who carry out sign ups specifically mention the Tenancy Sustainment,

Intensive Housing Management, Handyman service and other appropriate services available to customers should they start to struggle with aspects of their tenancy. They may not require or be eligible for any of these services at present but may require them at some stage.

2. Starter tenants feel vulnerable and are unwilling to say things are wrong. They are worried about potentially losing their property. We feel some work needs to be carried out to ensure customers understand that we value their opinion and can only improve our services if they inform us.
3. Derby Homes to provide all customers with a meter box key for easy access to the meter boxes for reading meters.
4. If a property has a prepayment meter, Derby Homes to provide customers with the pre-payment card/key to simplify matters.
5. Post let surveys to be simplified, reworded and carried out over the phone by a staff member who has not carried out the viewing or sign up in order to ensure honest feedback. This survey to be incorporated into the online account for all tenants to complete.
6. All staff to have refresher training relevant to Sign Ups, every twelve months to ensure consistency. Emails notifying staff of amendments to procedures and policies should be clearly headed 'amendment'
7. All keys to properties to be labelled. No redundant keys to be supplied.
8. Minimise paperwork provided to the customer at both Escorted Viewing's and Sign Ups. Staff to provide customers with a Tenancy Agreement and Document checklist at an EV and no more. All sign up paperwork to be reviewed and minimised so that less is given to customers at sign up.
9. No Sign ups on a Friday afternoon unless they are secure transfers. Gas uncapping would not be feasible and paperwork will need to be done.
10. At an EV or before the viewing is arranged, staff should ensure that customers have been made aware of their options so the expectation is set early on.

4.3 The following recommendations were agreed by the Housing Service Manager:

1. Staff who carry out sign ups specifically mention the Tenancy Sustainment, Intensive Housing Management, Handyman service and other appropriate services available to customers should they start to struggle with aspects of their tenancy. They may not require or be eligible for any of these services at present but may require them at some stage.
2. Starter tenants feel vulnerable and are unwilling to say things are wrong. They are worried about potentially losing their property. We feel some work needs to be carried out to ensure customers understand that we value their opinion and can only improve our services if they inform us.
3. Derby Homes to provide all customers with a meter box key for easy access to the meter boxes for reading meters.
6. All staff to have refresher training relevant to Sign Ups, every twelve months to ensure consistency. Emails notifying staff of amendments to procedures and policies should be clearly headed 'amendment'.
7. All keys to properties to be labelled. No redundant keys to be supplied.
8. Minimise paperwork provided to the customer at both Escorted Viewing's and Sign Ups. Staff to provide customers with a Tenancy Agreement and Document checklist at an EV and no more. All sign up paperwork to be reviewed and minimised so that less is given to customers at sign up.
9. No Sign ups on a Friday afternoon unless they are secure transfers. Gas uncapping would not be feasible and paperwork will need to be done.
10. At an EV or before the viewing is arranged, staff should ensure that customers have been made aware of their options so the expectation is set early on.

4.4 The following are under review where further dialogue is required between the customer voice and housing services manager

4. If a property has a prepayment meter, Derby Homes to provide customers with the pre-payment card/key to simplify matters.

The managers comments are that we accept that this is a problem. We will work with staff in our voids team to improve this process. This relates to our ongoing work around RAM energy. It may not be possible for RAM to supply pre-payment cards. We have already explored this with them. However there may be ways we can improve this.

5. Post let surveys to be simplified, reworded and carried out over the phone by a staff member who has not carried out the viewing or sign up in order to ensure honest feedback. This survey be incorporated into the online account for all tenants to complete.

The managers comments state that it is agreed that the post let survey can be simplified. We will work with the Customer Voice and the Customer

Engagement and Community Development team to implement a survey which is in line with Derby Homes' other surveys. The process of collecting the survey will be discussed and reviewed with the Customer Voice and will form part of the feedback in 6 months' time.

The areas listed below have no implications directly arising from this report:

- Legal and Confidentiality
- Personnel
- Environmental
- Equalities Impact Assessment
- Health & Safety
- Risk
- Policy Review
- Financial and Business Planning Implications

If Board Members or others would like to discuss this report ahead of the meeting please contact:

Holly Johnson / Customer Engagement and Community Development Manager /  
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Background Information: None  
Supporting Information: None

**This report has been approved by the following officers where there are financial or legal implications:**

<b>Director of Housing Management</b>	Clare Mehrbani	
<b>Head of Finance</b>	Michael Kirk	03/08/2019
<b>Head of Governance and Corporate Services</b>	Taranjit Lalia	05/08/2019